



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, February 28, 2024

Day 20

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

First Session

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van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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United Conservative: 48

New Democrat: 38

Independent: 1

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, February 28, 2024

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Hon. members, it being the first sitting day of the week, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Michael Peters. I invite you to participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Hon. members, please remain standing for the land acknowledgement.

Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

The Speaker: The Legislative Assembly is grateful to be situated on Treaty 6 territory. This land has been the traditional region of the Métis people of Alberta, the Inuit, the ancestral territory of the Cree, Dene, Blackfoot, Saulteaux, Iroquois, and Nakota Sioux people. The recognition of our history on this land is an act of reconciliation, and we honour those who walk with us. We also acknowledge that the province of Alberta exists within treaties 6, 7, 8, and 10 territories and the Métis Nation of Alberta.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'd like to introduce to all members of the Assembly Michael Peters, who led us in the singing of our national anthem today. Michael is a Legislative Assembly Office employee in the visitor services division. He got his start as a summer guide two years ago and now is a co-ordinator in our School at the Leg. program. He found his passion for singing beginning in grade 3. He's been singing in church choirs and a number of other choirs. He's currently a member of the Robertson-Wesley United Church choir. I also understand that Michael's grandma Bernice is watching today, who taught most of his piano lessons and a number of other things. I'd like him to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The hon. the Minister of Children and Family Services has an introduction.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce through you to the rest of the members of the Assembly the amazing kids from Broxton Park school in Spruce Grove. Not

only is this an amazing school that I actually attended overnight stays at, but it's also the school that my two sons attended. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

Member Hoyle: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you Don R. Getty school in Edmonton-South. I'm proud to have those children here today as well as Garth Worthington school from Edmonton-South. Let's please give them a round of applause and welcome.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has an introduction to make.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce three of our NDP caucus staff: Briana Cable, who has joined us in the graphics department, and Erin Rolfson and Graham Ruttan, dear friends of mine who have also been long-time Lethbridge-West NDP members and contributors. If they could rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

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

Stollery Children's Hospital

Mr. Long: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday Alberta's government made another significant investment towards making a stand-alone Stollery children's hospital a reality. Our government committed \$3 million last year to support the planning for a stand-alone facility, and we are officially building on that commitment. If passed, Budget 2024 will include a substantial investment in health capital projects and programs across the province. This will include an additional \$17 million, for a total investment of \$20 million over three years to advance plans for a new Stollery children's hospital, which is central to our plans to increase capacity in Edmonton.

The Stollery as it stands has an incredible impact on helping children and youth, guiding families through what are often stressful times. It serves a geographical area of more than 500,000 square kilometres and has among the highest in-patient volumes of any children's hospital in Canada, with 40 per cent of their visits coming from outside of Edmonton. This investment puts kids and families first while increasing capacity to serve Alberta's growing population.

Facilities will be upgraded, and health care providers will have access to new technologies to better refine their skills. A new stand-alone Stollery hospital will meet the needs of Albertans and will provide the necessary space for children and families to experience comfort and support throughout their stay. Building a stand-alone Stollery will not only enhance pediatric care but will also significantly contribute to broader patient capacity in the Edmonton region by making its current beds available to serve other community hospital needs.

I would like to offer my sincerest appreciation to those who have continuously supported and advocated for a new facility, especially our health care providers and the Stollery hospital foundation. Their dedication and unwavering support to our growing communities is admirable. I thank you for all your hard work. I'm very proud that a new stand-alone Stollery children's hospital is in its development stages, and I eagerly look forward to this new facility.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Edgemont is next.

Pink Shirt Day

Ms Hayter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to rise on what is our first day back here together. It's also the last Wednesday of February, so it's Pink Shirt Day. Today we raise awareness for antibullying initiatives. I appreciate this day not only because I get to wear my favourite colour, but also I get to stand here with all of my colleagues, also wearing pink, to stand with Albertans, creating a kinder and more inclusive province.

This is a day to remind ourselves here in the House of our responsibility to foster Alberta children's self-esteem. Today we should be asking ourselves: what is bullying? Well, bullying is a form of aggression where there's a power imbalance. The person doing the bullying has the power over the person being victimized. In addition to any physical trauma incurred, bullying can also result in serious emotional problems, including anxiety, low self-esteem, and depression.

What does bullying look like? Well, there are a few types. There's physical; there's cyberbullying; there is verbal bullying such as name-calling; and, lastly, there is social bullying, where we hurt someone by excluding them or even spreading rumours or ignoring them.

1:40

Unfortunately, bullying can turn into harassment when the behaviour goes against Canadian human rights laws and focuses on treating people differently because of their age, race, ethnicity. It could also be because of their family status – if they are from a single-parent family, a foster family, or maybe even a nonbiological gay or lesbian family – or even their sexual orientation and their gender identity.

Today is also a day that I'd love to be standing in a classroom with our future generation to stand up with them against the bullying that they might be facing. I am grateful to be standing here with my friends, knowing that we will always stand up to bullies.

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

Wildfire Season Preparation

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to inform Albertans about the measures our government is taking to address the heightened risk of wildfires across our province. Recognizing the gravity of the situation in the warmer-than-normal temperatures and below-average precipitation in many regions of Alberta, the Ministry of Forestry and Parks has decided to tackle the issue head-on by making a critical declaration of an early start to the wildfire season.

Our government recognizes the importance of a prompt and direct response to tackle wildfires and is committed to mitigating the risk of wildfires across the province. In Budget 2024 we will propose funding for the recruitment of 100 new firefighters. These additional firefighters will be instrumental in supporting the efforts of the currently 196 firefighters and support staff of the Alberta Wildfire team.

Wildfire prevention is a shared responsibility. I'd like to remind Albertans of the requirement for permits for any planned burning within the forest protection area. Additionally, the Alberta Wildfire team will use fire bans and restrictions to mitigate human-caused wildfires in response to hazardous conditions, underlining the importance of collective vigilance and responsible recreation. Last year over 60 per cent of wildfires were human caused. Every Albertan plays a role in reducing the risk of wildfires, that could impact our communities and natural landscapes.

Our government remains steadfast in its commitment to wildfire preparedness and prevention through strategic investments, proactive measures, and collaborative efforts. We are determined to safeguard Albertans in every corner of our province from the devastating impact of wildfires.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

LGBTQ2S Rights

Member Arcand-Paul: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak today wearing a beautiful ribbon skirt that was gifted to me to represent my communities. I'm wearing it today to take up space as a *tastawiyiniw*, a two-spirit person, an individual that possesses both the masculine and feminine energies, a people that were revered on these lands since time immemorial, before the arrival of settlers with the ideology that our people were sinful.

I do so in this House as a mark of defiance across from this government, which has threatened the existence of my relatives. I'm wearing this to remind them that as long as my colleagues and I are sitting here, we will always stand up and defend human rights in this province. I am wearing this ribbon skirt to remind this government that we are not going anywhere, that we belong in this province, and that we will not let them take away the human rights of our trans, gender-diverse, and two-spirit family members.

But this is not about me. This is about the trans youth that this government has targeted. Over the last couple of weeks I've heard from countless community members, trans folks, organizations, doctors, parents, athletes, coaches, professors, teachers, and experts in many other fields. They cannot believe their government has chosen to target vulnerable kids while there are so many areas that this government is failing in. Instead, they are seeing their government taking away freedoms of Albertans. The Premier is bullying queer youth for her own personal gain and, in so doing, is emboldening hate between Albertans.

In the United States Nex Benedict was murdered by bullies at their school in a state that had equivalent legislative attacks on the queer community as the Premier is attempting to do in Alberta. A trans person took their own life here because of this inflated political rhetoric in our province, and I worry, just like the parents of trans youth in this province, that we will have more deaths because of this government's harmful rhetoric. I should not have to rise in this House to remind this government that my people deserve to live and deserve human rights. To the trans, gender-diverse, and two-spirit youth: we see you, we love you, you matter; we will keep working to build an Alberta that is safe for you to live in.

The Speaker: I'd like just to remind the member that while I appreciate that this topic is very sensitive and that members' statements have the widest swath possible, making an accusation about another member directly inside the Assembly is never in order, and I am sure you can govern yourself accordingly in the future.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Solar Electricity Installations

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For months now I've been hearing from local farmers and ranchers concerned about the loss of prime agricultural land that's being gobbled up by sprawling solar electricity installations. There's good reason for this concern. Alberta's surface area includes more than 160 million acres of space; however, only 16 per cent is available to grow crops. According to a 2017 government research document Alberta was on pace to lose 347,000 acres of prime agricultural land over the

next 50 years. With rising population growth, I think it's safe to estimate we're losing this land at an even faster rate today.

Now, I understand that there is a tendency among some to dismiss any and all concerns about solar electricity generation on an ideological basis. Some folks contend that solar generation is just another form of agriculture. It's not. I'm here to tell you that these megainstallations are not farms. The agriculture industry, dating back centuries, has always been about producing food to feed the world. These megainstallations, sprawling over entire quarter sections, do not produce food. In fact, as every Albertan who received an electric bill can tell you, they're not even reducing electricity costs. And as the AESO's recent grid alert demonstrated, solar generation continues to be one of the least reliable sources we have. The sun doesn't shine at night.

Mr. Speaker, the province has a land-use framework designed to balance economic and environmental concerns. At the time it was created, there was no solar land rush under way in Alberta. Now there is. At the time it was created, Albertans did not face rampant electricity inflation. Now they do. At the time it was created, electricity service was seen as reliable. Now it isn't. The facts are clear. It's time to adjust course and end the unaffordable, unreliable, and unsustainable solar land rush.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge has a statement to make.

Farmer Protests in India

Member Boparai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A number of my constituents are concerned about the violence facing farmers in India as they attempt to march once again to the capital, Delhi, to have their concerns about the land and food insecurity heard. Protests continue over agriculture laws which could threaten India's vibrant agriculture sector, a sector that employs about 55 per cent of India's population. Indian farmers and their families subsist on an average income that is below the poverty line, yet modern farming practices mean that farmers must take on high levels of debt and burdens of poverty and ever-increasing debt, resulting in suicides and substance abuse. This is an untenable situation, and farmers want change.

Since 2021 farmers have been negotiating for guaranteed crop prices to be extended so that crops can be diversified while mitigating risk on small-scale farmers. Farmers have also asked for a debt waiver, a pension for farmers, protection for Indigenous rights to land and water, as well as improvements in seed quality.

On the morning of February 13, after another round of negotiations failed, a peaceful march set out from Punjab for the capital, Delhi. However, the farmers were met with violence and encumberments that have resulted in injuries and the death of at least one young man, 20-year-old Shubh Karan Singh. At a time of year when Punjabi Canadians plan to travel to Punjab to visit their families in farming villages, many are concerned for their safety.

I hope all members of this Assembly can agree that one of the necessary foundations for democratic countries is the right to protest peacefully, as has been highlighted by Amnesty International, and I, for one, support the farmers' continued right to do so without fear of violence.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition has question 1.

Personal Income Tax Rates

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign this Premier promised all Albertans a tax cut in exchange for voting her beleaguered government back into power. She promised that every family in Alberta would receive over \$1,500 every single year, and she promised that it would all start January 1, 2024. To the Premier: why should Albertans trust her to tell the truth when one of the first things she did was break her word on her single biggest election promise?

1:50

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Leader of the Opposition knows, when you run in a campaign, you develop a mandate to be able to implement policy over the four-year term, and we will be implementing a tax cut that will deliver to families an 8 per cent tax rate on income up to \$60,000, which will deliver \$750 for an individual and \$1,500 for a family. We want to make sure that our first objective and our first promise to Albertans was that we would run a balanced budget, and that's what we're going to do.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, she promised that that tax cut would come into place January 1, 2024. We have the documents. Moreover, the price of oil hasn't changed since she made that promise to Albertans, the interest rate hasn't changed since she made that promise to Albertans, and if she spoke to more people who weren't named David Parker, she would know that life has gotten less affordable since she made that promise. To the Premier: why won't she at least apologize to Albertans for telling them something she knew wasn't true nine months ago?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think Albertans are still waiting for the apology from the Leader of the Opposition for racking up \$80 billion worth of debt, which is now coming due over the next three years; \$26 billion at higher rates because her boss in Ottawa is propping up the Liberal government and leading to the affordability crisis that we have, leading to the inflation crisis that we have, leading to the increase in interest rates that we have. So as we go to refinance their debt, it's actually going to cost Alberta taxpayers more. That's part of the reason we have to be more prudent.

Ms Notley: Well, now this Premier claims she has a plan for the heritage trust fund that comes into effect in 2050, but how does she expect us to trust her on a plan that is 26 years away when she can't keep a promise that is nine months old? Just how naive does she think Albertans are? They're not buying it. They see a broken promise, a bait and switch, a Premier they cannot trust, that is bad for our province. To the Premier: why does she think it is okay to repeatedly break her promise to Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have in front of me the Todd Hirsch plan, which was campaigned on by the members opposite, and look what it says. "Government should assign a fixed amount of non-renewable resource revenues . . . that will be apportioned [to] base budgeting." Look what else it says. "A portion of the surplus should go into fixed endowments, to benefit Albertans in perpetuity." I think Albertans are pleased to know that they campaigned on a policy they had no intention of implementing. They were just doing that to get elected.

I've been talking about shoring up the heritage savings trust fund since 2001. I'm very pleased the Finance minister is working with me on that, and I can't wait to share the details with Albertans.

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

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, it was her promise, and she broke it.

Transgender Youth Policy

Ms Notley: Now, this Premier then had the gall recently to stand before Albertans and claim through crocodile tears to be concerned about the safety of children. She proceeded to announce a policy that has already started to marginalize, bully, and discriminate against transgendered Albertans under the age of 18, and all of that before it's even law. To the Premier: why does she think protecting her career from the likes of David Parker is more important than the well-being, human rights, and lives of thousands of Alberta's young people?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I and Alberta's government believe that Alberta's transgender children deserve our unconditional love and support. We see you, we love you, and you matter, but your future choices as an adult also matter, and making sure that children have the right as adults to make a decision to have children is very important to us. [interjections]

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Taking away the right of a child to be able to make an adult decision to have children of their own is not something that we're prepared to do, and this is the reason why the therapies will begin to start at age 16.

Ms Notley: Alberta parents care very much for the safety of their children. I'm a mom, and we all know that keeping our kids safe is job one. I also know that to do that, we need facts. It is dangerous living in a province where the government pushes everything but the facts. To the Premier. It is her misinformation, her extremist views that are causing parents to worry. Why won't she and her allies just stop spreading it? It is hurting kids. It is hurting families.

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 1:55.
The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we need to cool the temperature down and talk about what this policy actually says. What it says is that children aged 15 and under will not be starting puberty blockers and hormone therapies. It says that minors aged 16 and 17 will commence hormone therapies with the support of a physician, a psychologist, and their parents. As part of the work, as well, we are going to be working with the medical community to implement these changes. We also know that the most important thing, as the member opposite said, is having parental support. We're going to ensure parents are there.

Ms Notley: Here are the facts. Children do not receive gender-affirming health care in our schools. They do not receive bottom surgery before they're 18. They do not receive gender-affirming care without the consent of their parent, guardian, or health care provider. What is true is that 20 to 40 per cent of the homeless population are kids dealing with gender and sexual diversity issues.

What is true is that it is her policy that is dangerous, not their health care. To the Premier: why won't she stop this exercise in state-sanctioned bullying?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've spoken with many transgender individuals over the years . . .

Member Irwin: Name them.

Ms Smith: . . . and one of the things that has struck me is that in our province we don't do transgender surgery here.

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

Ms Smith: We send patients to Montreal. Many times those surgeries have complications, and we don't provide appropriate aftercare here. We need to make sure that we've got better surgical aftercare, better long-term health care, better long-term mental health support, as well as mental health support and counselling for children and families, and that's what we're going to be doing. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

A point of order is noted at 1:57.

The Leader of the Opposition for her third set of questions.

Provincial Response to Federal Pharmacare Plan

Ms Notley: Earlier this week Albertans were shocked when this government announced they would block them from receiving federally funded diabetes medication and contraceptives for free. Rejecting life-changing programs for Albertans just because you'd rather pick a political fight is beyond the pale. The Edmonton Zone Medical Staff Association said it best. "It is absurd to play politics with the health of our patients and deny Albertans this groundbreaking program." To the Premier: why is she gatekeeping this big step forward for Albertans' health care before she's even seen the details?

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's be clear about who's playing politics here. This is not a universal drug plan. It is a plan that, by her boss' own admission, only covers two areas of drugs, birth control and diabetes. Now, I can tell . . . [interjections]

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

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If we want universal coverage, the members opposite would work with us to enhance our existing program, because our pharmacare plan in Alberta, that covers seniors, the disabled, those on AISH, and others through our nongroup plan, covers over 5,000 different Health Canada drugs. That's the one we should be working on. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Ms Notley: Again, the fact: Alberta has some of the lowest rates of drug coverage in the country. We know hundreds of thousands of people would benefit from free contraceptives alone, and 10 to 15 per cent of diabetics don't take their medication because they can't afford it. The Premier should not be so smug about turning her back on these folks. To the Premier: how does it possibly make sense to leave Albertans and our health care system out of this program that all other Canadians get to benefit from?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, our Alberta pharmacare plan covers 50 oral contraceptives, intrauterine devices, emergency contraceptives. It also covers 16 different diabetic drugs and nine different insulin products. The solution here is for the federal government to work with us to expand access to the existing program, that covers 5,000 drugs, so that we can cover a more comprehensive range of services. I'm pleased to tell the members opposite that the Health minister federally called our Health minister and would like to work with us on opting out and giving us the support so that we can do that.

2:00

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to health care, that government isn't just ignoring us, ignoring doctors, ignoring nurses, ignoring Albertans; they're even ignoring the chambers of commerce. President and CEO of the Calgary Chamber of commerce said, "Given the persistent labour shortage in Alberta, we need every advantage to remain a magnet for talent." Edmonton's chamber president said, "Alberta's economic success hinges on the well-being of our workforce." Yet these folks don't care. To the Premier. In short, this is a bad economic decision, too. Why won't you just reverse this ridiculous position?

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, I never expected the member opposite to become a shill for big business. Of course, big business wants government to take on a cost that they're currently providing for their workers. Why would we be at all surprised that that would be the position they would take? This is the point. We have a public-private partnership on pharmaceuticals. We have private-sector companies that cover the drug plans for most of their employees, and then we step in and we cover the drugs for those who don't have access to it. We have a nongroup plan, and we're also covering those who are at the lowest end of the income scale. That's where we need to focus.

Wildfire Season Preparation

Ms Sweet: In May of 2023 the Alberta Fire Chiefs passed a resolution at their annual meeting requesting the province establish an advisory task force on wildfires. The province failed to respond. In November the RMA passed a similar motion proposed by Parkland county. Again, the government failed to respond. In January the Alberta Fire Chiefs sent a letter to the minister requesting this very task force be formed. Why haven't either the ministers of Municipal Affairs or forestry responded to these urgent calls from the experts and establish this task force?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to let the House and the hon. member know that we're in regular conversation with the firefighters, both my ministry and wildfires and emergency services, and I think the minister of forestry has announced that we'll be prepared for wildfires a month and a half earlier than usual this year. We're very much in conversation with the firefighters, and we will continue to be their important partners. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Ms Sweet: Well, given that the government called wildfire season 10 days ago and we don't have boots on the ground, we have a fundamental problem in this province. Alberta firefighters did phenomenal work last year protecting lives and communities during a very difficult wildfire season. They went above and beyond. But I've heard from many of them that they need more support, more training, and more resources to protect Albertans from our upcoming season. Can the minister tell this House today how many

wildland firefighters have actively signed their contracts with the province and how many crews are actually boots on the ground?

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

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question. I guess I'll first correct the information that the hon. member provided as far as not having boots on the ground. Currently we have over 200 people with boots on the ground fighting wildfire in Alberta, and that's along with our contract people but also with our permanent staff. We have about 429 permanent staff working in wildfire right now, too. So I think it's very disrespectful for the member to be putting down our firefighters that are on the ground right now fighting wildfires, protecting Alberta communities, and defending what we need and we value.

Ms Sweet: Mr. Speaker, since May of last year we've heard calls from municipalities, the Alberta Fire Chiefs, and from Albertans, many who hoped this government would have learned and implemented protective measures. Thirty-eight thousand Albertans were evacuated last year, and we still have not heard of a plan on how the UCP are going to protect these communities. The minister promised funding for fireguards around communities in December. Currently, though, there's not a single community that can apply for that funding. Why has the minister broken the promise? Where is the funding, and why can't you apply for it on the FRIAA website?

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

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thanks again for the question. First of all, I want to say that our hearts go out to the people that were evacuated in last year's fire season. That's horrible. We know how disruptive it is to people's lives.

When it comes to the fireguard program, currently there are a dozen communities right now working with our new fireguard program, that we announced last fall. We put \$5 million more into that program already. We're looking for more money in the upcoming budget for that program, and we're working with those communities right now to make sure that they have all the opportunities they can to help protect their communities going into this next fire season.

Renewable Energy Project Approvals

Ms Al-Guneid: Mr. Speaker, there was a time when Conservatives believed in low-cost energy, landowner rights, and less red tape. We're now seeing this government trample all over when it comes to renewables. Banning renewables and meddling in Alberta's market has consequences. Do not expect investments to flood back to our province and diversify rural economies after this moratorium. Is the Premier now telling farmers what they can and cannot do with their land? How do you even define "pristine viewscapes"?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is a great day. We announced that we not only are lifting the ban on renewables; we are moving ahead with clear guidelines for investment, with more projects in the queue than when we started. There's a lot of investor interest. We still have the most welcoming province in Canada. We are going to see continued growth that is going to provide reliability and coexistence of natural resource generation for electricity and agriculture, protecting food sources for people

around the globe. As the member opposite knows – her colleague spoke about that – farmers in India are facing this challenge. We're doing the work right here at home.

Ms Al-Guneid: Given that this government imposed the moratorium with zero consultation with renewable energy companies and power generators and given that the government has risked \$33 billion of investments and 24,000 jobs by banning renewables and given that the government refuses to be transparent and continues to hide reports done by the Alberta Utilities Commission, will the government start rebuilding trust with the renewable energy companies and the public? They can start by releasing all the reports from the AUC public inquiry.

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will be releasing all the reports when they're all done and handed in. We will summarize them and put them all out for everybody to see because they've done great work. What we've moved forward on is based on the findings that they found: an increase in interest in investing in Alberta, an increase in projects in the queue, doubling the number that are before the AUC right now. We are creating certainty. We are working with agriculture, municipalities, the tourism industry. Everybody provided their feedback. We listened to it. We found a very responsible and balanced path forward. We're getting great responses all through the industry right now.

Ms Al-Guneid: Given that this Premier delivered the highest prices ever in Alberta's history and given that Albertans deserve affordable electricity and transparency about their grid and a government that will work to secure investments and create jobs and given that instead the UCP has chosen to attack low-cost energy, chase away investment, and put jobs at risk, what message does the minister have for Albertans who have seen their bills skyrocket while this government plays politics?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's ironic that the NDP are bringing that forward when they cost Albertans more money than any other government in the history of this province. Not only that; they got off coal before we were ready, and they doubled the price of electricity, then threw the doors open to renewables with ... [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. the minister.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP's core planning still costs Albertans \$93 million a year for another five years because of their lack of planning. And already the renewable transition – because they had no plan, we went from 15 sites to hundreds, causing our transmission costs to go up over 500 per cent. That's the ... [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Premier's Meeting with Treaty 6 First Nations

Mr. Sinclair: Mr. Speaker, just yesterday our amazing Premier, Danielle Smith, along with the vast majority of our cabinet, attended a historic meeting with the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations leadership. They discussed some common interests and goals for our First Nations people of Alberta. This meeting marked the first time nearly our entire cabinet has met with such a large

representation of leadership from the Confederacy of Treaty Six. Could the Premier please inform this House how that meeting went and what we can hope to see as a result of it?

2:10

The Speaker: Despite his love for the leader of the government, using her name inside the Assembly, of course, would be wildly inappropriate, and I'm sure the member will govern himself accordingly in the future.

The Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I can tell you that it went a whole lot better than last year. It was a true honour for myself and my cabinet colleagues to join Grand Chief Cody Thomas, leaders of nearly all 16 nations in the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations for really what was a pivotal meeting. We have a shared frustration with the federal government not living up to its treaty commitments, and I made a commitment that we would work on their behalf to make sure that their issues get elevated with our federal counterparts. The meeting was a true success on all fronts. We talked about shared priorities like health care, procurement, economic advancement, and utility corridors.

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

Mr. Sinclair: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Premier for that response. Given that First Nations leaders in Treaty 6 territory have expressed that they are eager to collaborate with the province on initiatives and efforts to create a more prosperous province for everyone and given that working with First Nations' leadership has continued to be a top priority for this government and further given that I'm the only Indigenous member of government caucus – I cannot express how grateful and proud I am to be a part of this government – can the Premier please explain this work that's being done to advance these efforts outlined in yesterday's meeting?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our relationship with First Nations and Métis communities across the province has been of vital importance to myself and my cabinet colleagues. It's going to continue to be as we move forward. In fact, I was pleased to see Chief Tony Alexis mention just this morning that our meeting yesterday was the first time where he felt the doors have been truly open for partnerships. I'm excited to continue strengthening our partnerships across the province and create a more prosperous and equitable future for Indigenous peoples as a true partner.

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

Mr. Sinclair: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Premier for that answer. Given that reconciliation with Indigenous leaders and community is so vitally important to creating a brighter future for all Albertans and given that Chief Tony Alexis of the Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation said that yesterday's meeting was an exciting opportunity to work together and serve our constituents collaboratively, can the Premier please explain what else this government is doing to advance reconciliation with Indigenous peoples?

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

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question from the member. This government is paving the way for reconciliation

on all fronts. In fact, our Minister of Indigenous Relations likes to call it reconcili-action, and there is a ton of action. That's what we realized when we were talking around the table with all of our cabinet ministers. How many partnerships have already been created? We've got many initiatives in place to advance cultural reconciliation. Our commitment towards economic reconciliation with Indigenous peoples is unmatched across the country with truly successful programs like the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation and the Aboriginal business investment fund. The AIOC is going to deliver \$1.3 billion over a lifetime to communities. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Provincial Pension Plan Proposal

Ms Phillips: Albertans don't want the UCP to meddle with their pensions. They were clear before the election, they were clear during the UCP's sham consultation, and they were clear when over 30,000 people filled out our survey and told us to protect their CPP from the UCP gamble. The UCP also did a survey to hear what Albertans think, but rather than be up front with the results, they've chosen to hide them. Albertans can't even get access under freedom of information. My question to the Minister of Finance is simple: what is he hiding? Why won't he just release the results?

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question. We're not hiding anything from Albertans. We never have, and we never will. The department denied the FOIP request the member opposite asked about because it was my understanding that the information gathered in the survey will be used to inform the APP engagement panels, the what-they've-heard report, and give direction to Executive Council.

Back to the APP, in general, though, Mr. Speaker, we've paused the engagement sessions. The Chief Actuary is working on the legislation, and we're expecting a number by the fall.

Ms Phillips: Now, given that the Premier and minister promised to be up front with Albertans when it comes to their CPP and given that the only reason the UCP would refuse to disclose this information about the survey is that it shows what we all know, that Albertans are overwhelmingly opposed to the UCP pension gamble, will the minister commit to upholding his promised transparency and table the results of his hidden pension survey today?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite thinks that this has concluded, and it honestly hasn't. We've involved the Chief Actuary, the federal government. We've paused the engagement because we've heard from Albertans that they would like more clarity on the information. We're waiting for that legislative interpretation through the three actuarial firms. The Chief Actuary is engaged in this process, and we expect a number back in the fall. Then we can continue the conversation with all Albertans.

Ms Phillips: Given that while the UCP hid their CPP survey, just like they hid from in-person town halls, this side of the House did 16 in-person town halls, where we heard from thousands of Albertans overwhelmingly opposed to the UCP pension gamble, and given that if the UCP can't be trusted to be up front with the results of a simple survey, they definitely can't be trusted to handle Albertans' retirement security, so why won't the minister just listen

to what Albertans are telling him and finally end this senseless pension gamble?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, we asked the question. We released the LifeWorks report last September. We began this conversation with Albertans. The federal government has engaged with us. They've involved the Chief Actuary. We're getting to the bottom of their interpretation of the legislation. We look forward to their opinion, and then we can continue the conversation with Albertans. I would just remind everyone that we're talking about \$5 billion, potentially, that could stay in Alberta, every Alberta family, every Alberta business. When they talk about affordability, this is real numbers, a real possibility. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

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

South Edmonton Hospital Construction Project

Member Hoyle: It's now 2024. The south Edmonton hospital's construction should be well under way to achieve its original completion date in 2026. No construction has started, no updates have been shared, and my constituents are left in the dark. Yesterday the minister let the cat out of the bag and forced a pause on this critically needed hospital. My constituents are facing long wait times to access health care, especially because there are so few family doctors. Why is the minister's solution to this health care crisis to cancel the south Edmonton hospital?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government remains focused on expanding and modernizing hospitals and facilities to provide quality care, grow system capacity, and support front-line workers. Yesterday I was really pleased to be able to announce that we are going to go forward with the stand-alone Stollery hospital; 300,000 children go through those doors every year. They're spread over four different sites – four different sites – 11 different areas. We are committed to this, and I look forward to seeing it to completion.

Member Hoyle: Given that under the NDP the south Edmonton hospital would have started seeing patients in two years, given that AHS says that by 2025 the Edmonton area will be short 1,500 hospital beds and given that Edmonton's population has grown by 66 per cent since the last hospital was opened in 1988 and given that all the UCP has provided is an empty field, no new hospital, can the minister tell Edmontonians what their options are since she broke the promise of the south Edmonton hospital?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, the NDP couldn't build a lemonade stand in two years. When we look back at the fact that they had two years, if they say that from 2017 they could have built it by 2019, that is impossible. We have plans under way for the stand-alone Stollery children's hospital. We have the redevelopment of the Royal Alexandra hospital. We have the WestView health centre. We have the Strathcona community hospital. We're committed to making sure we have proper spaces in the capital region that make sense.

Member Hoyle: Mr. Speaker, we're not talking lemonade stands; we're talking about the south Edmonton hospital.

Given that last July the UCP promised that they were, quote, committed to, end quote, the south Edmonton hospital but given that the minister only yesterday admitted that the project is not

moving forward and given that Albertans are, sadly, getting used to this UCP government that makes promises during campaigns and then breaks them afterwards, can the minister tell this House when she decided to break her government's promise to build the south Edmonton hospital?

2:20

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, within the Edmonton zone there are 14 hospitals: five urban, seven community, two stand-alone emergency departments. These facilities provide health care services 24/7. The Stollery children's hospital is the centrepiece to our strategy for Edmonton. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Member LaGrange: Currently, Mr. Speaker, there are 236 beds in the Stollery spread across numerous facilities, as I've already said. By building a stand-alone Stollery hospital, we are also ensuring space is made available for adult patient beds. The proposed south Edmonton hospital is 400 beds. This will allow an additional 200 beds. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

The hon. the Member for Camrose.

Women's Empowerment

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. March is International Women's month, and I'm so proud to see that Alberta's women and girls are thriving. Alberta has so many women to be proud of, from Violet King, the first Black Canadian to obtain a law degree in Alberta and to be admitted to the Alberta bar, to Rosella Bjornson, the first female jet pilot in Canada, who broke down barriers in Canadian aviation history. These trail-blazing women truly embody what it means to be Albertan, yet there's still work to be done to ensure Alberta women can fully participate in our economies and communities. Can the Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women please share with the House what this government is doing to ensure Alberta women can fully participate in our province's economy?

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is correct: Alberta has so many women to be proud of. Each and every day the women of this province help grow our economy and build our communities, and Alberta's government is proud to support women in March and every month of the year. That's why we're meeting with community leaders and women to continue to find new ways to ensure we get women into the jobs they want, and our efforts are working. The last job report from January showed that women's unemployment rate dropped below 5 per cent in Alberta. We will strive to ensure all women in Alberta have access to meaningful employment.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose.

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that response. Given that Alberta's government is laser focused on ensuring that women and girls of this province have the tools to succeed not only in our communities but in our economy as well and given that we need women in Alberta in every sector of our province's economy and further given that we need to work towards a future where women and girls have every opportunity to engage in meaningful employment, can the same minister please share with

the House and Albertans what this government is doing to help women and girls break into fields that they have traditionally been underrepresented in?

Ms Fir: Mr. Speaker, we've done so much to help women enter fields that they are underrepresented in. We provided \$13 million to Women Building Futures to help women enter the transportation and trade sector. Recently the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors and I had a very exciting announcement with Women Building Futures. We've continued with the Women in STEM and Persons Case scholarships. We're supporting Indigenous women entrepreneurs. We're supporting the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association. We're supporting Elevate Aviation with \$5 million to help women enter the aviation sector. We launched the Project HOPE to help skill up women who face barriers to employment. We've always supported women, and we'll continue . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose.

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government has provided numerous examples of how they are helping women in the workforce and given that women and girls of Alberta still face some of the highest sexual assault and domestic violence cases in the country and given that Alberta's government has engaged in creating a 10-year made-in-Alberta action plan to end gender-based violence and given that the minister has already been working diligently to secure a better and brighter future for women and girls of Alberta, can the same minister please inform the House and Albertans how the creation of that action plan is going?

Ms Fir: Mr. Speaker, I've begun consultations with community leaders, survivors, and Indigenous communities to ensure we create a survivor-centric action plan. Alberta's government has given out first-year funding so far to Advanced Education to help stop campus sexual violence, public safety to help stop human trafficking, Indigenous Relations to support the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls working group recommendations, Justice for Provincial Court sexual assault awareness training, and Seniors, Community and Social Services to help stop elder abuse. Alberta's women and girls deserve to live their lives free from fear and violence, and we will not rest until that is achieved.

Grassy Mountain Coal Project

Dr. Elmeligi: Last week the AER announced they will send the Grassy Mountain coal mining application to a public hearing based on direction they received from the Minister of Energy and Minerals. Experts, citizens, and stakeholders will now spend days of their time assessing and providing input into a conversation they've already had. The application has already been through a public hearing process and was denied outright because it wasn't in the best interest of Albertans. Sounds like another broken UCP promise. Can the minister please explain to Albertans when no actually means no?

Mr. Jean: Well, when it comes to the NDP on coal, there's no credibility on it, Mr. Speaker, and that's because they right now – the NDP in Alberta has in the past been in government for four short years, but during that period of time they invited all of these billionaires from around the world to come on in, and they just gave them one message: dig, baby, dig. Well, this Conservative government is not going to allow that to happen. We are going to take a very reasonable and practical approach to provide Albertans with the protections they want and the economy they need.

Dr. Elmeligi: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a relief to hear that the government's not going to allow "dig, baby, dig" anymore, especially since given that the UCP-appointed coal consultation committee found that Albertans were deeply concerned or opposed to mining along the southern eastern slopes and given that Albertans are showing broad concern about the government's plans again, as evidenced by my inbox and I'm sure all of yours and media, and given that even a much-loved musician and cattle rancher seems to know more about this mine than the minister himself, will the minister commit to actually understanding the real concerns that Albertans have about this project before he keeps making decisions on it?

Mr. Jean: Well, that's the difference, Mr. Speaker. You see, the NDP made a political decision when they told everybody to come on in and take coal at any means. This is not a decision by my ministry. This is a decision by the impartial Alberta Energy Regulator, an organization that is at arm's length from this government, that makes good decisions for the people of Alberta, considering all of the issues at hand. This company was one of four proponents that this government said was in transition in the application process, and due process, the rule of law, has to apply here, and they have to have their day.

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

Dr. Elmeligi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that no, I guess, doesn't actually mean no in this particular case and given that we're in a multiyear drought which is hitting southern Alberta particularly hard and we're currently focusing on drought preparedness and response and given that the Crowsnest River dried up last week and the MD of Pincher Creek is now digging for water to support residents and given that the main reason this mine was originally denied was the risk to water quality and quantity, can the minister please explain how the water that isn't even flowing out of people's taps will be used for a coal mine that they don't want?

Mr. Jean: Well, Mr. Speaker, we would never let water from a coal lake be part of people's drinking water, and that's the case here. No stream, no lake, no river other than the old coal lake on the lease itself is going to be used for this. Very little water, protecting the waterways: that's what we're doing. But this is an application; this is not an approval.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Federal-Provincial Relations

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are tired of Justin Trudeau's Liberal government's infringing on areas of provincial jurisdiction such as the natural resource industry. One such intrusion was Bill C-69, also known as the no-more-pipelines bill. Thankfully, the Supreme Court of Canada agreed with Albertans last year when they ruled that this destructive legislation was unconstitutional. Can the Minister of Justice please explain to the Chamber how critical it is that Alberta continues to fight the federal government's intrusions into our province's constitutional jurisdictions?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This was, in fact, one of the biggest decisions in recent history. The Supreme Court has clearly stated that the federal government was acting

unconstitutionally. Now, this was an opportunity for the federal government to stop the bleeding and rebuild their relationships with the provinces, but the federal government unsurprisingly refused to listen to the court or to Canadians, and it said instead that this decision doesn't really matter. Albertans have suffered tens of billions of dollars in losses in investment and jobs. We won't let the federal government play fast and loose with the Constitution.

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

2:30

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and, through you, to the minister for the answer. Given that Bill C-69 caused a loss of tens of billions in investment and thousands of jobs for Albertans and given that the Trudeau-NDP alliance continues to infringe on Alberta's provincial jurisdiction with punishing policies like the proposed net-zero 2035 regulations, to the same minister: what is Alberta's government doing to ensure that our sovereign rights are protected from federal overreach?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. Now, while the opposition sits and criticizes, Alberta Justice lawyers are litigating every day in matters of significant constitutional importance. Radical antipipeline legislation? We blocked it. Absurd rules regarding plastics bans? We blocked it. Criminally convicted activists? Beat it, and keep on to B.C. We will not back down from this fight, and we will not accept any violation of Alberta's constitutional rights. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. member.

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and, through you, to the minister for his answer. Given that Alberta is proudly home to the strongest environmental and social regulation in the world and further given that the federal government nonetheless continues to attack Alberta's energy sector and the hard-working Albertans it employs, can the same minister please outline some of the tools our government is prepared to use, including how the sovereignty act might be used to stop these attacks?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for your insightful questions. Canadian law is clear. Any statute that is inconsistent with the Constitution is of no force and effect. We will use all of the tools available in this fight. The Alberta Sovereignty within a United Canada Act gives us the legal framework to push back on federal laws or policies that are unconstitutional. This is what Albertans expect, this is what Albertans elected us to do, and we will deliver.

Thank you.

Homeless Supports and Affordable Housing

Member Irwin: A hundred and fifty-five: that's the number of community members from Boyle Street and Bissell Centre who we've lost over the last three months. They're more than numbers. They're people who loved and were loved. They matter, and they deserved so much better. The major factor in their deaths? Homelessness. One of the family members in attendance at the memorial yesterday urged people in power to do something about it.

It doesn't have to be this way. We know the solutions: health care, housing, harm reduction. Will the minister do something about it?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Any death on the streets is unfortunate. Our hearts go out to the individuals involved and their families and, of course, to the individuals who are also working with the individuals on the streets.

We are doing something about it. It's why we made our navigation centre, to be able to work very closely with people on the streets, to bring wraparound services to those individuals and get them help. Unfortunately, that member spent her time away from this place protesting to keep people in encampments, where they are freezing to death, where they are being burned to death, where they are having overdoses. Not us. This government is focused on helping people, and we will continue to no matter what that member says. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Member Irwin: Given that I was at those encampment sweeps because those people are my constituents and they deserve to know that they have someone who cares about them – I wasn't there because I want them to be living in tents; I was there because they deserve to be supported – and with hundreds of thousands of Albertans at risk of houselessness and with people in Edmonton and Calgary facing higher rent increases than anywhere in Canada and more and more people in jeopardy of losing their housing, let's keep people housed by capping the astronomical rent increases that they're experiencing. Will the minister support my Bill 205? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we will not support Bill 205 because it will bring in rent control, which will make more people homeless, which seems to be what the goal is of the NDP. Again, that member and her party have spent the last several months protesting and trying to keep homeless people in dangerous encampments, continuing to see them be abused by gangs and drug dealers. Not us. We're going forward with our navigation centre... [interjections]

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

Mr. Nixon: ... bringing forward serious services to be able to help individuals. I'm proud to say that over 400 homeless people have been through our navigation centre in a month and a half, and they've all gotten help.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:34.

Member Irwin: Given that we've heard from countless Albertans who are experiencing skyrocketing rents – and I know the members over there have as well – rent caps would help keep struggling Albertans in their homes today. We need more housing – we absolutely do; no one disputes that – but this minister is not building enough housing to keep pace with population growth, so the problem will only worsen. I urge the minister to stop ignoring the real issues our constituents are facing. If he's so opposed to taking action on skyrocketing rents and he won't support my bill, then what will he do? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, this government is busy working to get more houses built. That's exactly what we're going to do. We've seen our affordable housing stock increase under this government by 40 per cent. Under the NDP it went down by something like 50 per cent. We continue to invest significantly, billions and billions of dollars, to make sure that we have enough affordable housing. But, further to that, we continue to focus on removing red tape, working with municipalities on getting houses built, and I'm happy to report we still have record numbers, including in January, where we saw the most houses built in the history of Calgary. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. The only one with the call is the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped

Ms Renaud: Merci, M. le Président. Getting on AISH is not a life goal of disabled Albertans. People don't want a life of poverty. Nobody wants to be labelled permanently severely handicapped. Applying for AISH is long, complex, expensive, sometimes dehumanizing, very often frustrating. Albertans who have exhausted all other financial sources and cannot financially support themselves because of a disability need AISH. AISH is legislated. If you meet criteria, you are eligible. To the minister: will this UCP government alter AISH eligibility in any way?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, our government is very committed to making sure that we fund our programs for the severely handicapped in our province. We are definitely going to continue to do that in future years. We're going to make sure that we have programming around individuals that are involved in AISH that is able to support them, make sure they have a quality of life, which is why we indexed it, for example. That government never did that. We will continue to make sure that we have the best program anywhere in the country. We're proud of that, and that's what Alberta is going to continue to do.

Ms Renaud: Given that that word salad tells me that, yes, eligibility will be looked at, given that it can take up to a year for an AISH application to be processed and a benefit commencement date set and given that profoundly disabled Albertans like people with traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury, stroke, stage 4 cancer, autism make up some of the 1,200 Albertans who apply for AISH monthly, what steps has the minister taken to ensure disabled Albertans who apply for AISH are processed as quickly and efficiently as possible so that they get the supports they need?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this government has invested in making sure that we have enough staff to be able to process AISH applications. Unfortunately, when the NDP and that member were in government, they reduced staff and did not provide enough for those services, which was very disappointing. This government wanted to be able to make sure that we put in enough resources to be able to do that. But, further to that, the biggest thing that we're doing is making sure that we have the highest AISH payments anywhere in the country. That's underneath this Conservative government. We're going to continue to do that, make sure that we have fully funded programs, and what I really want to encourage Albertans to do is not listen to that fearmongering.

Ms Renaud: Given that I know Albertans listen to fact – and what I have is fact – given that the AISH intake process is very long and difficult and can be expensive for people living in poverty and given that profoundly disabled Albertans who are not yet approved for

AISH have no other choice but to apply for income support, which is about half of what AISH is – clearly, living on \$900 a month, what income support is, isn't feasible for someone with a severe handicap – what is the minister doing to support AISH applicants caught in the webs of red tape and disastrous policy changes?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this government won't be lectured by a member or a party who did nothing for individuals on AISH, who saw wait-lists go up while they were in power. It did not actually care for the individuals underneath the supports and programs. Again, we've invested. It's staffed to be able to make sure that we can continue to do the important work that AISH does, and we continue to have the highest benefit in the country, something that we should be proud of, and we will continue to do that. But what is shocking is to continue to see the NDP fearmonger with the people that are on AISH. It's absolutely ridiculous to continue to see them do that for political purposes. To the people on AISH, rest assured that their program will remain in place.

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

2:40

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of the following government motions. Government Motion 26, sponsored by myself, reads:

Be it resolved that the membership of the Assembly's committees be replaced as follows:

- (a) on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, that Member Irwin replace Ms Pancholi as chair, and Ms Renaud replace Hon. Ms Ganley;
- (b) on the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, that Hon. Mr. Eggen replace Member Calahoo Stonehouse;
- (c) on the Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee, that Hon. Mr. Sabir replace Hon. Ms Ganley.

Also, Government Motion 27, sponsored by the President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, reads:

Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the government.

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

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice that at the appropriate time I will move a motion pursuant to Standing Order 42. Would you like me to read it into the record now? The Member for Edmonton-Manning to propose the following motion:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly

- (1) recognize that due to climate change and water and land conditions an unprecedented number of 58 wildfires are currently burning in Alberta, being 10 times more than the regular number of active wildfires for this time of year and indicating the possibility of an unprecedented fire season, creating significant health and safety risks to Albertans; and
- (2) urge the government to
 - (a) support a holistic and co-ordinated approach to wildfire management and emergency services in Alberta through establishment of a multiministry provincial fire service advisory committee, as requested by the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association;
 - (b) ensure that the membership of this advisory committee includes representatives from the Rural Municipalities of Alberta, the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association, Alberta Municipalities, the Confederacy of Treaty Six

First Nations, Stoney Nakota and Tsuut'ina Nation, Blackfoot Confederacy, Métis Nation of Alberta, private industry contractors, and subject-matter experts; and

- (c) establish, maintain, and publish a public awareness and evacuation safety campaign to protect Albertans during this time of emergency.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that brings us to points of order, and at 1:55 the Government House Leader rose on a point of order.

Point of Order

Allegations against a Member

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order through 23(h), (i), and (j), particularly (j). When the Leader of the Opposition was asking her question at the time noted, she said, to the best of my knowledge: "It is dangerous living in a province where the government pushes everything but the facts . . . It is her misinformation, her extremist views that are causing parents to worry." I believe that suggesting that the Premier is an extremist or has extremist views would be, certainly, language that would rise to the threshold of a point of order given that it would cause disorder within this Chamber. I do believe that this, in my opinion, would be a point of order and ask that the Leader of the Opposition apologize and withdraw and do better.

The Speaker: The Official Opposition House Leader or someone on her behalf.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At the time of 1:55 we were talking about a very serious issue, and the point of order was called. The language "her misinformation," attributing, suggesting any member is lying, would be a point of order, and on that I on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition would apologize and withdraw.

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

At 1:57 the Government House Leader rose on a point of order.

Point of Order

Parliamentary Language

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the time noted, the hon. Premier – without the benefit of the Blues I won't be able to quote directly – said something to the effect of: I have spoken to many trans individuals over the years. At that time the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood said, "Name them." To suggest that the Premier would be naming individuals in this Chamber that she's spoken to in confidence or not in confidence, especially on a matter such sensitive as this, I think would be wildly inappropriate.

That member has spoken on a number of occasions about the importance of respecting individuals and understanding the circumstances that these individuals are going through. I think it's highly disrespectful to ask the Premier to name individuals on something so sensitive. I would ask that that member apologize and do better.

The Speaker: The Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is not a point of order. Especially on the policy that this government has brought forward that is specifically impacting trans and vulnerable communities, ensuring there is adequate consultation is the responsibility of government and one that, according to everyone we have spoken with, this government has failed to do. Demanding

more information on their consultations, I think, is legitimate, and this was a heckle that I do not believe rises to a point of order.

The Speaker: Are there others with new or prudent information?

Seeing none, I am prepared to rule. I do have the benefit of the Blues, and the circumstances as the Government House Leader has reported them certainly do seem to have transpired, with an interjection from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood utilizing those words. However, I'm not sure how that would rise to a point of order. Of course, the Premier can make decisions about the best course of action for the Premier. This is not a point of order. I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

At 2:34 the hon. the Government House Leader rose on a point of order.

Point of Order

Insulting Language

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order of 23(j) in particular. At this time noted, when the hon. minister of community and social services was speaking in response to a question from the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, specifically on the issue of homelessness, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood said: that is bull. Fill in the blank. That language is certainly unparliamentary. I would encourage that member to not use that kind of language in the Chamber, the people's Chamber. I think that member should apologize.

The Speaker: The Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You will have the benefit of the Blues, but based on what I have heard in the Chamber and knowing the integrity of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, she did not use that unparliamentary language. It would be wildly inappropriate. I don't believe that this is a point of order because it did not happen. I think the Government House Leader misheard.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others wishing to provide submissions or prudent information?

Seeing none, I am prepared to rule. As all hon. members will know, without an accurate transcription of what may or may not have been said – and with the benefit of the Blues such language is not recorded in those. However, I would say to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood that if she did say it, it would be a point of order and I'd invite her to apologize and withdraw if she did. We will have to accept her account of what transpired as there is no transcript that would imply that that happened.

I consider this matter dealt with and concluded. It is not a point of order.

Hon. members, on the last day of the legislative session a point of privilege was raised by the Official Opposition House Leader, at which point the Government House Leader requested time to prepare arguments for such a point of privilege. This being the first opportunity for that, I now call on the Government House Leader to rise and provide arguments to the reported point of privilege.

Privilege

Threatening a Member

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do rise in response to the point of privilege raised by the Opposition House Leader at the conclusion of the fall sitting of the 31st Legislature. These matters are serious in nature, and points of privilege should not be levied

against another member frivolously. I have a full level of confidence I did not use the language I have been accused of saying. Full stop. I believe that you have access to audio and video records of the proceedings at the time in question. In those records I am confident that upon review you will find that there is no record of those comments because they were not said.

2:50

However, I do acknowledge that my conduct, though interpreted incorrectly, contributed to a decrease in decorum. For that, I sincerely apologize to you and commit to you, Mr. Speaker, and to all members through you in this Chamber to do better. I encourage all members to do the same as we remember that the people we serve do not benefit from petty squabbling.

With that, I'll leave the rest in your capable hands, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, as a point of privilege is a serious matter, the Speaker would typically take time to consider arguments, but as is precedent in this Assembly, when receiving an apology for the reported point of privilege, we accept that apology on its merit.

I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.

Motions under Standing Order 42

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning will rise to move a Standing Order 42.

Wildfire Season Preparation

Ms Sweet:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly

- (1) recognize that due to climate change and water and land conditions an unprecedented number of 58 wildfires are currently burning in Alberta, being 10 times more than the regular number of active wildfires for this time of year and indicating the possibility of an unprecedented fire season, creating significant health and safety risks to Albertans; and
- (2) urge the government to
 - (a) support a holistic and co-ordinated approach to wildfire management and emergency services in Alberta through establishment of a multiministry provincial fire service advisory committee, as requested by the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association;
 - (b) ensure that the membership of this advisory committee includes representatives from the Rural Municipalities of Alberta, Alberta Fire Chiefs Association, Alberta Municipalities, Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations, Stoney Nakoda and Tsuut'ina Nation, Blackfoot Confederacy, Métis Nation of Alberta, private industry contractors, and subject-matter experts; and
 - (c) establish, maintain, and publish a public awareness and evacuation safety campaign to protect Albertans during this time of emergency.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 42 to request that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to debate a motion in regard to a matter that is urgent and pressing. Why is this urgent and pressing? First, I'd like to acknowledge that pursuant to Standing Order 42 I have provided the members of this Assembly with the appropriate number of copies, and further, while a motion under SO 42 requires no notice, my office did provide advance notice to the Speaker's office and to the minister's office of my intention to

introduce a motion under the appropriate standing orders as per the Speaker's memo.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Thank you, Madam Speaker. The issue of the wildfire season is the most urgent and pressing matter facing Albertans today and requires the immediate attention of all members of this Chamber, so urgent that the Orders of the Day must be set aside for further debate on this issue. This is the first opportunity to have this debate in the Chamber as it is the first day of the House resuming since the recent announcements by this government of the early wildfire season and the extreme drought conditions in the province.

Madam Speaker, the province's preparedness for wildfire season is a matter of extreme urgency. It is urgent for the municipalities impacted by the potential threat of wildfire, for the residents of those communities, and for the safety of all wildland and municipal firefighters and their support staff.

The government called for an early start to the wildfire season on February 20, 10 days prior to March 1, the annual wildfire season start date. This decision highlights the high risk that all communities face with both land and weather conditions set to ignite wildfire. In fact, on the same day of the government's announcement fire bans were issued in communities across the province. There are currently over 59 wildfires burning in the province, and with the minister of environment warning on January 11 of a provincial emergency due to an extreme drought, we know that this year's wildfire season has the potential to be much worse.

Yet, Madam Speaker, Albertans have not heard from this government about a plan to prepare and prevent upcoming wildfire seasons. The safety of Albertans is at risk, making this an urgent matter to be discussed in this Chamber today. Albertans need to hear from the government about what the plan is, how municipalities will be supported, and how Albertans will be kept safe and what tools will be provided to them if they need support.

Madam Speaker, in May of 2023 a resolution was passed at the Alberta Fire Chiefs' annual meeting requesting the establishment of an advisory task force. The government did not respond to this request. Again, in November, a similar motion was passed at RMA, proposed by Parkland county, asking for a task force, and again no response from the government. On January 31, 2024, the Alberta Fire Chiefs sent a letter to the minister of forestry requesting this same task force be formed. Again no action from this government. Clearly, over the past nine months experts in fire management have been trying to highlight the urgency of this matter, with silence from the ministers and this government.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Work on this should have started months ago. A proactive approach is the best way to prevent another unprecedented wildfire season and its impact on the province and communities. A 10-day head start to the season is simply inadequate, and the effects on Albertans could be dire.

This matter is urgent, Mr. Speaker, to prevent the tragedies that Albertans faced when they lost their homes in the last wildfire season: 48 communities, 38,000 Albertans were evacuated. It is urgent because we are behind on training, we are behind on staffing, and we're behind on ensuring that certified equipment is available to be deployed. It is urgent because we know that increased wildfire not only impacts the health and safety of those who must be evacuated but negatively impacts all Albertans who face air pollutants with smoke and subsequent health risks.

On January 9 I wrote to the minister calling for an immediate creation of a wildfire task force among other measures. On January 31 I called on the government yet again to ask that they disclose

their wildfire strategy, as the AFCA has also requested. It is currently day 29 of calling on the government for a comprehensive wildfire plan. Mr. Speaker, the government needs to tell Albertans today what they're going to do to protect them tomorrow.

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 42(1.2) a member of Executive Council has up to five minutes to respond to the request for unanimous consent. The hon. Minister of Forestry and Parks has risen to provide a response.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon. I'll begin by sharing an important update on our province's 2024 wildfire season preparedness. We aren't here to play politics, like others may be; we're here to make sure that we are prepared for this wildfire season. As someone whose home and community are near the forest area, I am here to assure all Albertans, their communities, and other organizations that Alberta's government is ready and well prepared to respond.

Following the record-breaking 2023 wildfire season, we were well aware that we needed to make improvements to our prevention, preparedness, response, and mitigation efforts, and we have been working nonstop this past year to be certain we are prepared for the season ahead. To be ready for this year's fire season, we recently announced an early start to the legislated wildfire season. This means a permit is now required for all burning planned in the forest protection area. This will help us identify and monitor wildfire risks more effectively, ensuring we can either enhance protection measures in areas we know burning will be occurring or restrict it from happening if required.

Last fall we introduced new funding for the community fireguard program, which allows Alberta municipalities to take a proactive approach to wildfire resilience. Funding is being administered by the forest improvement association of Alberta, and project planning is under way in a number of municipalities. This helps our existing FireSmart programming, which has been a long-term commitment to support Albertans and their communities in implementing the FireSmart principles to reduce wildfire threat. We encourage Albertans everywhere, especially those that live in the forested areas, to become familiar with FireSmart principles and prepare their homes, properties, and communities accordingly.

With Bertie Beaver's help we are spreading wildfire awareness messaging. As Bertie travelled to schools and other events, I have been communicating through news releases, interviews, social media, and visits to communities, where we held town halls to listen to community concerns and share what we're doing to prepare.

This wildfire season we are implementing a wide range of operational enhancements. We have streamlined training for heavy equipment operators and returning firefighters to ensure they are prepared to respond faster. We're employing enhanced night operations, including ground suppression efforts complemented by night vision equipped helicopters and nighttime helitackling, to attack wildfires at night. We're also making use of drones and AI predictive models to help us identify wildfire risks and action these risks before they turn into larger wildfires. In addition, we're also increasing the number and availability of aircraft, water bombers, incident management teams, and heavy equipment operators, ensuring we have ample resources available throughout the province. We have contracts for water delivery in place should drought conditions affect water availability, and aircraft technology and heavy equipment are ready to be deployed at a moment's notice. Our personnel are better equipped than ever to respond to wildfires and help Albertans stay safe.

We are on track to have more firefighters available and ready to respond earlier than normal this year. As of this week Alberta Wildfire has 226 helitack and unit crew members, support staff, and contract wildfire fighters trained and ready to respond to wildfires throughout the province. Hiring and training of wildland firefighters and support staff are ongoing, and these numbers will continue to increase as we get further into the season. By April 15, 2024, Alberta plans to have over 900 personnel hired, trained, and ready to respond to wildfires. This is a significant increase in personnel and resources compared to 2023 and 2022. This number will also increase by May 15, 2024, when we will have nearly 1,200 personnel trained and ready to be deployed. We are also working hard to keep experienced personnel in Alberta by making it easier to rehire returning firefighters, and we are expediting the hiring and training of new recruits.

3:00

Wherever possible, we have made our processes simpler and more effective to speed up our readiness efforts. In addition to significantly increasing government personnel, Alberta maintains many mutual aid agreements should we require additional assistance this coming wildfire season. We also are initiating a wildfire reservist program that will enable us to hire, train, and deploy Albertans who want to contribute to wildfire operations near their communities. This will include emergency firefighters, if needed, as well as support positions such as camp supervisors. Albertans interested in getting involved in either a support capacity or those with relevant heavy equipment they'd like to offer in support of wildfire operations are encouraged to contact local forest operations.

Albertans can have confidence in the government they elected and especially so during wildfire season. For these reasons, I'd urge all members to not grant unanimous consent.

The Speaker: Hon. members, a Standing Order 42 is a request for unanimous consent . . . [interjections] Order. Order. Order . . . to set aside the Orders of the Day to proceed immediately to the proposed motion.

[Unanimous consent denied]

The Speaker: We are at Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

Evening Sitting on March 25, 2024

24. Mr. Schow moved:
Be it resolved that, pursuant to Standing Order 4(1), the Assembly shall meet in the evening on Monday, March 25, 2024, for consideration of government business unless the Government House Leader notifies the Assembly that there shall be no evening sitting that day by providing notice under Notices of Motions in the daily Routine or at any time prior to 6 p.m.

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) this is a nondebatable motion.

[Government Motion 24 carried]

Ethics Commissioner and Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee

25. Mr. Schow moved:
Be it resolved that the Select Special Ethics Commissioner and Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee be authorized

to meet during the consideration of the 2024-25 main estimates.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a debatable motion pursuant to Standing Order 18. Is there anyone wishing to join in the debate?
Seeing none, I am prepared to call the question.

[Government Motion 25 carried]

Mr. Schow: I now rise to move Government Motion 26. Be it resolved that the membership of the Assembly's committees be replaced as follows . . .

The Speaker: Sorry to interrupt the hon. the Government House Leader. Given that oral notice was only provided for it this afternoon, unanimous consent will be required to proceed directly to Government Motion 26. Perhaps you might request such a motion.

Mr. Schow: I got ahead of myself, Mr. Speaker. I do apologize. You are correct. I would like to ask for unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 39(1) in order to proceed to Government Motion 26.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Consensus is lovely.

Committee Membership

26. Mr. Schow moved:
Be it resolved that the membership of the Assembly's committees be replaced as follows:
- (a) on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, that Member Irwin replace Ms Pancholi as chair and Ms Renaud replace Hon. Ms Ganley;
 - (b) on the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, that Hon. Mr. Eggen replace Member Calahoo Stonehouse;
 - (c) on the Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee, that Hon. Mr. Sabir replace Hon. Ms Ganley.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a debatable motion. Is there anyone wishing to join in the debate?

Seeing and hearing none, I am prepared to call the question.

[Government Motion 26 carried]

Federal Clean Electricity Regulations

16. Ms Smith moved:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly approve pursuant to section 3 of the Alberta Sovereignty within a United Canada Act the following motion.
- 1. The Legislative Assembly is of the view that
 - (a) in accordance with section 92A of the Constitution Act, 1867, the Alberta Legislature has exclusive legislative jurisdiction over, inter alia, the development, conservation, and management of sites and facilities in Alberta for the generation and production of electrical energy,
 - (b) the government of Canada has proposed the clean electricity regulations (the "federal initiative") with the intent of bringing them into

- force in the near future and may consider amendments before that time,
- (c) the federal initiative, by its pith and substance, seeks to regulate the development, conservation, and management of electricity sites and facilities in the province for the generation and production of electrical energy,
 - (d) the federal initiative mandates a set of emissions standards and timelines that are unattainable within the context of Alberta's electricity industry and available energy resources,
 - (e) the federal initiative is already having an extreme chilling effect on investment in Alberta's electricity generation industry and, further, is slowing investments in emissions-reducing technology and projects,
 - (f) the Supreme Court of Canada recently issued a reference opinion that the Impact Assessment Act (Canada) is largely unconstitutional as it is ultra vires the federal legislative jurisdiction under section 91 of the Constitution Act, 1867, due to the legislative scheme intruding into areas of exclusive provincial legislative jurisdiction outlined in section 92A, which includes, inter alia, the development, conservation, and management of sites and facilities in Alberta for the generation and production of electrical energy, and
 - (g) the government is actively implementing its emissions reduction and energy development plan to achieve a carbon-neutral power grid and economy by 2050, which is in line with Canada's international commitments but does not align with the government of Canada's arbitrary 2035 net zero electricity grid targets.
2. The Legislative Assembly is of the opinion that
- (a) the federal initiative is unconstitutional on the basis that it is not directed at a matter falling within section 91 of the Constitution Act, 1867, and impermissibly intrudes into an area of exclusive provincial jurisdiction, namely the development, conservation, and management of facilities in the province for the generation of electrical energy as set out in section 92A of the Constitution Act, 1867,
 - (b) the federal initiative will cause or is anticipated to cause harm as follows:
 - (i) the federal initiative is already having an extreme chilling effect on investment in Alberta's electricity generation industry and, further, is slowing investments in emissions-reducing technology and projects;
 - (ii) the federal initiative proposes to mandate a set of emissions standards and timelines that are unattainable within the context of Alberta's electricity market and available energy resources, and as such the implementation of the federal initiative in Alberta presents a substantial and material risk to the health and safety of Albertans by
 - (A) jeopardizing the safety and reliability of the provincial electricity grid and availability of sufficient electrical energy supply, which dramatically increases the likelihood of widespread blackouts and brownouts during severe cold and hot weather events stemming from a lack of reliable and dispatchable baseload electricity, and
 - (B) jeopardizing the affordable access to electrical energy, and
 - (c) the federal initiative threatens the economic well-being of Albertans and the economic viability of the Alberta economy by dramatically increasing the cost of access to electrical energy through mandating hundreds of billions of dollars of public and private monies to be spent within an approximate 10-year period in technologies still under development and yet unproven for the required commercial application and grid infrastructure and services.
- And be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the Lieutenant Governor in Council to consider the following responses to the federal initiative:
- (a) ensure that the government and any provincial entity defined in the Alberta Sovereignty within a United Canada Act, to the extent legally permissible, refrain from recognizing the constitutional validity of the federal initiative, enforcing or aiding in the enforcement of the federal initiative, or co-operating with the implementation of the federal initiative within Alberta in any manner,
 - (b) in consultation and collaboration with the Alberta Electric System Operator, the Alberta Utilities Commission, the Market Surveillance Administrator, consumers, industry, Indigenous communities, and other relevant stakeholders develop electrical system reforms necessary to
 - (i) ensure a safe and reliable provincial electricity grid to guarantee Albertans and Alberta businesses access to reliable electricity at all times,
 - (ii) ensure access to affordable electricity for Albertans and Alberta businesses,
 - (iii) work towards a carbon-neutral provincial electricity grid in alignment with the government's emissions reduction and energy development plan through incentivizing the advancement of emissions-reducing technologies and legitimate carbon offsets,
 - (iv) ensure Alberta's electrical generation, transmission, and distribution systems will accommodate the expected high population and economic growth in Alberta over the coming decades, and
 - (v) preserve the interests and value of the capital investments made in Alberta's electricity system by private generators, transmitters, and distributors, enabling continued competition for generation and attracting continued private investment in Alberta's electricity sector (collectively

- the provincial electrical systems objectives),
- (c) in consultation and collaboration with the Alberta Electric System Operator, the Alberta Utilities Commission, the Market Surveillance Administrator, consumers, industry, Indigenous communities, and other relevant stakeholders explore the feasibility and effectiveness of the potential establishment of a provincial Crown corporation for the purpose of achieving and securing the provincial electrical system objectives.

And be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to use all legal means necessary to oppose the implementation and enforcement of the federal initiative in Alberta, including launching a legal challenge in the Alberta courts and to otherwise advance the objectives and initiatives described in this motion.

[Adjourned debate November 28: Ms Smith]

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier had the call. She has 57 minutes remaining should she choose to use it.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore has risen to provide some comments.

Ms Al-Guneid: Mr. Speaker, we're here today debating the sovereignty act motion introduced by this government. The sovereignty act stifles our economy and scares away investment. Government Motion 16 will be no different. What we need is meaningful engagement with the rest of Canada, not invoking an act that ignores the rule of law. We need to engage to make our case. We need to negotiate with the federal government. We need to address climate change and take actual appropriate measures to move forward together. Most importantly, Albertans have told us time and time again that they're proud of being Albertan and they feel strongly Canadian. We're not seeing any of this in Government Motion 16.

I'm also concerned by the musings of creating a Crown corporation in Alberta's electricity market in Government Motion 16. The sheer musings of nationalizing our electricity market sends waves of uncertainty to investors. Once again, the Premier is meddling in Alberta's strong market and sending confusing messages to global investors about the stability of our jurisdiction. The renewables sector in Alberta has attracted over \$6.4 billion in capital investment, created over 6,000 jobs, and produced enough energy to power 1.7 million homes in Alberta to date. Danielle Smith has been undermining the market that allowed national and international ... [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. The use of a proper name would be mildly inappropriate.

Ms Al-Guneid: The Premier has been undermining the market that allowed national and international companies like Telus, RBC, TC Energy, Cenovus, and Amazon to invest in Alberta. The latest project is between Amazon and Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners. It is one of the biggest power purchase agreements ever in Alberta. According to the Canadian Renewable Energy Association in 2022 Alberta's market was home to more than 75 per cent of all newly installed renewable energy capacity in Canada, growing to more than 90 per cent last year.

To be clear, this meddling did not start with this government motion, but it started with singling out the renewables sector and imposing the self-defeating moratorium. Then the Premier

continued to attack renewables publicly at every opportunity, and now this. The UCP government continues with musings about creating a Crown corporation, that is shocking the industry and creating investor uncertainty.

The Premier claims that we need dispatchable power. What the Premier is failing to also tell the public is that we have over 2,500 megawatts of natural gas coming online this year. This is also a lot of dispatchable power. It is more than quadruple our residential load. The Premier continues to show a deep lack of understanding of how our electricity system works. She seems to be bewildered that the sun doesn't shine at night and that the wind doesn't blow sometimes.

Mr. Speaker, the UCP's political theatrics are once again sending waves of uncertainty to global investors and adding more red tape. These political theatrics and musings are so risky that the government's own expert report is literally warning the government from its series of irresponsible actions that add to investors' uncertainty.

3:10

I'd like to read a few sentences from the government's expert reports. I'll start with Longview's expert report on the Alberta Utilities Commission, or the AUC's, website, and I want to emphasize that the AUC commissioned this market perception study from Longview Communications to review the attractiveness of Alberta's power market from an investor perspective. This report presents the views shared by the study participants, who consist of investors, industry analysts, power generators, and Indigenous market participants.

This report warns government from this adventure of a Crown corp by literally saying, "A provincial Crown corporation would be entirely destructive to investment in Alberta." Entirely destructive to investment. Yes, this is word for word in the government's commissioned expert report. As the government that claims to be pro business, the UCP runs against market fundamentals.

The report goes further and explains that respondents expressed frustration about the way changes have been communicated, including the announcement of the potential for a Crown corporation, adding to the already uncertain investment climate. A few respondents were critical of the province and accused them of political posturing, citing the need for a unified front among federal and provincial governments.

Then the report continues, "A smaller proportion said they understood the need for market redesign and that a Crown corporation might be appropriate" due to the market dominance of a small number of large companies in the province.

We have a market power concentration problem. The report literally says that a few participants indicated that new measures to strengthen offer control limits would support a more competitive marketplace that minimizes aggressive offer behaviour from Alberta's largest power companies. Alberta isn't a competitive marketplace; it's an oligopoly. This is all from the expert report, the government's commissioned expert report, which brings me to the point of: how is the Premier protecting Albertans from this market concentration and the volatility of power prices?

The UCP government delivered record electricity prices last summer. Albertans paid one of the highest power prices in the whole country. This government delivered the highest prices ever in Alberta's history, and the only solution being put on the table is to nationalize gas plants.

The Premier wants to pick winners and losers in the electricity market and force taxpayers to pay for gas plants that the industry does not want. The UCP continues to use out-of-date information

when it comes to the electricity system, that undermines our international credibility and attractiveness for low-cost energy, low-emission investment in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, we're here today debating the sovereignty act motion introduced by this combative government that continues to fight with everyone under the sun. I want to start by saying that, yes, there are problems with the federal Canada electricity regulations. That's why we asked the federal government for changes and flexibility for low-usage plans, flexibility on CCUS and the end of prescribed life. We made an official submission and offered solutions instead of throwing a tantrum. I shared our CER submission with both the minister of environment and the minister of utilities.

As we also saw in the federal government's latest CER update, they did reduce the stringency of the performance standard to enable facilities that implement CCUS, and they also enabled greater use of natural gas-fired units during peak demand periods. These are things we asked for in our submission as well as many from the electricity sector. It turns out that sometimes people respond to negotiations, productive input, and to grown-up engagement as opposed to tantrums.

Mr. Speaker, the CERs are serious regulations that will require serious changes and solutions and not political stunts. There is \$40 billion in federal money available to upgrade Canada's electricity grid. Alberta's grid is one of the most carbon-intensive grids in Canada. It will require more upgrading and investments than most other provinces to bring on new technologies to enhance reliability and affordability. Why isn't this government at the negotiations table representing Albertans and negotiating for the biggest share of that \$40 billion or even more? This is the government's job.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta was already on a path, very close to a decarbonized grid by 2035, but this is being jeopardized by the UCP, including an abrupt moratorium on renewable energy and by creating further uncertainty with political theatrics while threatening to nationalize electricity assets. Alberta's grid, like all electricity grids, will eventually get to net zero. It is time for us to plan and prepare for the future. Creating a robust plan to decarbonize Alberta's electricity will attract investments, create new industries and new jobs while addressing climate change.

Instead of political theatrics and introducing stifling legislation, this government can be implementing the following solutions to advance a reliable, affordable, and low-emissions grid. Proclaim the government's own storage bill. Bill 22 will help utilities implement storage projects, kick-start the storage sector, and enhance reliability and affordability. The UCP has been sitting on this bill for more than 18 months. Power companies are already massively investing in renewables. TransAlta alone announced it will spend \$3.5 billion on renewables by the end of 2028. So listen to the business community, and stop suppressing investments and new business.

Focus on building diversified electricity generation and a modern electricity grid. The world is enhancing grid reliability by advancing a mix of technologies like wind, solar, geothermal, hydrogen, abated gas, storage, energy efficiency, and building interties. Where is the government's road map to build a diversified grid, and why is this government painting a vision from the past for Alberta? Why has the government not been serious about meeting its net-zero aspiration? There are solutions, Mr. Speaker. What is troubling is that this government does not want to look for solutions. It is a can't-do government, forgetting that Alberta decided to create the oil sands. Alberta decided to separate the oil from the sands and create a multibillion-dollar industry.

To conclude, this motion does not add solutions that will help modernize Alberta's electricity grid. This motion continues the

path of this government to undermine investment certainty, and instead of looking to move forward in a meaningful way, the government is using this antidemocratic sovereignty act to add more confusion and send a message to global investors that Alberta is closed for business.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others? The hon. the minister of environment.

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do rise today to speak to this motion because we simply cannot permit the federal government's dangerous electricity regulations to be imposed upon our province and its people. The federal government's clean electricity regulations, quite frankly, are not about reducing emissions from electricity. Alberta is already doing that. Alberta has reduced emissions by 53 per cent since 2005 when it comes to electricity, and we are honest with Albertans about what that actually meant, the cost that Albertans incurred – we talked about that earlier today in this House – and, of course, impacts to reliability of our electricity grid.

Mr. Speaker, affordability and reliability absolutely matter, and this federal framework is an attack on affordability, reliability, and on the grid that 4.7 million Albertans rely on every single day.

3:20

As we saw in January, Mr. Speaker, natural gas is critical to keeping the lights on and furnaces running, especially during the coldest months of the year. Even with a growing renewable sector and even with improvements in energy storage, natural gas absolutely remains an essential part of keeping Albertans alive and keeping our economy going strong.

Last summer, Mr. Speaker, the federal government released the most damaging piece of Canadian electricity regulations seen in decades. Ottawa's proposed changes will not reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but they do absolutely threaten to leave Albertans and Canadians in the dark.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Now, Madam Speaker, I hear about the chilling effect on investment in electricity generation. Now, let me be clear. This is because of uncertainty being created by the federal government in all of the environmental policies that Minister Guilbeault has been rolling in over the last number of months and years. Let me be clear. Part of that is because the regulations that have been put forward by the federal government are not technically achievable. They rely on technologies that have not been proven and, in fact, don't even exist. They set unrealistic timelines, they're based on completely unreliable modelling, and there is a reason, I will say, that Ottawa is, you know, zero for 10 when it comes to hitting an emissions target. They have not hit one of the targets that they've set, and it's because their targets and their plans and their policies that they're putting forward are not actually based in reality. This federal government has abandoned common sense in favour of ideological delusions, and they continue to do that again and again.

We can't play political games, Madam Speaker, with our electricity system. This isn't a big social experiment for Ottawa to embark upon. This is our province. This is our economy. These are people's lives. In the dead of winter or the middle of summer, Albertans absolutely do need natural gas to keep the grid running, to keep families from freezing, to turn on the lights, to run an air conditioner, and to keep their businesses operating. Our province is rapidly reducing emissions, and we are doing it successfully, but we will not accept any regulation that threatens soaring blackouts and brownouts while placing additional costs for families and businesses. That is not something that Albertans want to see.

And speaking of costs, Madam Speaker, you know, that's the other thing. We've got to talk about the chilling effect that these regulations have on investment, of course, on our grid, but we also have to talk about the costs, because at some point somebody actually has to pay for all of these policies that the federal government is bringing forward, and it ultimately is the taxpayer, whether they pay for that through their taxes or they pay for that through their bills, and these costs would be absolutely astronomical and would absolutely be a burden to Alberta families and businesses. The Public Policy Forum report pegged the cost of Ottawa's grand electricity experiment at well over a trillion dollars. The Conference Board of Canada had previously put estimates as high as \$1.7 trillion.

Now, I would say, of course, that we couldn't trust the federal government's math on this, but unfortunately, while I have continued to ask Minister Guilbeault and our federal counterparts for any modelling they've done, any costing they've done, any socioeconomic impact assessment that they've done when it comes to their policies, they haven't done it, Madam Speaker. Ultimately, you know, we're fortunate to have these estimates from other reputable sources, but ultimately these are Canadians that are going to have to pay. We cannot support these regulations, nor should any MLA in this Legislature. This will result in Albertans shouldering an unbearable cost for an electricity system that will no longer deliver the safe, reliable, and affordable electricity that we all rely on. Affordability does matter. Reliability matters.

This federal government is so focused on ideology and setting targets to, you know, earn praise from their environmental audiences that they've really lost the plot. I mean, we saw that on the carbon tax, too, and I think Canadians are really speaking their minds on how they feel about these commitments we see from the federal government that sound good in a news clip to make the environmental activists happy but are completely out of touch with the realities that everyday Albertans and Canadians face.

Now, Madam Speaker, I hear the members opposite talking about the rule of law. We talk about that a lot because we do, on this side of the House, respect the rule of law. Again, that's an issue that we're facing on this topic and in this legislation. This Liberal government, federally propped up, of course, by the federal NDP, has shown that they'll happily violate the Constitution to get what they want. Now, last October the Supreme Court ruled that Ottawa's Impact Assessment Act was unconstitutional. A month later the federal court struck down another piece of federal overreach, declaring that Ottawa's designation of plastic manufactured items as toxic was unreasonable and unconstitutional. These are two of the biggest rejections of federal overreach in recent history.

Powering Alberta's electricity grid is also our exclusive area of jurisdiction. We have repeatedly called on Ottawa to listen to the courts, the highest courts in our land, Madam Speaker, to listen to Albertans, to listen to Canadians, to listen to our power generators, yet they refuse to do so. You know, I heard the member opposite say: we need to work together. I'll say this. It did not have to come to this. As soon as our Premier was elected, she offered the Prime Minister a chance to restart the relationship, to focus on making life better for Albertans while still reducing emissions and making sure that we could also grow the economy, making sure people have jobs while also going down a path of carbon neutrality.

I met with Minister Guilbeault this summer for the first time, and I offered the same offer. My exact words to the federal environment minister were: look, let's have history show that we were able to put politics aside and work together in the best interests of Albertans and Canadians and, you know, prioritize affordability and reliability and energy security. Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, again and again our requests for reasonableness, for information,

for flexibility, and to meet the needs of our Alberta populations were rejected time and time again.

In November we offered Ottawa a path forward that would keep reducing emissions without putting the lives and people's businesses at risk. Based on expert analysis and industry consultations we provided a detailed submission outlining why the regulations laid out in CG1 were unrealistic and ineffective. We weren't alone, Madam Speaker. It wasn't just the government that shared this perspective. Alberta's Electricity System Operator spoke out on the 2035 timeline, saying that it could put the province at risk of blackouts and threaten billions in economic growth. Capital Power's CEO said, quote: we do not believe 2035 is possible. The Business Council of Alberta called Ottawa's modelling unrealistic and said that the one-size-fits-all approach is incapable of preserving an affordable and reliable grid. The province next door, Saskatchewan, called the regulations "unaffordable, unconstitutional, and technologically and logistically unattainable."

Now, Madam Speaker, I could go on because the opposition to this federal policy is broad and wide ranging. Ontario's regulator called them "unachievable in Ontario by 2035," and, as in Alberta, they said that this would put their province's grid and economy "at risk." We had hoped, despite their track record, despite what we've seen in the past, that Ottawa might listen, that they would put ideology aside.

Then two weeks ago, of course, the federal Liberal government put out their updated report, and in their public update, Madam Speaker, the federal government essentially admitted that they got it wrong, that their draft regulations were too stringent, wildly unachievable, and risk curtailing investment in the very technologies that were needed to reduce emissions. That is what we have been saying all along.

But despite recognizing their failures, instead of learning from their failures, Minister Guilbeault doubled down. His 11-page report contained no real details and committed to making no meaningful corrections, once again ignoring provinces, business leaders, generators. The document is laughably brief on facts. For example, they admit that the ridiculous physical performance standard of 30 tonnes per gigawatt hour was wrong, but then they don't actually say what the new standard is going to be to replace it.

I think, based on what we've seen before, we're not going to see that flexibility that they committed to in these bilateral tables. They say that an end of prescribed life longer than 20 years is being considered to prevent stranded assets but refuse to state what the new deadline would be. They say that changes are not final and they're still being considered, but after a 30-day feedback period they'll move to final regulations. That is a flawed process, Madam Speaker. The new report is nothing but lip service and, you know, a shiny distraction that fails to effectively address the concerns, flaws, and inaccuracies that we identified last fall.

Minister Guilbeault, Madam Speaker, is still pushing emissions targets that are not feasible. His government is still proposing to violate Canada's Constitution, and these regulations still threaten to leave Alberta families freezing in the dark. This report is so dismissive of Albertans and Canadians. It literally lists TBD under changes to the end-of-life provisions. This is not some draft essay from one of the Prime Minister's former drama classes. This is a sweeping regulation that threatens the integrity of our country's electricity system and puts us at real risk – real risk – of soaring costs and rolling blackouts at a time when affordability is the number one concern of Albertans and Canadians. I think, given their concerns, Albertans and Canadians deserve better than being told TBD on the future of affordable, safe, reliable electricity.

3:30

It is clear that Ottawa is dead set on making electricity more expensive, increasing the risks of blackouts, and violating our Constitution yet again, so Alberta has to defend itself. We have to be able to chart our own path and establish a constitutional shield on this front, Madam Speaker. Albertans own our resources. We are responsible for resource development. We are responsible here in this province for electricity generation. Ottawa needs to stay in their own lane. We have a plan to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. We are confident we can do this in a way that is not reckless, that does not put at risk the quality of life and safe, reliable, affordable energy and electricity. We would continue to call on the federal government to step aside, to abandon their regulations, to work with us instead of against us, but given what we've seen in the past, we cannot and will not accept the situation.

You know, I will say this, Madam Speaker. Over the last number of weeks we've seen a number of NDP leadership candidates say that they're now coming out against the carbon tax. If these members opposite actually are starting to care about things like affordability and reliability and energy development, then I don't see why they wouldn't step up and once again separate themselves from their masters in Ottawa, with the NDP-Liberal coalition, stand up and support the Premier's motion to defend our province and stand up in the best interests of Albertans and Canadians.

You know, I'm not optimistic for that, Madam Speaker. We saw it again when we asked them to support us in opposition to the carbon tax. That was on October 31. I remember it because, as opposed to trick-or-treating, we were in here fighting for Albertans and Canadians, and again the members opposite said: no; we'd rather stick to our ideological crusades instead of standing up for Albertans. Again, let's take the opportunity to put ideology aside, stand up for Albertans, make sure that we are working on reasonable timelines and working to maintain affordability and reliability in our electricity grid in the best interests of Albertans.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, just a reminder: there is a lounge behind the Chamber, a great place to have all of the conversations that are happening in this Chamber while others are speaking.

Are there other members that wish to join the debate on Government Motion 16? The hon. minister of energy.

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an absolute privilege today to speak in relation to this sovereignty act motion. The reason why it's so important is because this is another step by our government in protecting Albertans and their opportunity to make choices for themselves but to also enjoy what they should enjoy, which is the best quality of life in the world, the best opportunity to get low-cost and affordable electricity, and to live their life as they see fit.

Section 92A of the Constitution couldn't be clearer, that the management of electricity and electricity grids is exclusively provincial jurisdiction. You know, Madam Speaker, this was reiterated in 1982, and I think it was under Prime Minister Trudeau Sr. It specifically said:

In each province, the legislature may exclusively make laws [for the] . . .

Now, "exclusive" is pretty straightforward.

(c) development, conservation and management of sites and facilities in the province for the generation and production of [electricity.]

I think it's pretty clear that this is exclusive jurisdiction of the province, and even Prime Minister Trudeau Sr. agreed.

Now, I don't know why junior is going off as he is and trying to take more jurisdiction from the provinces and causing, quite frankly, what I would call nothing but disruption in our Confederation. Causing problems between different parts of this country is not helpful. It actually causes problems. But we need the province to put the federal government back in its lane when it's actually not in its lane, and we saw just recently that the Supreme Court of Canada did that.

Madam Speaker, you know, we often hear about the NDP in Alberta being different than the NDP in Ottawa, but it's not. It's the same party, and we know that the overlords of the mother ship in Ottawa – Prime Minister Trudeau and his companion, his shipmate Mr. Singh – have clearly decided to take Albertans and make them a pinata of Confederation. Why would they do that when they recognize that Alberta is a different jurisdiction? We have a different electricity grid, we have different needs, and we have different industry. In the long run, this is all about an attack on Alberta's energy industry and a power grab and money grab by the federal government trying to get more of Alberta's hard-working money back into Ottawa.

Madam Speaker, we will fight that. We are going to fight that. We have been clear that we are going to stand up for Albertans, that we are going to make sure that they have the opportunities that they deserve. They are very hard-working, very productive people, and we work for them. We do not work for Mr. Singh or Prime Minister Trudeau. We work for them. The Alberta government understands that what we want to do is move forward with the world, and when the world looks at the word "energy," they see Alberta. When they see Alberta, the word "Alberta" and the province of Alberta, they think energy, and that's because we have such an abundance of energy. We have oil and gas. We have lithium. We have helium. We have so many different natural resources here.

We also have an incredible industry, an industry of oil sands producers. Do you know, Madam Speaker, that without the oil sands producers producing energy during the last almost blackout, we would have had a blackout? Many people don't realize this, but the oil sands industry produces about 40 per cent – that's not 4 per cent; that's 40 per cent – of our electricity here in this province. Albertans use it. They use all of that energy, and in fact it's great to see that. Without that, we would have Albertans, frankly, freezing in the dark. I know how much I appreciate every time I get up in the morning and feel the heat from the shower or feel the heat from the natural gas boiler in my basement. I'm pretty happy, and I'm very happy that we have an industry that works with our government towards a better long-term plan for Albertans.

Madam Speaker, part of that is their cogeneration facilities. It became very clear to this government and, I think, to most industry that the federal government clearly does not understand cogeneration and what our province brings to the table as far as opportunities for Albertans to provide and utilize all of the energy to provide electricity. We do a great job with that.

But what I really found interesting in this was that during question period the Leader of the Opposition actually criticized our Premier for not bringing in a tax cut. Wow. I never thought I'd ever see the day when the leader of the opposition party, the NDP Party, asked a Conservative party for a tax cut, Madam Speaker. I was very surprised at that, but I do have to say that, you know, asking and promising one thing and delivering another thing has been the NDP when they came into power here for four short years. Hopefully, we don't see that again. We saw them bring in the coal companies from around the world, with absolutely no change in regulation or rules. We're going to change the rules. We're going to make sure we have one of the best class opportunities in the

world for coal producers but that they do it in a way that respects Albertans and respects the environment.

Madam Speaker, even though the Liberal Party and the Liberal government in Ottawa have been unconstitutional in relation to their proposed regulations and legislation and, frankly, very poorly thought out proposals, fortunately enough they have sat down with us, have taken some of our recommendations. They now understand how the industry works in Alberta, and they've actually changed some of the things that they've proposed. In fact, I think that, more than anything, they've changed it because the Supreme Court of Canada made it very clear that they were out of their lane and needed to get back into it. That's important, because we all have a job to do, and if we all do our jobs properly and row that boat together, Canada will be much better off, Canadians will be much better off, and Albertans, with all our natural resources, will be much better off. I would encourage the federal Liberal government to sit down at the table more with the Alberta government and work with us, not work against us.

Now, despite all of the NDP and the Liberals' talk about the end of oil and the end of combustion engines, the truth is, Madam Speaker, that combustion engines may see a shelf life in the near or medium future or even the long term. But all experts agree, all credible forecasters agree that oil and gas as an industry is going to dominate – dominate – for decades to come, and that's great news. We have the third- or fourth-largest reserve of oil in the world right here. We have one of the largest gas reserves in the world right here. We have a lithium deposit that shows true promise, helium that is going to I believe dominate, with Saskatchewan, the world supply.

3:40

If we do it right, we will have so much to offer Albertans and, frankly, Canadians, because we do. We do. And we have paid out Canadians for a long, long time. We have sent \$20 billion for a long time to Ottawa for their redistribution to their friends. Madam Speaker, we need as Albertans to stand up and protect Albertans, and that's what we're going to do.

Now, why do we do that, Madam Speaker? Because we want to build communities here. We want to build a province here. We want to build world-class cities like Calgary and Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Lethbridge. All of these cities in Alberta should be the best place to live in the world, the best place to raise a family, the best place to work, have a job, and have a future. If we do that, if we encourage tradespeople and all other Canadians and people from around the world that have expertise in what we do here, we will have a better Alberta. We will provide more opportunities for Canadians. We will make sure that their children and their grandchildren continue to have great-paying jobs right here in Alberta, where they live, where their grandchildren live, where their great-grandchildren live, and where generations of people will live in the future as long as we do it right.

That means the NDP should work with us, not against us, in making sure that Alberta's energy is utilized properly, that the resource is truly taken out of the ground and processed, and that the riches from that are given to Albertans, that more money is kept in Alberta with Albertans, training Albertans for the future. Our universities, our trade schools should be full of students from all around the world that want to stay here, that want to work here, that want to raise a family here, because that, Madam Speaker, is what our job is, what my job is, to create better communities here in Alberta.

And the better they do here, Madam Speaker, the better everywhere will be, because the more natural gas that's used from Alberta, the less emissions in the world. In fact, there have been some reports that suggest that we could displace a huge amount of coal if we'd

just be able to export our natural gas to the world. We're trying to. We signed an MOU with Ukraine recently on a number of issues that deal with energy. We continue to explore opportunities with Korea and with Japan and with other countries, the opportunity to get ammonia and hydrogen to market, because hydrogen is made with Alberta natural gas: low-cost feedstock, low emissions.

Madam Speaker, the best part about all of these things that are here in Alberta is that they belong to the people of Alberta. They don't belong to the government, and they sure don't belong to Justin Trudeau and the federal government. They belong to the people of Alberta, and that's why I encourage as many people as possible to move to Alberta to take advantage of the richness and the resources of Alberta, the promised land, in my opinion, one of the most beautiful places in the world.

It is clear that the federal government has ignored a number of groups that are so important in this discussion. Now, we have taken initiatives with our Indigenous friends here in Alberta that have never been done anywhere before in Canada, North America, and, in fact, the world, Madam Speaker, not to the extent that we've done. We've shown real respect and a collaboration to work with them to do things better, and those Indigenous communities have received riches beyond their expectation 20 or 30 years ago, beyond our expectation. They are participating and owning real oil and gas energy opportunities, and there's more to come. They're doing that because our government took a real solid position on AIOC, the Indigenous Opportunities Corp. Right now they're participating, and we're bringing that number up, and we're going side by side with them, understanding what their needs are and prioritizing them within our government because they're Albertans.

Madam Speaker, the more money that stays in Alberta with Albertans, the better all of us do. Our energy is produced under the best environmental standards in the world. Alberta doesn't need to learn anything from Justin Trudeau, Jagmeet Singh, or Charlie Angus, who wants to make it impossible for energy companies to support local hockey teams or local soccer teams or ballet or gymnastics. I mean, I just can't believe how out of touch this Charlie Angus is in Ottawa. Of course, I did serve with him for a period of time, and I knew he was out of touch then, but he's even more out of touch now. He should come and see all the benefits that we receive here in Alberta for the families, for the kids. All of those opportunities would not be available without our oil and gas sector providing many opportunities and continuing to support our communities. I want to see that even more. I want to see more people living in our communities, working in our communities, and raising their family there, and I think that's only a good thing.

Now, Alberta is way ahead of Ottawa, and maybe that's one of the reasons why Ottawa has come forward with some sort of unusual requests in the regulations and the clean energy regulations. In particular, Madam Speaker, you know, while Ottawa talks about CCUS and removing emissions, in Alberta we've already removed 11 million tonnes of CO₂ from the atmosphere through CCUS. Now, the federal government hasn't done that. They only talk about it in abstract forms. We are a world leader on CCUS, just like we're a world leader and Canadian leader on hydrogen and ammonia.

Madam Speaker, Alberta is in a great place, and we believe that we are only going to be in better places as we go forward and work with Albertans and Indigenous communities and other communities all across this great province to provide more for Albertans: more education, better quality of life, more jobs within Alberta for Albertans.

One of the other things we've done, Madam Speaker, is we've dramatically reduced methane emissions years ahead of schedule. The minister of environment just actually announced that just a few months ago, and we've actually met our targets well before we were

expected to. Those are the things that make me so proud to be an Albertan because we are steps ahead, miles ahead, truly, of the federal Liberals and most jurisdictions in the world, if not all jurisdictions in the world, in oil and gas.

We're very proud to support an oil industry which makes massive investments to provide Albertans with almost half of their electricity, and we hope they do more things along those lines because those are the things that will help our province grow as it should. We've seen record amounts of people coming to Alberta and becoming Albertans just in the last few years. Madam Speaker, I think there are almost 200,000 people that moved to Alberta in the 12 months ending in December.

Now, Madam Speaker, that was a record, and that was a record because people really look here and say, "Wow; you mean I could sell my house in Toronto and buy four houses in Fort McMurray?" Yes. You can. You can buy houses much more affordably here in Alberta than anywhere else, and that doesn't even take into consideration the tax ramifications of how much money you save because we have the lowest tax jurisdiction in the country, one of the lowest in North America. It doesn't look at all the great opportunities people have to not pay, for instance, PST here. That doesn't even talk about the highest weekly earnings that people make here in Alberta compared to the rest of the country, and we have for years continuously made higher earnings than the rest of the country.

There are so many reasons to move to Alberta, Madam Speaker. There are so many reasons that the federal government should work with us. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to rise in support of this important motion. I hope all the House will seriously consider it by supporting the Premier on this initiative to send a clear message to Ottawa when it comes to protecting our province. That's, I think, where I will start my comments. You know, probably about two years ago I was down in Washington, DC. At that time I was serving as minister of environment. I was with the then minister of energy and the then Premier and we were testifying at the United States Senate at the energy committee. It's a pretty major committee in that large country to the south of us.

During that process we spent a lot of time talking to American senators while we were down in DC, and the one thing that really jumped out about the difference between our system up here, the Westminster system, our Confederation that we call Canada, and the republic down to the south of us that includes the states that come together to make up the republic that is known as the United States, is a real difference between our provinces and states, which most of us in this House will understand. Often I would submit to you, Madam Speaker, that the states in the republic often have better rights than our provinces within Confederation, more independence, but one thing that stood out after all of those meetings with those senators is on one issue for sure here in Canada. There's one issue that we have more rights on. You know what that is? That is the right to develop our resources and who owns the resources.

3:50

Every senator was stunned. I remember particularly one conversation with a senator from Alaska who could not believe that the province, in our Constitution, had fought for by one of our great Premiers, Peter Lougheed, had control and the right to develop our resources and to profit from our resources. As a recent Court of

Appeal ruling said when it came to Bill C-69, that is our birthright and that is something that American states don't enjoy. In fact, the Department of the Interior would have a lot of authority when it comes to resource development.

And really, that stood up with me when I came back home, the need to continue to fight to be able to make sure that we kept that right not only for us now but for Albertans who will move here, for our children, for our grandchildren, for Albertans that aren't even born yet, and that it is absolutely critical that we do so. At the heart of this fight that's what this is about. There's lots of other noise and important issues that are associated with this that could be talked about, but at the end of the day this is a fight for our very birthright and we must make clear to the federal government that for Alberta to sign on to the Constitution, to sign on to this country, it was only under the condition that we would always be able to control our birthright and be able to control our resource development.

And it's been shocking, Madam Speaker, to see the NDP over the years that I have served in this Chamber with them, whether they were in government or on the opposition side of the aisle, continue to sell out that birthright, continue to support people like Justin Trudeau and, again, their overlord Mr. Singh, who is the leader of their party. It's a challenge when you actually have structures of parties this way. I think the NDP have illustrated that in the fact that they continue to sell out Albertans on this very important issue, time and time again.

I'll give you a couple of examples in a moment, but I actually just want to drill down on that, Madam Speaker, because some of the new members of the House may not know that the NDP's structure of their party is that they are all the same across the country. They are underneath a federal party. We are not. I have a lot of respect for our federal Conservative cousins, but they are separate parties. I know they get really upset because they don't want that to get pointed out. That's why you see heckling when somebody brings it up, but that is the structure of it. One has to wonder if that is why this party, the NDP, have continued to stand in this Chamber no matter what side of the aisle they're on and not fight for the birthright of Albertans, not fight for that critical win that we got when we signed on to the Constitution of this country.

You know, we saw it most recently with two big issues that I think our government is very proud of and should be proud of and that is the wins on the plastic ban and Bill C-69, the no-more-pipelines law. That is our government fighting all the way to the highest court in the land successfully, Madam Speaker. Why? Because it is the Constitution, it is our right, and the federal government overstepped.

But what did the NDP do when they were in government or on that side of the aisle? They never supported us when it came to that. They never supported Albertans because they can't, Madam Speaker. They have to listen to Mr. Singh and the federal party, who do not support Alberta being able to develop their resources. But that's okay; we're here, we're in government, we are able to do that, and we won two very significant rulings to reaffirm our rights as Albertans. This government always will fight to the highest court in the land and beyond to be able to make sure that we protect Albertans' rights, to protect my kids' and your grandkids' rights to be able to develop their resources in the future, and that's something that we should be very proud of.

Now, sadly, this Minister Guilbeault character: he doesn't seem to still understand that. He keeps ignoring the fact that those court rulings are happening. He doesn't care about the Constitution. I would submit to you that he doesn't care about Canada. He is the biggest threat to Confederation, if you ask me, Madam Speaker, and he was my counterpart for several years in environment. I've been in the room with Mr. Guilbeault for several meetings. I can tell you

I wasn't very impressed. He is an individual who does not know his file. He's very focused on ideological components of his file but not actually an understanding of how things work in our country.

A case in point: the other day when he came out and said that we're not going to have roads no more, that we should stop building roads. I mean, this is not a person who clearly understands what is taking place in our country, has any concept of the size of our country, the reality of our country, and he certainly does not care about Alberta. I say again: been in the room with him lots, Madam Speaker. I would consider him the single biggest threat to this province and the single biggest threat to Confederation because he just does not care. It's why he, before he was in politics, spent his time illegally climbing buildings and not focusing on making sure that he worked for the working men and women of this country.

An Hon. Member: Spider-Man.

Mr. Nixon: Spider-Man, as some would call him.

I remember when he brought in his new emission plan and we were in a meeting with him here in Edmonton, and he had not read the plan. We were in there. He had his officials; I had my officials. We were sitting across from each other, having a meeting over here in his office in the federal office here in Edmonton. He could not quote any component of the plan. He did not know the numbers of the plan. He had no understanding, and this is the individual that the NDP want us – and they're in a coalition with this party federally – to listen to when it comes to something like this. Well, we can't, not only because we're not going to give up on our rights – unlike the NDP we're not going to give up on defending Albertans' rights when it comes to their resources – but because this is dangerous.

What they are bringing forward, the federal government underneath Prime Minister Trudeau and Minister Guilbeault, could cost people their very lives. That's just the reality. We saw it just recently here a couple of months ago when it was cold. At my farm the night that our electricity grid was having some challenges, it was minus 50 on the thermometer outside. That's pretty cold. I don't know how you survive in an environment like this without energy resources. Let me tell you, all of those who would like to see us shut down Alberta energy: we're about to find out real quick why that was a bad idea. Fortunately, through the leadership of the electricity minister we were able to get through that challenge, but this is what the federal government is driving us towards. It would be constant blackouts. They don't understand the numbers. Where's the electricity going to come from? How will all of this work? They have absolutely no concept, but the NDP are blindly continuing to follow them into the abyss.

Now, what we see happen with the NDP – you see this because they're so focused on their ideology. They're not focused on helping Albertans. You don't get that with the socialist party across from me. They're just focused on – they can't help themselves, whether it comes to financial policy or environment policy or social policy. As we've just seen recently with the encampments here in Edmonton, the party across from me showing up at encampments and protesting and trying to stop the police from helping individuals who are in tents freezing to death, Madam Speaker – freezing to death – where minor children were being sexually exploited, and they're protesting the stopping of that.

The point of that is that they can't go beyond that ideology. If you've got a party who is willing to attempt to block people from getting help inside vinyl tents in minus 50 degree weather, that are being burned to death, exploited by gangs, sexually abused, or dying of overdoses as a result of their ideology, Madam Speaker, of course you're going to see the same thing when it comes to

electricity, which is what you see taking place here. It's why this party will not . . .

Ms Phillips: Yeah. Nice try.

Mr. Nixon: Madam Speaker, you see how upset they are, particularly the Member for Lethbridge-West. She's really riled up about this. I would be, too, because the truth hurts. The truth hurts, and they get really upset about it.

Again, you know, the member from Highlands up there, right there leading the protest to stop people from tearing down encampments. And they are going to continue to do that because they can't go beyond their ideology, which is why they won't stand in this Chamber and defend Albertans. They won't do it. I served in this Chamber with them for almost a decade. I've never seen them stand up for the people of this province once, and you're going to see it again, I suspect, shortly. That's why they won't rise and speak against Justin Trudeau, because they can't, because their leader is Mr. Singh, they belong to the same party, and they can't go out against Justin Trudeau.

So is this the group that we're going to trust to be able to advocate for something as important as our electricity system, for our largest industry? The industry, by the way, Madam Speaker, that pays the bills of the entire country, not just this province. I know the NDP hate oil and gas. They've never made that a secret. When they were in government, they continually brought in policies to try to destroy the oil and gas industry. But the reality is that the oil and gas industry pays their salaries. The oil and gas industry pays the bills of Albertans. They are our largest taxpayer, our largest employer. [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Perhaps this is a good reset moment for the Chamber, for all involved.

The hon. minister has the floor.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. This is an important industry, so when you go and you see the policies are coming from the federal government, they're going to kill the golden goose, not only the golden goose that's providing the energy that we need for our equipment, for our manufacturing, for our heat, for our hospitals, for everything that we need to survive as a society but also the industry that's providing the tax base for our entire country. This is why Canada is doing better than other jurisdictions at times despite the NDP and the Liberal government trying to destroy this country with being some of the highest spending governments in the history of mankind. I mean, it's crazy what is taking place and what they will continue to advocate for. But that oil and gas industry is what's going to carry us forward, amongst other industries. We should be proud of it, but we also need that energy to make those other industries work.

4:00

You know, we often talk about agriculture in this Chamber, as we should. My farmers – and the minister of agriculture, I know, will agree with this – have had to pay ridiculous amounts of money to dry grain ever since the NDP brought in the carbon tax, that they lied to Albertans about, and brought it forward after they didn't campaign on it. The Member for Lethbridge-West led the way to be able to make sure that all of our province would have to pay ridiculous amounts of money that could destroy our industry. Now this government came in and got rid of it.

We still got Justin Trudeau, though, doing his thing under their boss Mr. Singh in Ottawa, but I've got a funny feeling that we're going to see a Prime Minister change soon, Madam Speaker, and finally get rid of the carbon tax brought in by the socialists. So this

is why we have to send a message to Ottawa, again, to make clear that this is our right and that this province – despite the fact that we’ve got an opposition that will sell out Albertans each and every day, the majority in this Chamber will always stand up for our rights, will always stand up to make sure that we are able to develop our resources in the future and to make determinations and not to adopt insane policies that the federal government has no idea how to achieve, that will result in us not having electricity, result in people not being able to run their equipment, would result in the shutdown of our entire economy.

And do you know what? This is the scariest part. Do you think our friends to the south in the States are going to do the same? I can promise you not. Do you think other major jurisdictions in this world are going to follow suit? No. So all that’s going to happen is that we’re going to continue to have our electricity rates go up, caused by the NDP and the federal government. We’re going to continue to see inflation go up, the cost of living go up. And you know what, Madam Speaker? Tens of thousands of Canadians will flee this country to go run their businesses elsewhere. But the good news is that there’s a bright spot here in Alberta, in Canada, the fastest growing place in the world. Why? Because we’re not adopting these ridiculous NDP policies that they are doing to support their friend Justin Trudeau.

You saw, Madam Speaker, how riled up they get over there when that comes up, because they don’t want Albertans to know who their real boss is. They want to continue to pretend that they defend Albertans, but they don’t. They have risen in this Chamber time and time again to attack this province, to make sure to go against our largest industry. Their policies are against this province. But you know what they don’t do? They don’t stand up and vote to make clear that things like the carbon tax and the federal policies that are coming against our largest industry in Alberta are not acceptable.

I have to be left wondering – I mean, at this point I think they probably just want to see our electricity grid fail because they would rather be right with their crazy ideology than make sure that Albertans are protected, which is why I bring up the social policy, because it’s a great example of it. They would rather be so focused on their ideology that they would leave homeless people freezing to deaths in tents. That’s the party that’s across from us. Didn’t go very well. Don’t worry; we are here to fix it.

We as a province can never ever, ever let the federal government step on our rights when it comes to resources, and every member of this Chamber should understand that and should stand up in this Chamber and make clear to Justin Trudeau and the federal government that it will not be accepted here in Alberta. And, Madam Speaker, through you to the NDP, why do they continue to come here each day and defend Justin Trudeau?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Last fall the Premier had introduced a motion under the Alberta Sovereignty within a United Canada Act to protect our provincial rights within Confederation. Since then the Trudeau-Singh alliance has continued to overstep and push costly, punitive, and unreasonable policies on Albertans. As Justin Trudeau’s radical environment minister Steven Guilbeault continues to advocate for his unaffordable, unreliable, and unconstitutional clean electricity regulations, it’s time for this federal NDP-Liberal coalition to stop pushing their ridiculous ideology on Albertans.

Alberta has long been the backbone of Canadians’ economy, providing countless jobs, driving innovation, and fuelling growth for the whole country. However, the recent introduction of the clean

electricity regulations threatens to undermine the stability and the viability of Alberta’s electrical system. These regulations would impose unrealistic standards and restrictions that would irreparably damage investment in our province. The CERs would destroy the Alberta advantage.

Despite our efforts to work with the Trudeau government, they continue to march blindly forward to their unrealistic net-zero-by-2035 goal. The ball is in Ottawa’s court on whether they are willing to change course and seriously work with us on a realistic path to a carbon-neutral grid by 2050.

This last winter, during January, we received a sneak peak of the future if the CERs were to be implemented. An Arctic cold front paired with limited winter sunshine hours and temperatures too cold to run wind eliminated the energy provided by wind and solar options and almost caused rolling blackouts across Alberta. If it weren’t for reliable natural gas generators, Albertans would have experienced these blackouts. Trudeau wants to toss out essential natural gas generation on a whim, and we cannot let that happen. On that cold January weekend we successfully avoided rolling blackouts. But that will not be the case if Justin Trudeau and Steven Guilbeault are allowed to proceed with their devastating electricity regulations. They will strand natural gas assets that we need to get us through cold Alberta winters, and this government will not let Albertans freeze in the dark.

We anticipated these energy shortages, and to prevent future risks, our government recognizes the need for more baseload power from natural gas. Unfortunately, the federal government’s regulations are already creating uncertainty and driving away investment. Our government will not take undue risks with Alberta’s power grid. We cannot let the NDP-Liberal coalition continue to make utility bills more expensive for hard-working Albertans. To do so would be grossly irresponsible.

That is why the government of Alberta took decisive action by introducing the first motion under the Alberta Sovereignty within a United Canada Act. This resolution is a testament to our government’s commitment to protecting Alberta’s interests and ensuring the continued reliability and affordability of our electricity system.

Motion 16 calls upon the Legislative Assembly to support our government in resisting the enforcement of the CERs and to collaborate with stakeholders to develop sensible reforms that safeguard the affordability and reliability of our electricity grid. Most Albertans who have first-hand insights and experiences with Alberta’s electrical grid have been telling us that the CERs are unrealistic, technologically improbable, and extraordinarily expensive to comply with. We have been engaging with stakeholders since the draft CERs were released, and our message to the federal government is this: we will protect Albertans’ access to affordable and reliable electricity despite your attempts to undermine our grid.

Alberta is taking steps so that we are ready and able to protect our province’s grid and our economy should the unconstitutional federal CERs come into effect and threaten the reliability and affordability of our power grid. While we remain open to collaborating with the federal government towards achieving a carbon-neutral grid by 2050, we want to be treated as partners, not adversaries. The federal government must come to the table with a genuine willingness to address the concerns of everyday Albertans. This, of course, is something we haven’t seen from them yet.

We are continually looking for ways to improve our best practices in electricity generation, and I acknowledge the need for innovative solutions to secure a dependable, affordable, and sustainable electricity supply. This is why this motion calls for

collaboration with industry and stakeholders who are simply doing their job by providing the electricity that Albertans rely on.

We must explore all options to safeguard our province's energy sovereignty in the face of the onerous regulations like the CERs, and as we move forward, our government is exploring all avenues to ensure Albertans' lights stay on, technologies like energy or electricity storage, SMR, carbon capture innovations.

Our aim is to protect Alberta's energy sovereignty to contribute to the resiliency and sustainability of our electricity grid. By providing clear guidelines and legal protections, we can ensure that our grid operates effectively and in the best interests of all Albertans.

Madam Speaker, our electrical grid is nothing short of remarkable. It powers our economy, our lives, driving job creation and innovation while ensuring energy security for all Albertans. Despite what the NDP-Liberal alliance is saying, our government will continue not just to support an affordable and reliable electricity system but to champion it, recognizing its invaluable contributions to our province, our country, and the entire world.

4:10

Madam Speaker, I encourage all members of this Assembly to defend Albertans' access to affordable and reliable electricity alongside this government. If Justin Trudeau, Steven Guilbeault, and their NDP-Liberal cronies in Ottawa or just across the aisle won't respect our provincial jurisdiction, we will make them. Albertans have had enough, and we have their backs.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I stand to speak in favour of Motion 16. This is a super-duper motion. The Trudeau lovers – the Trudeau lovers – across the aisle do not like Motion 16, but they have no moral authority to speak on the electrical file.

Madam Speaker, let's just take a walk back in history. They were a very incompetent government with the electrical file. You know what they did? They forced the closure of coal-fired plants before the end of their economic life, forcing Alberta taxpayers to pay billions in compensation to big business power generators. They were very bad. Unfortunately, Albertans are still paying for their incompetence. I have never heard the former Premier, who has lost an election twice, who is now running away, apologize to Albertans for increasing their power costs. The NDP is very bad on this matter.

Motion 16 is a compelled response to the government of Canada seeking to impose their clean electricity regulations in Alberta. But what do the clean electricity regulations seek to do? They seek to impose net-zero electricity by 2035. And who do these mandates impact? I went to the government of Canada website for these very bad regulations to find out, and guess what I found? Well, Quebec: their power is 88 per cent hydro, 6 per cent renewable, 94 per cent in total. They're not really impacted by this. B.C.: 94 per cent hydro. Ontario: 59 per cent nuclear, 26 per cent hydro, 9 per cent renewable. That's 94 per cent in total: not impacted. Manitoba: 97 per cent hydro. What about Saskatchewan and Alberta? Well, Saskatchewan is 21 per cent hydro and renewable, 79 per cent carbon based. They're certainly impacted. But what about Alberta? Well, we are 15 per cent hydro and renewable. We are 85 per cent carbon based. So Alberta: very impacted. How much, Madam Speaker? It is estimated that this will cost between \$44 billion and \$52 billion in capital investments to reach the net-zero targets set out by the federal government by 2035. Now, that's AESO, but these very inflationary environment cost estimates are often low.

Trudeau is seeking to impose burdens and force Albertans to pay for them. But, Madam Speaker, this shouldn't come as any surprise. This is a pattern. Trudeau hates Alberta. He hates that Alberta does not accept his woke socialist ways. He hates that Alberta is the best, a land of freedom and prosperity. Trudeau does not like coming to Alberta. He sneaks into Alberta from time to time and then runs away. But this fiscal imbecile has more than doubled the national debt, adding more debt than any Prime Minister, all combined, before him. Why is this?

Trudeau is Canada's first NDP Prime Minister. He is the first NDP Prime Minister. He is the worst Prime Minister ever, a joke of a Prime Minister, and the sooner he is kicked out, the better. Madam Speaker, that is going to happen soon. He will be kicked out, or he's going to run away to try to save face. I hope he runs away, because the sooner he does that, the sooner we can start repairing the damage he is causing. Unfortunately, under this horrible – horrible – joke of a Prime Minister Canada's per capita GDP is dropping like a rock, and we are sleepwalking into disaster if we don't wake up and kick him out.

But in the interim what are we to do? Well, what does the Constitution say about this CER? Section 92A(1) of the Constitution Act states:

In each province, the legislature may exclusively make laws in relation to . . .

(c) development, conservation and management of sites and facilities in the province for the generation and production of electrical energy.

So the development, conservation, and management of electrical energy is Alberta's jurisdiction. The federal government is not staying in its lane. But this is a pattern of Trudeau's. He is like an unwelcome guest in House Alberta. He is in our house, an unwelcome guest laying on the couch like a slob, throwing virtue-signalling garbage around, and not taking hints to get out and leave us alone. This is what the Alberta sovereignty act intends to do: get him out.

Certainly, these clean electricity regulations are proof positive that the Alberta Sovereignty within a United Canada Act is a beneficial thing for Alberta. It is good for Alberta to defend our freedom and prosperity, defend ourselves not only from the NDP-Liberal chaos and destruction harming Alberta. It is this socialist, Liberal-NDP axis government that is harming the economy, especially Alberta, which is the rainmaker in this rigged partnership. These very bad regulations mandate a set of emissions and standards and timelines that are unattainable in the context of Alberta's electricity industry. These very bad regulations are having a chilling impact on investment in Alberta's electricity generation industry and slowing investments in emissions-reducing technology. Madam Speaker, Trudeau and Jagmeet are very bad government.

This motion asserts the constitutional stewardship to use our powers to reduce electrical costs for Alberta, to increase baseload capacity that works, including when the sun is not shining or the wind is not blowing. Madam Speaker, I support this motion, and I encourage our friends opposite to make a course correction, to stop going down the path of their socialist destruction, that harms Alberta, to support Alberta asserting its constitutional jurisdiction, to stop being Trudeau lovers, and vote for Motion 16.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

4:20

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. There were quite a few speeches. I think it's important to get the record straight and talk a

little bit about this sovereignty act, that they brought this motion in under.

The Member for Red Deer-South talked about the NDP closing coal-fired plants but conveniently forgot to mention that federal regulation SOR/2012-167, the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions from coal-fired generation of electricity regulation, brought forward by Prime Minister Harper, in fact closed 12 out of 18 coal plants in Alberta. That was 2012. I would urge them to look for that regulation. It's SOR/2012-167.

The second thing I do want to say is that they do criticize the federal government all day long but often forget that for many of the things they are complaining about today – for instance, that payment that they often complain about, equalization – the federal Conservatives were there. The minister of energy was part of that caucus, too, when last that formula was negotiated. Under Stephen Harper's government they left resource revenues out of that mix so that the fluctuation in Alberta's treasury will exclude the fluctuation in oil and gas revenues. That's why we won't get the equalization payment. That was their own doing when Stephen Harper was the Prime Minister. Then they were here for 44 years. I think they had multiple governments, federally as well, and the only pipeline that's in play right now is the Kinder Morgan pipeline, which has nothing to do with Conservative governments.

Speaking of the electricity system, its reliability, affordability, I think I would ask any one of them to come visit the northeast. Walk down the street – eight, 10 houses – and ask people how they are doing with electricity bills. Electricity bills have been skyrocketing. Electricity has never been this expensive in this province, just because the UCP removed the cap and made Albertans pay for the crazy amounts for electricity.

But, speaking of the sovereignty act, I would say that some members also mentioned that rule of law is very important. I do agree. Rule of law is integral to democracy, and with that rule of law comes the separation of power between three branches of government: the legislative, executive, and judicial. That separation is also very important, and the UCP understanding of that separation has not been that great.

I want to quote some examples. For instance, some minister calling the police chief over a traffic ticket would violate that separation. The Premier taking a call from a person before the court who is accused of plotting to kill RCMP officers will be violating the separation of powers. Anyone promising to pardon people who were convicted at the Coutts blockade also will violate this rule of law and the separation of powers. So every branch is important, and they only work if everyone stays in their lane.

Having said that, the federal government should stay in their lane. They should stick to the powers that are assigned to them under sections 91 and 92 and respect the powers that have been given to the province. That is fundamental to our democracy. But when there is a dispute, where one order of government has violated or encroached upon the powers of another order of government, I think basic law 101 is that our judiciary is the final arbitrator of that. A Legislative Assembly or Parliament cannot decide if something is unconstitutional or is violating any provision of the Constitution. It needs to be the judiciary.

The government has many things at their disposal. They can send a reference to the Court of Appeal here if they really want to challenge the constitutionality of something. They can do that, but they chose not to do that. Instead, they're invoking an unconstitutional piece of legislation. This motion under that unconstitutional piece of legislation: a completely dishonest and illegal stunt that will not help us with anything. The motion says: be it resolved that the government does all to "oppose the implementation [of this initiative], including launching a legal

challenge." Tell me where it says that the government needs this Assembly's permission to launch a legal challenge against the federal government or to challenge the constitutionality of some federal initiative. They don't. They are playing games.

They refuse to engage in debate on wildfires. We are just at the end of February; we still have 50-plus wildfires in this province. They would not engage on that. We have a drought situation facing us, which experts are warning us about. They will not engage on that. There are six people dying on the streets of Alberta every single day from drugs. Six Albertans are dying every single day on the streets of Alberta. They will not do anything about it. They won't debate about it. Rather, they would just stand here, pull this dishonest and illegal stunt under an unconstitutional piece of legislation for political gamesmanship. And then they will tell us that we can't play political games with the electricity system. Yes, you are playing political games with this system, because electricity has never been more expensive than it is now.

On the constitutionality of their bill many legal scholars from the law school in Calgary have opined that this piece of legislation is offside this Legislature's mandate to make laws. They cannot make laws just to invalidate some laws of the federal government that they don't agree with. If you want to challenge the constitutionality of some law, the Legislature is not the place; the judiciary is. Send a reference.

The second thing is that the government claims to be pro business, but we don't see any evidence of that in their actions. The Calgary Chamber of commerce, business organizations across the province warned them that this sovereignty act will drive investment away, will create uncertainty, and that there is no evidence that it will lead to economic growth, but they didn't listen. Rather, they will listen to their lobbyists and insiders.

4:30

Also, they talk about reconciliation. The chiefs of Treaty 6, Treaty 7, Treaty 8: they all oppose this sovereignty act. They said that they were not consulted on it. They said that it could potentially infringe on their treaty rights. That's all on record. In particular, they were concerned that this legislation is enabling this government to direct political organizations, municipalities, school boards, police forces, and anyone receiving provincial funding not to enforce rules deemed harmful under this legislation by this government instead of respecting the rule of law, instead of telling Albertans and everyone the truth, that whatever they are doing will not help them with their electricity bill.

It will not invalidate any federal legislation. If you really need to challenge federal legislation, courts are the way. They talked about the Supreme Court's recent decision. Before that decision, that was the valid law. Now the court says that that encroaches on provincial jurisdiction. Now that's the law. So if government seriously thinks that they have a case to make, they should bring a court challenge, send a reference to the courts. They should not be wasting this Legislature's time by bringing a motion under this piece of legislation, which many Albertans, many legal scholars, many Indigenous community leaders think is not constitutional.

Instead of pulling these political stunts, the government needs to do better. They need to engage with their federal counterparts and stand up for the interests of Albertans, and this motion doesn't do that. There is nothing that's stopping this government from bringing lawsuits. There's nothing that's stopping this government from going to talk to the federal government. But political point scoring is more important for them than anything else so they can distract from their record of broken promises that they made during the election campaign; for instance, that people will get a tax break. Now people need to wait because now they want to, I guess,

continue pulling these dishonest political stunts, which will not help Albertans with anything, whether it's the affordability of electricity, whether it's the reliability of electricity, whether it's anything else that is causing crisis in our province: health care, education.

Just yesterday we heard that the Minister of Health will not proceed with a hospital in south Edmonton that had, I guess, long been promised to them back in 2017. The priority for them is to bring some motion under an unconstitutional piece of legislation, and let's all have some . . .

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister of public safety.

Mr. Ellis: Madam Speaker, thank you very much. I've certainly been listening intently to both sides of the House. You know, as somebody that's been here since 2014, I think it's probably, I would say, important to let the House know maybe a bit of history – right? – about how we got to where we are.

I just want to say that I certainly support Government Motion 16, but I do want to talk a lot about electricity. You know, for those of you that do not know, we did have a cheap and reliable electrical grid right up until about 2015. I'm not sure what happened in 2015, but I'm pretty sure we all really do know what happened, and that was the NDP government. Madam Speaker, we were paying about 2.3 to 2.8 cents a kilowatt hour – that's about what we were paying – cheap, reliable energy. And then the NDP came along, and they completely broke the system. That's right. They broke the system, and they broke the power purchasing agreements. The former minister talked about a cap. They put a cap at three times what we were paying, and they wanted a pat on the back for it.

Madam Speaker, we talk about breaking the power purchasing agreements. And then you know what they did? Because, apparently, there weren't any lawyers in Alberta, they had to go to an NDP lawyer in British Columbia, Mr. James Arvay, in order to sue Albertans. That's right. A sole-source contract. They said: "You know what? We have to rely on somebody who knows what they're doing." The only person available was Mr. James Arvay, who is an NDP lawyer out of British Columbia, in order to sue Albertans. [interjections] Yeah. That's right. That's right.

Then, as they continued to break our electrical system, we had what's known as the Balancing Pool, and the Balancing Pool was bleeding a million dollars a day – a million dollars a day – to the point where they panicked. They absolutely panicked. Do you know what they did? Do you know what they did? They brought in I think it was Bill 43, which gave unprecedented powers to the energy minister to bypass Treasury Board, to bypass all the checks and balances so they could take money out of the treasury and stuff it into the Balancing Pool. That's how bad they broke the system. So what you are experiencing now as far as power prices in Alberta is a direct result of how the NDP broke the system.

And you know what they did? Some of the folks were talking about this: the transitioning off coal. Do you want to know why the coal companies don't complain about that? I'll tell you why. The NDP paid them off. That's right. Madam Speaker, we are paying and have been paying roughly about \$150 million a year for stranded coal assets, and we will be paying that until 2030. That's right. The NDP are just the gift that keeps on giving, aren't they, huh? Just the gift that keeps on giving. That's right.

We talk about the \$80 billion worth of debt that they left us, the \$26 billion that is coming up for maturity at 5 per cent interest, Madam Speaker. I mean, you don't have to be a mathematician to know that that's a lot of money. That's right. Money that could be spent on hospitals, money that could be spent on education, money that could be spent on public safety. But, no, we've got to continue to pay for the NDP debt. That is their legacy: a broken electrical

system, high rates that we're paying right now. The NDP are a disaster, and they will never be a government in this province again.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. McDougall: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today it is my pleasure to rise and speak to Motion 16. [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. McDougall: This motion will reassure Albertans that our government remains committed to our promise of making life more affordable by protecting Albertans from the undue overreach of the federal government and to ensure that Albertans have continued access to affordable and reliable electricity. This motion is rooted in the fundamental constitutional principle of provincial jurisdiction and the protection of Albertans' interests. It addresses a critical issue that strikes at the heart of our province's economic well-being and energy security. It reflects the urgent need to defend Alberta's sovereign economic interests and the livelihoods of Albertans from federal overreach.

Motion 16 underscores the essence of Alberta's legislative authority as enshrined in section 92A of the Constitution Act, 1867, which grants exclusive jurisdiction to the Alberta Legislature over the development of electrical energy within our province. I suggest that members opposite may want to look at that Constitution again.

4:40

It is within this context that we must evaluate the federal initiative, the clean electricity regulation proposed by Justin Trudeau, Steven Guilbeault, and the NDP-Liberal alliance. It is important to state clearly that the clean electricity regulations and net zero by 2035 mandate not only overstep the boundaries of federal jurisdiction but also threaten the very fabric of Alberta's electric industry. The imposition of unattainable emission standards and arbitrary timelines jeopardizes the stability and reliability of our provincial grid, thereby increasing the risk of widespread blackouts, brownouts, especially during extreme weather conditions, which Albertans are all too familiar with.

Trudeau's proposed regulations would impose significant financial burdens on Albertans, with estimates suggesting the expenditure of hundreds of billions of dollars within a 10-year period. Such exorbitant costs coupled with the uncertainty created by the clean electricity regulations deter investment in emissions-reducing technologies and impede the growth of our energy sector. Motion 16 highlights the stark contrast between Alberta's long-term energy objectives and the federal initiative's nearsighted approach. While our government remains committed to achieving a carbon-neutral power grid and economy by 2050, the Ottawa clean electricity regulations would impose unrealistic net-zero electricity grid targets by 2035, undermining the feasibility of Alberta's comprehensive strategy and threatening the reliability and affordability of electricity for millions of Albertans.

Justin Trudeau's out-of-touch government has failed to recognize and appreciate the fact that the energy needs in Canada vary province to province. We have seen provinces like British Columbia, Manitoba, and Quebec, where hydroelectric power is viable and even an attractive option. In these three provinces hydroelectricity represents 85 per cent or more of their electricity supply. In Ontario the combination of hydro and nuclear power represents over 75 per cent of their energy needs. In contrast, provinces like Alberta and Saskatchewan, without access to hydro or in the near term nuclear, have harnessed natural gas and abundant sunlight hours to fuel our energy needs. The reality is that our geography significantly influences the paths and timelines available

to us, and we all strive for more realistic and achievable net-zero electricity.

The federal government's proposed regulations are unrealistic for provinces without enough baseload hydro or nuclear electricity, period. Our provinces are unique, and we must travel on the appropriate path to reach our long-term net-zero goals. The proposed clean electricity regulations risk compromising the reliability and affordability of our electricity supply here in Alberta and in other provinces with similar realities.

Madam Speaker, I would like to once again emphasize that our government remains committed to our 2050 net-zero targets. It is Trudeau's imposition of an unrealistic and ideologically motivated timeline of 2035 that this motion seeks to oppose. Our province is committed to reducing emissions, and our track record speaks for itself. It is a fact that Alberta has already reduced electricity emissions by 53 per cent between 2005 and 2021, and we are confident that our plan will lead to a reliable and affordable carbon-neutral power grid by 2050. Yet our success doesn't negate the regional realities we face. A nation-wide, one-size-fits-all regulation to achieve a net-zero electricity grid by 2035, as proposed by the federal government, is not only impractical, but for the hard-working, everyday Albertans who depend on a secure grid reliant on natural gas, it is downright dangerous.

Ottawa has no business making Alberta electricity less affordable. Our Confederation is stronger when we embrace flexibility and regional differences and when our federal government respects our constitutionally protected areas of provincial jurisdiction. Surely, elected representatives in this House are not proposing that our resource and electricity markets and industry should be decided by Laurentian or central Toronto elites. We must ensure that our Canadians and, particularly, Albertans have access to safe, clean, reliable, and affordable energy for decades to come. It is therefore in response to this absurd one-size-fits-all approach by the Trudeau-NDP alliance that Motion 16 sets forth a clear and pragmatic course of action to protect Albertans from federal overreach.

Firstly, Motion 16 calls upon the Legislative Assembly to affirm the unconstitutional nature of the clean energy regulations and assert Alberta's exclusive jurisdiction over the development and management of electrical energy resources. By doing so, we will send a resounding message to Ottawa that Alberta will not yield to federal overreach that threatens our economic prosperity and energy security.

Secondly, the motion reinforces the imperative of developing electrical system reforms in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including industry, Indigenous communities, and regulatory bodies. These reforms would aim to safeguard the affordability and reliability of Alberta's electricity grid, ensuring uninterrupted access to energy for all Albertans.

Motion 16 represents a decisive step toward safeguarding Alberta's sovereignty and economic prosperity in the face of federal encroachment. It is incumbent upon us as stewards of the province and as Alberta's elected representatives to stand united in defence of our jurisdictional rights and the well-being of Albertans. As proud and loyal Canadians we are also standing up for our Canadian Constitution and the principles by which Canada was created. Therefore, I call on all members of this Assembly, including the

members opposite, to support this motion as it is in the interest of all Albertans irrespective of their party and political affiliations.

Let us remain steadfast in our commitment to preserving Alberta's energy independence and shaping a future defined by resilience, innovation, and prosperity for all Albertans and for generations to come.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others to speak to Government Motion 16?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 16 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:48 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

Al-Guneid	Elmeligi	Loyola
Arcand-Paul	Goehring	Metz
Batten	Haji	Phillips
Boparai	Hayter	Renaud
Brar	Hoyle	Sabir
Ceci	Ip	Sigurdson, L.
Chapman	Irwin	Sweet
Deol	Kasawski	Tejada
Eggen	Kayande	Wright, P.
Ellingson		

Totals: For – 46 Against – 28

[Government Motion 16 carried]

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn the Assembly until tomorrow, February 29, at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:06 p.m.]

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