



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, May 9, 2024

Day 49

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Amery, Hon. Mickey K., ECA, KC, Calgary-Cross (UC),
Deputy Government House Leader
Arcand-Paul, Brooks, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA,
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)
Batten, Diana M.B., Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
Boitchenko, Andrew, Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Boparai, Parmeet Singh, Calgary-Falconridge (NDP)
Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)
Brar, Gurinder, Calgary-North East (NDP)
Calahoo Stonehouse, Jodi, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
Chapman, Amanda, Calgary-Beddington (NDP)
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
de Jonge, Chantelle, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)
Dyck, Nolan B., Grande Prairie (UC)
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Ellingson, Court, Calgary-Foothills (NDP)
Ellis, Hon. Mike, ECA, Calgary-West (UC),
Deputy Premier
Elmeligi, Sarah, Banff-Kananaskis (NDP)
Eremenko, Janet, Calgary-Currie (NDP)
Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC),
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Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP),
Official Opposition House Leader
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Haji, Sharif, Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Hayter, Julia K.U., Calgary-Edgemont (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, ECA, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horner, Hon. Nate S., ECA, Drumheller-Stettler (UC)
Hoyle, Rhiannon, Edmonton-South (NDP)
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., ECA, Taber-Warner (UC)
Ip, Nathan, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP)
Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche
(UC)
Johnson, Jennifer, Lacombe-Ponoka (Ind)
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McDougall, Myles, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)
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(UC)
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Petrovic, Chelsae, Livingstone-Macleod (UC)
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, ECA, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
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Sabir, Hon. Irfan, ECA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP),
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Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC),
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Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, ECA, Calgary-Shaw (UC)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. R.J., ECA, Highwood (UC)
Sinclair, Scott, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)
Smith, Hon. Danielle, ECA, Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC),
Premier
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),
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Tejada, Lizette, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
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Deputy Government House Leader
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)
Wright, Justin, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UC)
Wright, Peggy K., Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC),
Deputy Government Whip
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)

Party standings:

United Conservative: 28

New Democrat: 38

Independent: 1

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Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
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Scott Sinclair	Parliamentary Secretary for Indigenous Policing
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Northern Development

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Rowswell
Boitchenko
Bouchard
Brar
Hunter
Kasawski
Kayande
Wiebe

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Cyr
de Jonge
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Stephan
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Chair: Mr. Getson
Deputy Chair: Mr. Long
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Ellingson
Hunter
Ip
Lovely
Rowswell
Sabir
Wright, J.

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Lunty
Metz
Petrovic
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Tejada

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Getson
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Phillips
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Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

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Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Mr. Rowswell
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Al-Guneid
Armstrong-Homeniuk
Dyck
Eggen
Hunter
McDougall
Sinclair
Sweet

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 9, 2024

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our King and 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 interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Hon. members, it being the last sitting day of the week, we will now be led in the singing of *God Save the King* by Ms Nicole Williams.

Hon. Members:

God save our gracious King,
Long live our noble King,
God save the King!
Send him victorious,
Happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us,
God save the King!

The Speaker: Hon. members, I trust there will be no unsportsman-like penalties today.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Well, hon. members, it's my great pleasure to introduce to you and through me a great group of individuals who are joining us in the galleries today. Our constituency assistants and staff are often the first point of contact for people that we serve in our communities. Their jobs can be very rewarding but also very demanding. We have over 60 constituency employees here today participating in the spring constituency employee learning and development seminar, which is held each year. It includes programming that is targeted to support them in their unique roles. Over the lunch hour we had an opportunity to recognize the contributions of many of them who have served the Legislative Assembly for five, 10, and 15 years. I invite them to all rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock has a school group.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three classes from the Barrhead elementary school, 70 kids all in total. They are here to enjoy learning about the democracy that we are able to enjoy in this land. I would ask that you all please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Acadia on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Member Batten: Perfect. It's my pleasure to rise and welcome the school Connect Charter, grade 6, from the lovely constituency of Calgary-Glenmore. If you could please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Excellent. Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce to you and through you Janet Norman and Heidi Senft, both my constituency staff up in Grande Prairie. Janet has been with me since the beginning, and they're both just rocking it, so I want to introduce you. Please receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I do have a very, very special introduction to make here to the Assembly. There's a special guest joining us today in the Speaker's gallery. Hunter the Lynx is the Edmonton Oilers' official mascot, and he took some time away from a B.C. fishing trip to come back and celebrate the Edmonton Oilers. We're very excited about the playoff run they are on. For the benefit of members from Calgary, who are not familiar with what that is, the playoffs take place after the regular season. It's the annual elimination tournament to determine the winner of the Stanley Cup. Yada, yada, something, something '89. I don't know how far it goes.

Hunter, for those of you who don't know, was born and raised in the Edmonton river valley and he now calls the Edmonton Ice District home. He has family members located in every province across Canada. When he isn't attending community events and supporting the Oilers, Hunter works nights controlling the city's snowshoe hare population. And one other interesting fact . . . [interjection]. I don't know much, but that does seem to be fairly unparliamentary. As you know, I do enjoy a good fun fact on occasion. Lynx primarily hunt by stalking their prey, lulling them into a false sense of security before ultimately going in for the kill just to make things interesting, much like the Edmonton Oilers are currently doing to the Vancouver Canucks. Please rise and give Hunter the warm welcome of the Assembly. [Standing ovation]

Hon. Members: Let's go, Oilers!

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Now I'd like to see the hon. Member for Sherwood Park top that.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the better part of the last decade my family has made two camping trips, one to Mabel Lake, B.C., and one to the Kootenay Plains. We meet with groups there, and around the campfires of Mabel Lake and Kootenay Plains we solve the problems of Alberta. And it just so happens that two of my friends from my camping trips, one from Mabel Lake and one from Kootenay Plains, are here with their kids, so I would like to invite Mike Morden and Beck Morden to stand and Scott Mar and Neva Mar to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-East has an introduction.

Ms Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the very best constituency assistant that there ever was, who has also just been celebrated and honoured for her 15 years of service to the Legislative Assembly. I am her favourite MLA that she has served but not the only one. I ask Cindy Koch to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you my constituency assistant. I will say that not only is she a wonderful person; I owe my political career to her, and I couldn't be more grateful for all of her selfless work that she does on my behalf for the constituents of my constituency and the

province of Alberta. Angela, please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Stripes. I rise to introduce to you and through you a good friend of mine, Reed Clarke. Reed has spent his career building sport in the city of Edmonton, and now he is the CEO of Sport Edmonton. Reed, please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great honour to rise and introduce to you and through you a lovely individual from the charming constituency of Cypress-Medicine Hat, Ms Danielle Williams. Danielle, please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

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

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House from my Fairview constituency office – and please stand as I say your name – Tammy Schiml and Dianne Nellis. I also would like to introduce Patrick Malkin from my office here in Forestry and Parks here in the Legislature. Please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take the opportunity to introduce Debbie McCarthy from Grande Prairie-Wapiti. She manages my office and does a great job. We started this journey together. Please rise and enjoy the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Boitchenko: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you Wendy Snow, who dedicated 10 years of her life for Albertans and in my constituency. I would like her to please stand up and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Ms Lovely: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Chamber Mr. Rod Krips, who is from my Camrose community. He's a retired CAO from the towns of Daysland and Viking. Mr. Krips, please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Chamber.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Mr. Speaker, to you and through you I'd like to introduce my two constituency assistants, who are celebrating five years with us, Sharon Lencewich and Jess Arsenaault. They're amazing gals, and they look after me when I'm here, and they look after my constituents. Thank you, guys. I love you.

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, through you and to you I'd like to introduce the amazing team that I have in Red Deer, Burton Bailey and Emma Kunaka, who I could not manage without. I am so thrilled to introduce them to you. Please rise and get the warm welcome of our Assembly.

Thank you.

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

Mr. McDougall: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you two individuals who run my life from the

constituency, Althea Adams, who had worked for a previous minister, ex-school trustee, and keeps me honest and educated about education policies amongst other things; and Brooklyn Bauerlein, a student at the University of Calgary.

Thank you very much.

Members' Statements

Bill 20

Mr. Kasawski: Control: that's what the authoritarian Bill 20 is really about. In an attempt to control everything, the UCP is ripping away not just the rights of voters in Alberta but also the ability of municipalities to effectively serve Albertans. This bill is an attack on local democracy, something that the Premier likely would have argued herself just a few years ago, back when she used to speak out against government overreach and even demanded corporate and union donations be removed from local elections.

But her tune has changed. She's in the Premier's office. She loves adding blue tape and consolidating power. She's not the only one; all the UC MLAs are providing backup vocals. The rest of the members opposite seem to have no problem talking on and on about federal overreach, yet look how comfortable they are giving themselves the power to override municipal decisions.

It's time to stop with the hypocrisy. It's time for the UCP to stop the flip-flopping and stop picking fights with Albertans. What we need is the government to start focusing on what really matters to Albertans. Our broken health care system needs fixing. Our schools are overcrowded and underfunded, and the affordability crisis has pushed thousands of families to the limit. Bill 20 does nothing to address these issues and help everyday Albertans.

Bill 20 is a distraction from what's important. It's yet another pet project that the UCP is busily working away on while Albertans fall farther behind. It's a story we're seeing time and time again, just like with our pensions, just like with Alberta's police force. Albertans have been loud and clear. They didn't ask for any of this. They're not asking the UCP to override council decisions. They are not begging the UCP to consolidate power into the Premier's office and cabinet. They are not asking the government for overreach of any kind, be it federal or provincial.

This authoritarian legislation has no place in Alberta. Bill 20 needs to go.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake has a statement to make.

Supports for First Responders

Mr. Sinclair: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Wildland firefighters are heroes. When Albertans are forced from their homes due to wildfires, these brave men and women are on the front lines to protect these communities. They don't think twice. They rush in. They sacrifice to preserve homes and livelihoods of people they've often never met before. We saw this last summer, when they saved the towns of Drayton Valley, High Prairie, Entwistle, many other homes in Parkland and Lac Ste. Anne, or in 2011, when they saved a good part of my hometown of Slave Lake.

I remember vividly. In 2011 both my wife and I were trapped in the southeast neighbourhood in Slave Lake because the fire had crossed one of the exits and we were bottlenecked in. Although I had many friends and family lose their homes that day, I'm grateful both my wife and I survived. Tragically, these firefighters sometimes pay the ultimate sacrifice and aren't so lucky.

In recognition of this sacrifice, Alberta's government has expanded the coverage of our heroes' fund for first responders to

now include those who fight, suppress, or extinguish a wildfire such as firefighters on the ground, helicopter and water bomber crews. This change took effect on April 26 through order in council and will make them eligible for a \$100,000 tax repayment. No amount of money can bring back their loved ones, Mr. Speaker, but this will help ease the burdens on the families.

We also know not all heroes wear fire helmets. Alberta's government is working to support all first responders and emergency workers in this great province. Front-line workers have a higher risk and rate of posttraumatic stress injuries than the general population. Between 2019 and 2023 1,418 Workers' Compensation Board claims were filed by first responders costing \$227 million while the human cost is impossible to properly account or measure.

Today we announced the latest recipients of the supporting psychological health and first responders grant program. This year we've awarded \$1.5 million in grants, including 13 for service providers, and we're all grateful for their service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 20

Mr. Ip: Mr. Speaker, there are no other words for it. Bill 20 is an attack on the very idea of local democracy and the rule of law. With this piece of legislation, the UCP have declared that they believe that local elections and local democratic choices are simply options for the Premier's office to consider and not a reflection of the will of Albertans.

If passed, this authoritarian legislation will turn Alberta's local councils into simply field offices for the cabinet, where the Premier can, without any warning or for any reason, fire councillors, mayors, reeves or overturn any law that the UCP disagrees with. It is a recipe for disaster.

But, sadly, this isn't the first time that the UCP has attempted to put their thumbs on the scales of democracy. Who can forget how the members opposite fired the Election Commissioner investigating their leadership race and a member of their caucus, who can forget how the UCP tried with their first Bill 10 to give cabinet the power to rewrite laws in secret, and who can forget how this Premier's very first bill tried to give the cabinet the power to change laws behind closed doors? Albertans spoke out then, and they are speaking out now.

Mr. Speaker, the concept of democracy is that no one vote should count more than anyone else's and that all voters are equal. This is a principle that is directly challenged by this bill, that gives the 25 people in the UCP cabinet the ability to arbitrarily overturn the votes of Albertans. This government can try and spin this bill all they want. They can try and convince Albertans that nothing will change or that they can be trusted with this power to veto local elections on a whim, but Albertans simply don't trust this UCP government. Bill 20 must be withdrawn. Kill the bill.

Access to Epinephrine

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Mr. Speaker, May is Food Allergy Awareness Month. Today I would like to speak about something of great importance to myself and all of those with allergies: epinephrine.

Epinephrine is a medication which, when administered to someone experiencing an allergic reaction, can be life-saving intervention. Having witnessed my daughter fight for her life from a severe allergic reaction, I cannot emphasize strongly enough the importance of advocating for more accessible epinephrine in Alberta. This is why I took such great joy in the passing of my first private member's bill,

the Protection of Students with Life-threatening Allergies Act in 2019. Bill 201 was a culmination of passionate work invested by Alberta Health, Alberta Education, Food Allergy Canada, myself, and others.

The mandatory stocking of epinephrine autoinjectors, creation of a risk-reduction plan, and mandatory training for school staff were all new steps which are now making life safer for students in school. Not only does this keep our students safer, but it also offers some peace of mind to the educators who are responsible for their safety in school.

Having been lucky enough to draw a private member's motion this session, I hope to use it to further that goal. The goal of this motion will be to make epinephrine more accessible in public areas outside schools. Specifically, this motion would call on the government to look into allowing school bus carriers, EMS operators, municipal fire departments, and businesses such as restaurants to carry epinephrine for emergency situations by cutting the current red tape in place. This would allow Albertans with allergies to enjoy everything Alberta has to offer with the peace of mind that they can be helped if they experience a severe allergic reaction.

May is Food Allergy Awareness Month. During this month I want all Albertans who have severe food allergies to know that I and our government are committed to ensuring your safety and well-being.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Bill 20

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, municipal leaders across the province are speaking out on Bill 20, including in the Premier's home riding, where their mayor said, "Pay attention to this one Alberta." It's brutal for everyone. One Strathcona county councillor – the minister of technology will want to hear this – said, "Bill 20 looks to be solving a problem that doesn't exist and may be contrary to democracy." To the Premier: will she finally apologize for this attack on democracy, stop this attempted power grab, and simply kill the bill?

Ms Smith: No, Mr. Speaker, and part of the reason for that is there are a number of provisions that are going to make it easier for municipalities to build affordable housing. The mayor of Brooks actually came up with a really smart idea to allow for a five-year property tax reprieve phased in to get more housing built in the riding. We're actually making that provision available to all municipalities. We are also taking both municipal and education property taxes off affordable housing, and we're also going to allow the community-revitalization levy to be used to build more affordable and attainable housing. We like those things.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, more than a few of the 260 communities represented by Alberta Municipalities are also represented by UCP MLAs. In a letter written yesterday, the AM said that the bill "cannot be salvaged" and that the government is "blindly ploughing ahead regardless of what . . . Albertans think, want, and need . . . Bill 20 is rushed, deeply flawed, and full of half-baked changes that do not withstand scrutiny." To the Premier: why is she forcing her MLAs to ignore their own constituents while she refuses to kill this bill?

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, we often get phone calls when a municipality steps outside what their mandate is supposed to be. Remember that municipalities are responsible for road maintenance and water and waste-water utilities, municipal fire services, recreation services, public libraries. They're not supposed to be instituting mask bylaws or having excessive taxes on their local access fees or asking for decriminalization of all drugs or banning natural gas home heating in homes or making permanent residents eligible to vote. These are the kinds of things . . .

Ms Notley: That's a lie.

Ms Smith: . . . we've been watching across the country, and we won't let it happen here.

Mr. Amery: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted.

Ms Notley: That last thing is simply not true.

The UCP takes rural communities for granted, and the Premier has stopped listening completely.

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

Ms Notley: Her minister claims random heads-up phone calls count as consultation, but no one who has received those calls agrees, and the vast majority who did not also assert they were never consulted. The Premier knows consulting after the bill has passed is not a thing, so to the Premier, again: why not at least create some truth after the fact? Scrap the bill and actually consult Albertans.

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have consultations going on all the time. In fact, at the moment we have 192 consultations currently happening; 116 of them have public engagement sessions as a part of it. We had two consultations on the proposed changes that we were making because they were in the minister's mandate letter. We all consult with our various municipalities. We just came through constituency week, where I can tell you we heard from residents, we heard from municipalities, and as a result we are making two modifications to the two sections of the act that they have the most problem with. Those amendments will be introduced in the Committee of the Whole, and I think they'll be happy with them.

The Speaker: An additional point of order is noted at 1:53.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall has a question.

Ethics Commissioner Appointment

Mr. Sabir: Mr. Speaker, the Premier stated yesterday that she agrees with the UCP's recommendation to appoint a UCP insider as Ethics Commissioner because "we are all going to accept the result because this individual is appointed for the next five years." This Chamber hasn't even seen a motion to confirm any recommendation, yet the Premier stated that it's a done deal. Will the Premier please tell this Assembly when she directed the UCP committee members to choose this candidate?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, nothing is further from the truth. Mr. McLeod was selected through a select special committee that was comprised of both government and opposition MLAs. The process involved the public service. It involved an arm's-length, third-party organization that thoroughly conducted a vetting process of Mr. McLeod. Those recommendations will come to this Legislature for further debate in due course. We're happy to have a robust debate

about it, but I am confident that the committee did its job and did it well.

Thank you.

Mr. Sabir: Mr. Speaker, the Premier stated yesterday, "We are all going to accept the result." It seems like clear direction for how she expects her caucus to vote. Albertans should be very concerned that this entire process was already decided from the beginning. It is insulting to the other candidates who went through the interview process, a process that shifted halfway through when the Premier's own whip was substituted into the committee without having participated in the interviews. Why is the Premier supporting the appointment of a UCP donor, a former nomination candidate, as the province's Ethics Commissioner?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, the hypocrisy knows no limits. Once again, a select special committee comprised of members of both sides of this House conducted a thorough review of all the candidates. An independent organization conducted a thorough and comprehensive vetting of all candidates. [interjection] The recommendations of that committee will come before this House in short order . . .

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

Mr. Amery: . . . and we will all have the opportunity to debate. Mr. Speaker, Mr. McLeod is an eminently qualified individual, with qualifications in both the public and private sectors that span for decades, and we're incredibly proud to hear that he was the recommended individual.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 1:56.

Mr. Sabir: Mr. Speaker, in the committee the Member for Airdrie-East defended recommending this UCP insider by saying that she expected UCP insider Shawn McLeod would stand up to the NDP. This hyperpartisan comment reveals why exactly this person was recommended. Albertans should have no faith in the UCP recommendation. Will the Premier reject this partisan crony appointment of a UCP insider to be our next Ethics Commissioner and restart the process so the entire province can be confident in the independence of this legislative office?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, the government will do no such thing. We will not interfere with an independent process. The NDP have been disparaging Albertans for years. They've opposed our oil and gas industry. They've brought in and designed the carbon tax. They put the province in the worst financial position in the history of this province, and we will never listen to them or their advice with respect to what they think is better for this province. They spend more time disparaging this province than anyone else.

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

Bills 18 and 20

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, nearly everyone I talk to in our downtown community is deeply concerned about the UCP's bills 18 and 20. Businesses, postsecondary, arts venues, developers, local residents: they're all deeply concerned that a Premier and government who already refuse to listen or collaborate are now seizing more power to override and undermine local decisions and gatekeep every dollar they're able to access. These bills create incredible uncertainty for everyone invested in the heart of our city, and they agree with leaders across the province that the bills need

to be scrapped. My question to the Premier is simple. Will you listen and scrap these bills?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, we do listen to Albertans, and one of the things that we heard from Alberta municipalities is that they wanted another billion dollars in revenue. Part of the main part of Bill 18 is to go from half a billion in housing funding to \$2 billion like B.C. has got with the same population. It's a billion and a half dollars. I know the NDP doesn't care about having that money to build homes, including that member, in downtown Edmonton. Some of that money could go there potentially, but, no, they don't want anything that's good for Alberta. This is what we've come to expect from the folks across the aisle.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, speaking of housing, Mr. Speaker, for years this government dragged its feet in their responsibility to address the root causes of social disorder. While they did that, the city of Edmonton and the government of Canada stepped up, took real action, funded and built 210 units of supportive housing. This government refused to collaborate or invest in a plan that had strong support across our community. Instead of thanking those who stepped up, now this government wants to punish them by gatekeeping every federal dollar available and focus on political posturing over actual action. To the Premier: will you just admit what everyone sees, that bills 18 and 20 are about this government's inability and unwillingness to actually listen to or work with anyone?

2:00

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, how out of touch can those members be? Social disorder that is occurring in this city, in this province, in this country is the result of policies that are NDP-Liberal policies. So we as Canadians, we as Albertans, we as the people of this country are fighting back against the NDP-Liberal policies that have made this country less safe, that have put the power in the hands of the drug dealers, have put the power in the hands of organized crime. We're saying no to that. On this side of the House we're going to support law enforcement, and we're going to push against NDP policies. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, bills 18 and 20 are bad for business at every level. When you have a Premier, a government bent on pursuing power, driven by ideology, when the only thing anyone can trust is that they'll always put their own political interests ahead of anything else, well, that's about as unattractive for investment as it gets. Investors and innovators are watching, and this government's actions are creating uncertainty that will drive them out of our downtown and out of Alberta. Real leaders earn respect and co-operation through trust and collaboration; they don't have to legislate to force people to kiss the ring. To the Premier: will you listen to my community and people from across the province, do what's right, and scrap these bills?

Mr. Jones: Mr. Speaker, do you know what was bad for investment? The NDP government from 2015 to 2019. It's in the numbers. We had an exodus of tens of billions of dollars of capital. We lost 183,000 jobs. And why? Because they increased taxes. They were antienergy. They were antibusiness. They literally told Albertans to seek employment in other provinces. They called us the embarrassing cousins. That's bad for investment, and it's the primary reason they were removed and they're the only one-time government in Alberta's history. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Presumptive WCB Coverage for Wildland Firefighters

Ms Wright: Mr. Speaker, it is my firmly held belief that all firefighters deserve respect and recognition for their selfless service to our province and our communities. When municipal firefighters get sick because of exposures they face on the job, our province covers their care, their lost wages, and treats them like the heroes they are. On the other hand, the incredible actions day in and day out of our wildland firefighters are not respected in the same way. Why are our wildland firefighters not entitled to presumptive coverage for the illnesses they suffer from exposure on the job?

Mr. Jones: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite, through you, for the thoughtful question. It's a very reasonable question and request, and that's why my department is currently reviewing the evidence that has led Ontario to change their policies on this. It's also the reason why we recently expanded our heroes' fund to include wildland firefighters, because we value the tremendous work they do, the risks they take to protect our communities, our property, and our lives.

Thank you.

Ms Wright: Every time we raise this topic of workplace illness faced by wildland firefighters, the minister has insisted that they need to look at the science. In a groundbreaking study in 2022 by the International Agency for Research on Cancer the experts found that wildland firefighting is carcinogenic. Who does the minister have reviewing the science, how much longer will these heroes be made to wait, and will the minister admit that this is just another stalling tactic designed to avoid doing the right thing?

Mr. Jones: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is insinuating that we are trying to not support our firefighters, but the evidence speaks for itself. We expanded presumptions for firefighters last year, we just expanded the heroes' fund to wildland firefighters this year, and we have committed publicly, including right now again, to review the information that has caused Ontario to change their policy because we want to provide best in class supports, presumptions, and coverages to our firefighters of all types.

Ms Wright: Recently a constituent shared their experiences on the fire line: marching a marathon, smoke in the air, burning lungs, sweating, Nomex leaching forever chemicals into skin. Alberta doesn't pay benefits to all of these workers when they get sick on the line even as they stay camped in a tent in the bush, outside cellphone coverage, beyond the comfort of a loved one's voice. Will the minister today do the right thing and pay each of these heroic firefighters their benefits, ensure they get a pension, and extend presumptive health coverage to them, just like counterparts in Ontario, Manitoba, and British Columbia?

Mr. Jones: Mr. Speaker, wildland firefighters and firefighters with cancers not on the presumptive list can apply through the regular claims process. Again, we are looking at the emerging research and science to determine if presumptions should be extended beyond their current calibration. I'm happy to meet with firefighters, as I have in the previous month, to discuss this further, and we will be there to support them every step of the way.

Bill 20
(continued)

Member Irwin: Big trivia fan here, and it seems like a good day for a little UCP MLA trivia. Who said this? Quote: we think having a level playing field, everyone playing by the same rules and taking

out the influence of corporate and union donations, is something every party should commit to. Well, it was this Premier back when she was leader of the Wildrose. Wow. So what the heck happened to the former version of that leader, who claimed to want big money out of politics but is now bringing it back with Bill 20?

Mr. McIver: It must be my birthday, Mr. Speaker, when the member talks about the bad legislation the NDP put through that actually tilted the playing field for campaigns in the NDP's favour. In the last municipal election there were nine candidates that got \$1.6 million from the unions, more of the same in Edmonton. [interjection]

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

Mr. McIver: If you look at the amount of money in campaigns, it's gone nowhere but up since they took the, quote, big money out of politics. Since the NDP legislation the money has gotten bigger, it's gotten darker, and, Mr. Speaker, Bill 20 will help to correct that.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted by the hon. the Government House Leader at 2:06.

Member Irwin: Given that that wasn't an answer to my question, let's try another MLA in this Chamber who had very specific views on corporate and union donations. This person stated that phasing out corporate and union donations is critical. One of his main priorities when he was Wildrose leader was getting big money out of politics by phasing out union and corporate donations. You guessed it. The same minister stated that this Premier wasn't able to make decisions; in fact, she waffled a lot. So how does that minister – that's the Minister of Energy and Minerals – feel about waffling on this issue? Will he vote to kill Bill 20?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll repeat what I just said. The fact is that had the NDP actually done what they said they were going to do and made a sincere effort to take the big and dark money out of politics, we might be having a different conversation today, but they stacked the deck in their own favour intentionally. They tilted the playing field so their candidates would have more money at the provincial and municipal levels. They have no right to talk about this. They did everything in their power to tilt the electoral playing field in their favour, and we are going to fix that.

Member Irwin: Final round of UCP MLA trivia. Another cabinet minister once stated: we believe that the only influence in politics should be the influence of the voter. And on big money in politics he said . . .

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

Member Irwin: . . . "This practice is not just wrong; it's dead wrong" and that legislation on electoral fairness must do more than lip service in promoting democratic values in Alberta. So this time will the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services please state on the record why he has changed his mind on promoting electoral fairness, and will he kill Bill 20?

The Speaker: It's almost like at the beginning of question period I had hoped that there would be no unsportsmanlike penalties. Following the rules by not using a preamble would be a really good start to having no penalties called, but a point of order is noted at 2:07.

Mr. McIver: Well, I'm not extra good at trivia, Mr. Speaker, but I do remember that since 1905 there was only one government in the

history of Alberta fired after only one term in office. For a dollar? Oh, it was the NDP. We all win.

Mr. Speaker, part of that was because of the terrible legislation on campaign financing they put in place. They said that it was meant to be a level playing field. It never was. Nobody believed it then; nobody believes it now. The numbers and what's happened in between has proven that. I don't think they'll ever get back in government because of stuff like this. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Arts and Culture Funding

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is home to hundreds of world-class artists. These artists work day and night creating amazing works of art that make our province a more vibrant place to live. Through Budget 2024 Alberta's government has clearly shown they are dedicated to promoting and supporting the arts here in Alberta. To the Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women: can she tell Albertans how she is promoting and supporting local artists through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts?

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is a top destination for the arts in Canada, North America, and the world. The reason our province is a world-class arts destination is because of the outstanding artists that call Alberta home. These artists help tell our province's story and make us proud to call Alberta home. One of the ways we're helping promote, support, and celebrate Alberta artists is through a new exhibit at the Royal Alberta Museum called Here & Now. This exhibit features 12 Alberta artists displaying themes of identity, strength, landscape, and ability, and I encourage everyone to visit the RAM's new art exhibit, open now until September 29.

2:10

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

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's government is dedicated to supporting the arts within the province and given that we need to invest in the arts to help continue Alberta's impressive economic momentum and given that this economic momentum comes after the deplorable NDP government rammed our province's economy into the ground, hindering our ability to support the arts, and further given that we have seen how the arts can help Alberta's economy, to the same minister: can she please tell Albertans why it is so important to fund the arts?

Ms Fir: Mr. Speaker, what's good for the arts is good for Alberta. In Budget 2024 we're investing \$33.1 million into the arts – and we're investing this much because the applied and live performance arts industry contributes more than \$1.1 billion in GDP and sustains over 1,500 jobs – with record investments in the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, Arts Commons, the Winspear Centre. The arts not only tell our province's stories; they help Albertans get jobs, and the arts help continue our province's economic momentum.

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

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that funding the arts creates jobs, boosts provincial GDP, and solidifies Alberta as a world-class arts destination and given that the Member for Calgary-Buffalo has not read the budget and seen the impressive increase in

arts funding for the province and further given that the member opposite is under the impression that this government doesn't fund programs that engage youth with the arts, to the same minister: can you please set the record straight and provide details on how this government is funding programs that engage youth with the arts?

Ms Fir: Mr. Speaker, since 2019 Alberta's government provided over 600 grants, totalling over \$42 million, to projects that engage kids in the arts and other programming; \$121,000 for arts in summer school; over \$2.3 million to the artists and education program. We support the travelling exhibition program, which has visited over 440 schools; 25 CFEP and CIP grants, totalling over \$920,000, went directly to organizations that engage youth with the arts; and we support jubilee school, which has provided arts education to over 57,000 students.

Bill 18

Mr. Ellingson: Mr. Speaker, the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta are not only two of the top five research institutions in Canada; they are also leading the nation in start-up companies. Indeed, the University of Calgary has been the leading start-up university for the past few years, generating more companies from research performed than any other university in Canada. Why is the Minister of Advanced Education in support of this gatekeeping Bill 18 when it puts the research behind these start-up companies at risk?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, I definitely support Bill 18. We know that our universities here in Alberta are not as competitive as others in the nation, so this is a great opportunity to collect information, collect this data, work with the postsecondaries, and get more federal funding into our postsecondaries here in Alberta. I have spoken to the postsecondary presidents and boards of governors, and they are supportive of this approach to get more federal dollars here into the province.

Mr. Ellingson: Given that research is being conducted across all sectors, including foundational sectors in Alberta such as agriculture, given that there is increasing concern about food security and food supply chains along with growing agriculture as core to our economy, given that the founders of two companies profiled by the University of Calgary, Bee Energy and AgGene, were awarded NSERC grants to further their research, leading to the creation of their companies, why is the Minister of Advanced Education supporting Bill 18, that could negatively impact this vital research advancing food and agriculture right here in Alberta?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, Bill 18 will support this research even further because we are going to work with the postsecondaries. We're going to talk about possible exemptions. I have already spoken to the postsecondaries about this process. Of course, the more information we have, the more we know about what's being funded, the more the province can actually leverage that funding and partner with the postsecondaries. Bill 18 is going to open up these opportunities to have these conversations and to bring more funding in.

Mr. Ellingson: Given that health and life sciences are the most important concern of Albertans and form a significant portion of both Alberta's budget and economy and given that the founders of groundbreaking children and mental health companies like Fledge received SSHRC grants to advance their research and given that cutting-edge companies like Stroke.AI received Canadian institutes of health grants to advance their research into aneurysms, supporting

the launch of their company, why is the Minister of Advanced Education supporting Bill 18 when this kind of incredible research is launching companies that are addressing the health and well-being of Albertans?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that there is incredible research being done here in Alberta. Clearly, the member opposite is doing his own research and becoming more aware of the research that's being done. That is why Bill 18 is going to help support these efforts in understanding what kind of research is being undertaken across the postsecondaries and, again, finding ways to leverage federal dollars to bring more dollars into Alberta. I think the NDP should be more concerned about that aspect than any other aspect that they've brought up.

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

Student Psycho-educational Assessment

Ms Hayter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Psycho-eds are critical. They change lives, they unlock students' potential, and are often the difference between struggling students and thriving students. This is why I introduced Bill 208, the Psycho-Educational Assessment Access Act. In less than 24 hours I have been overwhelmed with support for this bill. To the minister: will the UCP join us and vote in support of Bill 208, a bill that Alberta students and teachers desperately need?

Mr. Nicolaidis: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm looking forward to further debate on the bill on Monday and in subsequent days to be able to explore the merits of the bill in greater detail and additional time to conduct further analysis. We firmly believe that it's critical and essential to ensure that our students receive the support that they need, especially in early years. It's part of the reason why we've mandated literacy and numeracy screening in grades 1 to 3, to ensure that we're assessing all kids and to ensure that they are able to operate at grade level and, of course, we're able to provide intervention supports for those students who do need some additional support.

Ms Hayter: Given that right now schools have to triage students for funded psycho-eds, which leaves most students and families paying out of pocket, and given that psycho-eds cost \$2,000, \$3,000, and even \$5,000 here in Alberta, a price that simply is too high for families navigating the UCP's affordability crisis, and given that it is this government's job to fund psycho-eds and ensure all children have a learning environment where they can thrive, the minister knows this problem exists and got worse in COVID. Why hasn't the UCP funded it and fixed it? They've had five years.

Mr. Nicolaidis: Well, Mr. Speaker, in fact, we absolutely recognized those concerns during COVID, which is precisely why we provided targeted funding to our school boards, to ensure that they could conduct psycho-ed assessments and other assessments to evaluate learning loss. It's part of the reason why we subsequently mandated literacy and numeracy screening and assessments in grades 1 to 3 in order to be able to catch up to some of that learning loss as well. We're continuing to evaluate the supports that our school divisions need. In Budget '23 we provided \$121 million over three years to help support the growing complexity in our classrooms as well.

Ms Hayter: Given that over half of Alberta teachers do not think that the psycho-educational assessments that they request will be done within one school year and given that this leaves students

struggling grade after grade with no understanding of why they are facing the problems that they are and given that this takes a huge toll on their mental health, leaving students with depression, anxiety, and undiagnosed learning disabilities, and given that Bill 208 presents a real solution – assessing teacher training, classroom funding alongside psycho-educational access – can the minister explain why supporting teachers, students, and parents isn't a priority of this government?

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, Mr. Speaker, supporting students and teachers and parents and families is a top priority for the government. We are absolutely committed to doing that. In Budget '23, as I mentioned, we provided \$121 million in new funding over the next three years. That money is going directly to our school boards so that they can do this important work, so that they can hire psychologists, so that they can hire educational assistants, they can conduct psycho-ed assessments and other learning assessments that are necessary.

In Budget '24 we've also invested \$1.2 billion over the next three years to help address enrolment growth and pressures that we're seeing in our schools. We're continuing to build schools as well in our growing communities. We will be there for families and students every day, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

2:20

Support for Nurses

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week is National Nursing Week. As a former registered nurse working in long-term care, I recognize the hard work and commitment our nurses put in on a daily basis. Nurses are on the front line dealing with emergencies, trauma, family crises, mental health injuries, and so much more. Given that they are constantly caring for others, often with great self-sacrifice and putting their own mental health aside, to the Minister of Health: what is this government currently doing to ensure that we are caring for our nurses on the front line?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member. Our government cares deeply about all nurses, and we recognize that they have gone above and beyond during the past few years serving our province and caring for the Albertans that we all love. To show our appreciation and support, our government has made significant investments in nursing education to ensure Albertans can add more nurses over time and provide opportunities for existing nurses to increase their skills and progress in their careers. In fact, breaking news: about 1,000 nurses have recently applied to fill the 50 spots at the U of A for the nurse practitioner program.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister. Given that according to the government of Canada "presumptive legislation facilitates workers' compensation coverage by presuming, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, that the injury or illness is work related," given the trauma that registered nurses can be faced with on a daily basis, to the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade: does this government recognize the trauma that registered nurses may be dealing with and the need for presumptive legislation for these front-line workers?

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

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the member for the important question. We recognize the tremendous work of our front-line nurses, the challenges that come with that work, and the need to support their mental health. It's one of the reasons we announced the recipients of our latest supporting psychological health in first responders program, which is providing \$1.5 million to 13 nonprofit organizations and six researchers. One of these recipients is developing and testing an intelligent online psycho-educational support program specifically geared to emergency health care workers, including nurses. This program will help support their well-being through the use of technology and develop skills for optimal mental health management. Previous grants are already being used to fund next generation mental health platforms to assist in identifying PTSTIs.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister. Given that Alberta was the first province to legislate presumptive legislation in 2012, with many provinces soon following suit, given that same legislation was revoked January of 2021, negatively impacting hundreds of our committed nurses and keeping them off the front line, to the same minister: when will presumptive legislation be restored?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the member again. Again, Alberta's government recognizes the tremendous efforts of our health care professionals, including nurses, and their service to Albertans. Supports are available to nurses through the normal workers' compensation process for those suffering with psychological injuries, and Alberta's government is also investing in other supports like the supporting psychological health in first responders program. AHS has internal programming and programming through our Mental Health and Addiction ministry. We will continue to look at new research regarding links between professions, including nursing, psychological injuries, and the workers' compensation system.

Provincial Review of Calgary Municipal Councillor

Member Kayande: Mr. Speaker, in defence of Bill 20 the Minister of Municipal Affairs cited the horrific case of Calgary city councillor Sean Chu, who had been reprimanded for inappropriate physical contact with a minor, a 16-year-old girl, while employed by the Calgary Police Service. This councillor was found guilty of discreditable conduct under the Police Act. The Premier announced in November 2022 that the deputy ministers of Justice and public safety would conduct a review to see whether any further action should be taken. Will the Premier commit to tabling her review into the conduct of Sean Chu in the House today?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, the folks across are stuck. With one question they are against firing councillors; with the next question they want councillors fired. They just can't decide what side of the argument they're on. It's like so many other things. It must be great being in the NDP. You can be on both sides of every argument, and then when it's done, no matter what happens, you can say: I told you so. But nobody believes it. Albertans have seen the show. They're tired of it. They don't believe it, and this is just an extension of it.

Member Kayande: Given that the Minister of Municipal Affairs failed or refused to take action in this case, claiming that he

couldn't, given that only yesterday he updated that claim by saying that he already has the power to act and given that after these allegations were revealed, the councillor was found to have shared photos of the mayor of Calgary's licence plate, an act that could have compromised her safety, can the Premier or the minister explain why this report has been hidden from the public and why he has failed to act on these serious allegations for over two years?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess I'm not even sure, but I believe it's a city of Calgary report. If it was my report, I expect I would have seen it, but no. It's a city of Calgary report, so they should probably take that up with the city of Calgary. Listen, I get letters all the time from Albertans complaining about a mayor, a reeve, a councillor, and the most common response that I send back is: talk to your municipality. They're duly elected. They have the authority. They have the responsibility to look after these issues. That's the advice, in this case, that I'd give to the hon. member across.

Member Kayande: Given that the Minister of Municipal Affairs used this case, where a 16-year-old was alleged to have been assaulted by a police officer who is still a city councillor, as a defence of Bill 20, given that the victim told me, and I quote, "My trauma from Sean Chu sexually assaulting me is not for individuals to evoke and further traumatize me in the process in order to obscure their undemocratic policy agendas such as Bill 20," will the minister today apologize to this individual for trying to use her trauma as some sort of political benefit and commit to never doing so again?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, we've evoked no such reference, but the folks across just did three times, so perhaps they should actually make the apology that they just asked for because they're the only ones here that I'm aware of that have evoked this very painful issue, very bad behaviour from a time before the councillor was elected. I certainly don't support it, I'm sure no one in this House supports it, but the only ones that have evoked that painful memory sit across the aisle. Shame on you. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Ms Gray: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:27.

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

Road Construction in Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our roads and highway systems are vital economic corridors that allow our province not only to survive but give us an ability to thrive. On the eastern edge of my constituency is the Acheson industrial park, and it's buzzing with activity. Part of the reason is the access to highway 16, the CN main rail line, and highway 60 itself. However, there is a real need to alleviate the congestion where this transportation infrastructure intersects; namely, the widening of highway 60. An overpass is required to deconflict the road and rail traffic. Can the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors please advise on the progress of the highway 60 overpass and widening?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland for this very important question and for being such a great advocate for this project.

Highway 60 is part of our provincial high-load corridor and supports the Acheson Industrial Area. That is why we're investing over \$55 million over the next three years for major road improvements to highway 60. The design work has been finalized, and the construction will start later this year on two new overpasses crossing the CN tracks, an additional overpass crossing highway 16A for northbound traffic, and four kilometres of twinning along highway 60 between highways 16A and 16. This is an important project, and we're going to get it done.

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

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is music to the ears of the folks in my area. Given that roads connect our communities and facilitate good relations, it's critical we maintain these corridors when we create them, given I'm extremely fortunate to represent the Alexis band in my constituency and given that a vital road allowance was granted by the chief and council long ago and given that construction of Nikoodi Road through the reservation allows everyone in the area the much-needed route on the west end of Lac Ste. Anne and further given that our end of the bargain was to maintain and improve this road, can the minister advise the status, plan, and timing of the upgrades to this vital road out in God's country?

The Speaker: The hon. the minister of transportation.

Mr. Dreeshen: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member for that very important question. I'm happy to inform this House that we are actually paving a 14-kilometre section along the Nikoodi Road. The paving project will begin at highway 633 and end at highway 43 and goes through the Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation. The design work is under way and will be completed this fall. Funding for construction is in the current capital plan, and the preliminary project cost is \$17 million. Construction will begin this year, and it will probably take about two construction seasons to complete this important project.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the minister, through you to him: thank you so much, sir; that's awesome. Given that highway 22, the Cowboy Trail, which runs all the way up from southern Alberta through central and what some of us consider to be northern Alberta as well, is an important economic route for people, economic activity, and for the province to survive, given that this has been identified as a major economic corridor and further given that there are segments in my area that are in vital need of repair for safety and overall performance, can the minister advise when the road will be repaired in the constituency of Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, and what are the further plans for the Cowboy Trail as a vital economic corridor?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Highway 22, or Cowboy Trail, actually has 18 road and bridge projects totalling \$157 million over the next three years. There are actually two projects in the Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland constituency, including slide repairs and a culvert replacement near Mayerthorpe, and the design work is currently under way for both projects. On this side we are consistent. We understand rural Alberta, and you compare it to the NDP, who are not consistent. They flip-flop on everything from supporting a carbon tax to supporting workers' rights. While the NDP are all over the road, we're actually building roads.

Work Permits for International Students

Mr. Haji: Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba government took charge and stood up for thousands of temporary foreign workers, including international students who are losing legal status in Canada. The Manitoba immigration minister requested the federal government extend the expiring students' postgraduate work permits. Will the minister stand up for thousands of Alberta's international graduates and students and request a similar extension of work permits for all students whose work permits expire this year?

Mr. Jones: Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that the minister is aware of, and the minister is engaging with his federal counterparts to find the best solution. We're also working internally to streamline our programming so that our Alberta nomination streams are working as quickly as possible to get, particularly communities around Alberta, the workers they need and so that they can work in their most appropriate field.

Mr. Haji: Given that the minister is aware of it and given that the future of thousands of Alberta's international students and graduates have been jeopardized due to the erratic, unclear, poorly planned decision-making of this government and given that those decisions include shutting down the Alberta opportunity stream, letting processing time now increase by seven months, opening and closing the tourism and hospitality stream within the same day, and limited routes for Alberta express entry, will this government take some responsibility and commit to seeking a similar work permit extension and relieve those stranded students whose . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, the international student file really does reside with the federal government, and certainly the federal government has handled this whole file very irresponsibly. From the provincial perspective, we are responsible for issuing provincial attestation letters, and we work with the postsecondaries to make sure that we are taking their needs into account, that we are issuing letters for those jobs that are in high demand. But the actual file around international student visas, again, resides with the federal government. They did no consultation with the provincial government when they put some of these policies in place, and certainly we have to hold them to account.

Mr. Haji: Given that we have numerous cases coming to our offices due to the long processing time in our provincial immigration system and given that these international graduates are being forced to either leave our beautiful province or fall victim to perpetrators committing immigration fraud, who will exploit them by trading legal status for insane amounts, will the minister commit to meet these students within the next 15 days and assure them that the ministry will do everything in its power to prevent them from leaving this beautiful province?

Mr. Jones: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member opposite for raising his concerns on behalf of the constituents. This is certainly a program that is a priority for Alberta to make sure it's streamlined. Again, immigration does primarily rest with the federal government. We're constantly engaging with them on ways that we can make both sides of the program work better for Albertans. We're also trying to remove barriers for credential recognition in Alberta and to get newcomers in Alberta working in their highest and best field as quickly as possible.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie has a question to ask.

Education Funding for Newcomers

Member Eremenko: Thank you. Schools in Calgary-Currie are frequently welcoming students throughout the school year. Oftentimes these are students arriving with their families from around the world, many from war-torn areas such as Ukraine, Syria, or South Sudan. Teachers, administration, and support staff are giving a heroic effort to accommodate these children mid-year, but it's taking a toll. With the lowest per-student funding in Canada, how is the minister properly resourcing schools who see growth in enrolment between September and June?

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, Mr. Speaker, last year, as an example, we took a closer look at the numbers in student enrolment. Of course, our school boards make a projection, and then we see the actuals, but of course it's not static. These numbers continue to increase and change at all points throughout the year. But we saw that there was quite a spike in enrolments over projections, so we stepped up last year with mid-year funding to provide an additional investment of \$30 million to the supplemental enrolment growth grant. Again, that was in-year to help address some of that increased pressure.

Member Eremenko: Given that a principal at a local junior high in Calgary-Currie reports welcoming 10 to 15 new students per month while a significant number of newcomer families are finding their first homes in the inner city, therefore accessing Sacred Heart school, Sunalta, Connaught, and Mount Royal, and given that newcomer families are typically navigating a brand new and complex system for the first time that requires additional administrative resourcing, will the minister unlock additional funds further and further mid-year so that the children attending school for the first time in Canada have the supports they need to succeed?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, we're working towards that. In Budget '24, which the Assembly has recently passed, we're providing \$1.2 billion in new funding to our school divisions over the next three years. Our school divisions are able to use those dollars to support learning programs and services to meet the growing need. I'm encouraged by the fact that people from across Canada and, frankly, from around the world are choosing Alberta and are flocking to our amazing province. It's a sign that we're on the right path.

Member Eremenko: Given that we can agree that there is, in fact, a growing demand and that we must rise to that demand and given that families often arrive in Canada as protected persons or refugees, many having been witness to violence and war resulting in prolonged school closures and disruption to regular schooling, and given that there are protracted conflicts that result in prearrival trauma, posttraumatic stress disorder, physical and psychological health concerns further compounded by language and cultural barriers, what specifically is the government doing to leverage the education system to help these children with their mental health and physical health issues so that they might not just survive but thrive?

Mr. Nicolaides: There are a number of things that we're doing, Mr. Speaker, to help support these students that are sometimes, indeed, refugees or others coming from war-torn regions. Our government stepped up during Russia's act of aggression and war against Ukraine and provided supports for Ukrainian refugees, including Ukrainian students. We have also, as I mentioned earlier, provided in Budget '23 over \$120 million to support classroom complexity

over the next three years. This funding can specifically go to hiring additional educational assistants, hiring psychologists, speech-language pathologists, and others that will help address some of these challenges.

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

Federal Housing Funding

Mr. Bouchard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal government has a serious spending problem. This Liberal-NDP coalition's reckless spending now costs over \$46 billion in debt servicing alone. In shutting down parts of the economy while increasing government spending, Trudeau has added more debt than all other Prime Ministers combined. Albertans are feeling the effects of this reckless spending. Now the federal government has announced an expensive housing plan, but Canadians across the country are not buying it. To the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services: how is the federal government's spending affecting Albertans' abilities to find affordable housing?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, sadly, to date the federal government has not done a lot for housing here in Alberta. They seem to come to town, announce large housing dollars, and then go elsewhere in the country to spend that money, which is disappointing, something that we're going to fix when we pass Bill 18 in this House, I hope. Further to that, though, what we are seeing take place, to the hon. member's point, is the federal government attempting to come to Alberta, bribe Albertans with their own money, and try to force municipalities to be able to adopt so-called green building codes, which ultimately would just make housing more expensive for Albertans. We will continue to call on the federal government to make sure that they don't do that anymore in the future, but we are also prepared to legislate to stop them and to be able to make sure money goes to houses.

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

Mr. Bouchard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Albertans' taxpayer dollars are currently being eaten up by the ever-growing federal debt, causing many Albertans to face affordability concerns, and given that under the Trudeau federal government rent prices have skyrocketed across the country and further given that Albertans and Canadians alike do not trust this federal government to fix the housing affordability problem that they have created, could the same minister please explain whether this new so-called plan will actually address housing affordability concerns Albertans are currently facing?

2:40

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, the plan that the federal government has brought to Alberta to date will not help with affordability concerns, but I do have hope. Since Bill 18 was introduced inside this Legislature, the federal housing minister has come to the table and said that he wants to work on a significant housing deal that will benefit all Albertans. We will look forward to seeing some of the information that comes forward.

But I want to stress again that we will not be adopting green building codes or rules that will make housing more expensive. We will not be bribed with our own money by the federal government, Mr. Speaker, but want to see concrete actions that build more homes.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bouchard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for his answer. Given that our government currently has initiatives to address affordability concerns within our province and provide housing options for all Albertans and given that our UCP government is looking to ensure that families, seniors, Albertans with lower income, and those in need are able to find affordable and readily available housing, could the same minister please describe the plans our government has put in place to address housing availability and affordability in Alberta?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, the CMHC has actually said that Alberta is one of the few places in the country where we are actually seeing more affordable housing built and has projected that we will continue to see that take place because of the good governance in this province as well as the economic situation that we have taking place. We're seeing results already this year: already 10,000 new housing starts in this province and this year, which is almost double where we were at last year. We're on track to double our capacity in our housing construction industry this year alone. So we're going to continue with those efforts when it comes to the market side. We're also investing billions of dollars in traditional affordable housing all across the province.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period.

If I can have your attention just for perhaps 15 seconds. We have just two brief members' statements, followed by what I hope will be a very brief period of points of order. For all members who would like to join us at the bottom of the stairs who aren't necessary for the effective functioning of the Assembly, at approximately five minutes to 3 we will have a flag-raising ceremony in the rotunda as well as an opportunity for us to show our support to, it pains me to say, Alberta's team at present on the steps of the Legislature.

In 30 seconds or less we will continue with the remainder of the daily Routine.

Members' Statements

(continued)

Jordan's Principle

Member Batten: Tomorrow is Bear Witness Day, a day to honour the memory of Jordan River Anderson and the principle named for him. Jordan River Anderson was born in 1999 in Norway House Cree Nation in Manitoba. He was born with multiple disabilities and stayed in hospital from birth to death.

Jordan River Anderson never knew the comfort of a home, the smells of fresh baking from the oven, or the ebbs and flows of families sharing a common space. By the age of two Jordan River Anderson was cleared to go home, but it never happened for, you see, the federal and provincial governments were squabbling, squabbling and fighting until Jordan River Anderson passed away in hospital at the age of five. And what were they squabbling about? The bill, the monetary cost to permit Jordan River Anderson to leave the hospital and go home, to leave the hospital and be with his loved ones, to leave the hospital and have a higher quality of life.

Jordan's Principle is a legal requirement that commits that First Nation children will receive the products, services, and supports that they need when they need it. It means we worry about who pays the bill afterwards and serve the children first. This principle puts the best interests of the child ahead of all else.

Jordan River Anderson passed away 19 years ago. Today we are facing record numbers of Indigenous children in the care of the

government. We are facing a disproportionate number of Indigenous children and youth dying in care or shortly after. Why is the UCP not acting? Why is the UCP not treating this like the crisis it is? Where are their solutions, their interventions, their ideas? It is obvious that what is being done is not working. When the government fails to act in the best interests of the child, we fail Albertan children. We must do better.

Bill 20

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, on June 22, 2015, I was proud to stand in this Chamber and vote to ban corporate and union donations in Alberta. The first bill of the Alberta NDP government was to make sure that Albertans were the paramount voices in our democracy. After 40 years of an entitled, corrupt, out-of-touch Conservative government, this House voted for An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta. And I'm proud to say that I was not alone in passing that bill that day. I'm proud that also voting to renew democracy in Alberta that day were the now Deputy Premier, the Minister of Energy and Minerals, the Minister of Forestry and Parks, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The Member for Airdrie-East, the Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock, the Member for Taber-Warner, the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul also voted to pass this piece of legislation.

But now, Mr. Speaker, sadly, it seems that the Tory land influences are creeping back into this government. The UCP is currently working to convince Albertans that bringing corporate money back into provincial politics is a way to add transparency to elections. At the same time, they're telling Albertans that a cabinet vote should take priority over their own local election ballots. Bill 20 is a bill that the UCP didn't consult on, had no intention to consult on, still refuses to consult on, and that no one other than Take Back Alberta has asked for. It's an undemocratic, authoritarian bill that tries to take Alberta backwards.

I look to my colleagues who joined with me in voting to renew democracy in 2015 and encourage them to remember why they voted that way that day and ask them to do the right thing: stand in this Chamber again and vote to kill Bill 20.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

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

Ms Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills I'm pleased to present the committee's final report on Bill Pr. 2, the Community Foundation of Medicine Hat and Southeastern Alberta Amendment Act, 2024, sponsored by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat; Bill Pr. 3, the Providence Renewal Centre Amendment Act, 2024, sponsored by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford; and Bill Pr. 4, Rosebud School of the Arts Amendment Act, 2024, sponsored by the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod. These bills were referred to the committee on March 28, 2024. The report recommends that Bill Pr. 2 proceed with amendments and that Bill Pr. 3 and Bill Pr. 4 proceed. I request concurrence of the Assembly in the final report on bills Pr. 2, Pr. 3, and Pr. 4.

[Motion for concurrence carried]

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Bill 21

Emergency Statutes Amendment Act, 2024

Mr. Ellis: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I rise here today to request leave to introduce Bill 21, Emergency Statutes Amendment Act, 2024.

The legislation is about protecting the safety of Albertans. With disasters becoming more severe and complex, it is crucial for the government to be able to respond decisively to protect the lives of Albertans. While Alberta already has a strong emergency management framework, the proposed Emergency Statutes Amendment Act would ensure that the province has the necessary authority to effectively manage emergencies.

Mr. Speaker, I hereby move first reading of the Emergency Statutes Amendment Act, 2024.

[Motion carried; Bill 21 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Are there any tablings that just can't wait till Monday? The hon. the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table an article from the *Edmonton Journal* about New Ethics Watchdog Named over Objections from NDP, and I have the requisite number of copies.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by Sherwood Park, followed by Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite copies of a tabling entitled Ontario to Increase Health Coverage for Wildland Firefighters, a CBC article, and another tabling, Federal Public Safety and National Security Committee Unanimously Supports Correcting Misclassification of Forest/Wildland Firefighters.

2:50

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a statement, a news release from Alberta Municipalities, who would like the government to rescind Bill 20 and invite the government to hear about the shortcomings about it.

Member Irwin: I'd like to table five copies of an *Edmonton Journal* article entitled Non-profit Part of Bill 20 Finds Support, but I would like to highlight the issues around housing in there, in which the Official Opposition housing critic claims that the housing elements are not enough.

Thank you so much.

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

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of an e-mail that I sent to the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction confirming in writing my request that I made in third reading of Bill 12 yesterday for him to table the 27 letters that he has repeatedly referred to related to life leases that were sent to the former NDP government. I'm asking the minister to table them within 24 hours, as is customary in this House.

Thank you so much.

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

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite five copies of an article from today's *Edmonton Journal* entitled Councillors Unite to Oppose Provincial Bills wherein the council of Edmonton voted unanimously to encourage the province to scrap bills 18 and 20.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that brings us to points of order. At 1:53 and 1:54 – we would deal with them separately. It's likely combined. The hon. the Government House Leader.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the time and hope that we would get out and get a picture with the mascot, as I know members want to, I will combine these two points of order, and I'll withdraw the third and fourth and fifth points of order as I believe you sufficiently dealt with the preamble that I had a problem with and another issue just in good nature.

Mr. Speaker, at the time noted, off the record the Leader of the Opposition, while the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, I believe, was answering a question, said quite loudly, "That's a lie" and then began the second point of order by beginning her question with saying, "That last thing is simply not true." These are, of course, my unofficial records, my unofficial accountings, but you cannot say that someone is lying or insinuate that they're lying in this Chamber. That would be unparliamentary.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: On behalf of the member I apologize and withdraw.

The Speaker: I do agree that it was very unparliamentary. I accept the apology and consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

I appreciate the hon. the Government House Leader withdrawing the additional three points of order.

That leads us to point of order 6, raised by the Official Opposition House Leader.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language Gestures

Ms Gray: Thank you. At that time the Minister of Municipal Affairs was responding to the MLA for Calgary-Elbow and said very clearly, "Shame on you" while pointing at him. A direct reference to an individual telling them that they should be ashamed has been ruled unparliamentary in this place, most recently November 2, 2023, and pointing at your colleagues has not only been subject to a point of privilege but multiple points of order. I believe he should apologize and withdraw.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did not see the pointing, but I do have what I believe is an unofficial record, and the words are: "But the only ones that . . . evoked that painful memory sit across the aisle. Shame on you." I believe the comment was directed generally at the caucus of the NDP, not at an individual member. That indeed would be a point of order. But I'll leave it in your hands.

The Speaker: I do have the benefit of the Blues. The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs said the following: "I'm sure no one in this House supports it, but the only ones that have evoked that painful memory sit across the aisle. Shame on you." The challenge here is that I can confirm that the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs was in fact pointing at the member opposite, of which I believe an apology is a reasonable course.

Mr. Schow: Of course, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw and apologize.

The Speaker: I consider this matter dealt with and concluded and thank the House leadership for their expedient dealing with these matters.

That brings us to Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 13 Real Property Governance Act

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Guthrie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move third reading of Bill 13, the Real Property Governance Act.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Madam Speaker, this legislation fulfills a promise we have made to cut red tape and to save taxpayer dollars. The RPG Act strengthens property governance across the GOA as well as its agencies, boards, and commissions. The purpose here is to implement a centralized approach to government property management with the goal of making the most efficient use of our resources.

The act creates a centralized inventory of land owned by government, bringing improved awareness and transparency to our property portfolio, which also requires departments and consolidated entities to offer surplus property to Infrastructure prior to disposal. This offer will be at net book value, so that means transfers will occur at asset value, which is recorded on the government of Alberta's balance sheet. No money changes hands for departments, but consolidated entities will receive a cash payment at book value for property transferred to the GOA.

To be clear, this legislation does not alter decision-making authority. Consolidated entities will continue to make independent decisions about their properties. Land would only be offered back to Infrastructure if it was no longer needed for programming use. Madam Speaker, by modernizing and centralizing property transactions in one ministry, we can better support priority investments across government, reduce red tape, increase transparency, and ultimately save taxpayer money.

Madam Speaker, in terms of next steps we will further refine how property management is done across our government. Part of this process includes the implementation of a centralized ownership model. On a go-forward basis property will be leased instead of transferred, transferring ownership to government organizations for program delivery, doing business better for less money. That is what this legislation and related next steps are all about.

Madam Speaker, at this point I want to address a couple of the concerns the opposition expressed during debate. First, Infrastructure already has the authority to buy and sell property on behalf of the government. That's not a new concept. Additionally, there are policies around how sales occur. The department is required to sell land through public offerings using a realtor or entities listed in schedule 11 of the Government Organization Act. This is an open and transparent public process.

Furthermore, Bill 13 requires a repurposing assessment prior to sale which circulates all surplus land, government land, and property to all consolidated entities to assess possible alternate uses. Land that is not required for other government programs will then be either held for strategic purposes, sold under the acquisition disposal and surplus property policy, or returned to an ABC for disposal.

Madam Speaker, another thing that I've heard during debate here is the opposition's belief that somehow Bill 13 circumvents local decision-making around school boards, and nothing could be further from the truth. Let me be clear. This bill does not legislate property away from public school boards, nor does it change the current processes where surplus land is concerned. School boards continue to retain decision-making authority over property assets.

The current requirement has school boards receiving approval on the sale of land from Education. Now, that part remains intact. With the Minister of Education's approval, an offer to transfer will now be submitted to Infrastructure, where it will be evaluated for government needs. This effectively provides the GOA with a right of first refusal on lands before being sold. Madam Speaker, Bill 13 facilitates an inventory system that is viable and transparent to the public. Furthermore, a single repurposing and disposal assessment will reduce redundancies and improve efficiencies.

Madam Speaker, the Real Property Governance Act will, first, centralize property inventory under one umbrella, which will allow us to make decisions quickly and strategically. Second, the offer to transfer surplus property back to government allows for better resourcing of priority projects. Finally, as a policy initiative we will continue to modernize our governance process by leasing on a go-forward basis property to consolidated entities rather than conduct nominal sale asset transfers. The Real Property Governance Act is a common-sense step forward in how government sells and manages property, and I encourage all members to support this bill.

With that, I move third reading. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

3:00

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others to join the debate on Bill 13? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and offer a few thoughts at third reading for Bill 13. But before I begin my comments, I'd just like to start off by saying that I had the opportunity to visit the grade 6 students of Gabrielle-Roy school in my riding, and during the question-and-answer period of that session some of the students asked me what I found to be the most stressful part of the job. I said that, you know, this job of being an MLA is stressful in a number of ways. It's not physically demanding. But the need to speak in public is something that a lot of people find fearful. I don't count myself among those people who are afraid of speaking in public, but I understand that most people would rather die than make a public speech.

I think, compound that with the fact that often we're called upon to make speeches to ensure the proper functioning of the Legislature more than really to deal with the matter of the bill at times, Madam Speaker, it's a very stressful situation I find myself in. I know that there are a number of my colleagues who are waiting to talk about other bills that are going to be up for debate, but we need to make sure that we address Bill 13 first. That's why I'm given the task of filling the next 19 minutes with my thoughts on real property governance by the provincial government of Alberta.

I have a number of things that I'd like to say, though, on this topic in response to some of the things that the minister raised when he introduced this bill for third reading, Madam Speaker. It's interesting. He started off his speech by saying that this bill would in fact reduce red tape and enhance the efficiency of the processes around declaring surplus property and selling surplus property, but then when he got to the part where he tried to address the concerns that my colleagues have raised with the disposal of school board property, he indicated that the process is actually anything but efficient and less red tape. He's actually adding a layer of red tape. So instead of the local school board and the other entities that

they've entered into agreements with and the Ministry of Education overseeing the transfer of those properties, the Ministry of Infrastructure is now inserting themselves into the process after all of those people have had their say on what should happen with local school board property. I find that to be concerning.

I know that I've spoken to a number of community groups and school groups in Edmonton-Gold Bar over the years who have expressed concerns with the existing system of deciding how school property is transferred from one board to the other or transferred to the city or transferred to another entity that's interested in using that building. You know, just a couple of examples, since I've got 18 minutes to fill, I think about . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Sixteen.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, yeah. You're counting them down more eagerly than I am, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much.

You know, I think about the Michaëlle-Jean school in my riding, which is located in the old St. Kevin school, that was held by the Edmonton Catholic school district. The francophone school board had to work with the Catholic school board for a number of years to just determine whether or not that building was going to be surplus and whether they would be able to use that building for the purposes of educating their junior high school students and high school students in that building. It was an incredibly frustrating process. It took a very long time for the Catholic school board and the francophone school board to come to an agreement.

It's not clear to me from reading this bill how the Ministry of Infrastructure is going to insert themselves into that process, and so I'm worried that this bill, once it's passed, will make these kinds of arrangements more difficult for school boards instead of less difficult, which is what the minister said is the intention of the bill.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

I also think about another example in my riding, Mr. Speaker; that's the Headway School. The Headway School is a private school that operates in Edmonton-Gold Bar, and it caters to students of the Sikh faith. They're located in a school that's on 76th Street and just south of 106th Avenue in my riding. For a number of years they've owned that building, and they came to own that building under the existing rules of transferring land from the school boards and the city and the Ministry of Education. It took Headway School a number of years to go through that process, and they're very proud of the fact that they now own the building.

If I recall the situation correctly, it's my understanding that the school board that owned that property turned the property over to the city of Edmonton, and then the city of Edmonton decided to sell that property to the Headway School. Mr. Speaker, I'm personally quite glad that the Headway School now owns that property. The school is bursting at the seams; the demand for the education that Headway School is providing is sky-high. I believe that all of the students and the staff are well served by the fact that Headway School owns that building.

But if they were to undergo that process after this bill comes into place, Mr. Speaker, I'm concerned that it would take them even longer to navigate an already lengthy process because now the Ministry of Infrastructure is inserting themselves into a process that already involves the local school board, the city of Edmonton, the independent school board. We have a case where we have maybe too many cooks in the kitchen. So I'm very concerned that this is going to be a process that frustrates the ownership of these buildings, which are in dire need.

There are a number of vacant schools owned by both the Catholic and the public school board in my riding. The demand for those

properties is sky-high, and there are a number of useful purposes that those properties could achieve. I'm afraid that the Ministry of Infrastructure is only going to make putting those pieces of property to the highest and best use more difficult than it currently is, Mr. Speaker, not less difficult the way the minister intended. So I sincerely hope that whatever process is created by the Department of Infrastructure doesn't unduly lengthen an already lengthy and complex procedure for transferring ownership of these kinds of local school boards.

You know, on the issue of saving taxpayer dollars, the Minister of Infrastructure has talked about how this bill will improve the governance of property that the province of Alberta owns in an effort to save taxpayer dollars. Now, while I am in favour of saving taxpayer dollars, Mr. Speaker, I am ultimately in favour of the proper use of taxpayer dollars. It's incredibly concerning to me as a resident of the city of Edmonton that the government doesn't seem to be willing to pay its property taxes on the buildings and the provincial land that it owns here in the city of Edmonton. It was incredibly disheartening to see the mayor of Edmonton write a letter to the Minister of Municipal Affairs in response to the government's threat to take over its finances, that the government of Alberta owes about \$60 million in unpaid property taxes since 2019 and has an ongoing debt of \$14 million a year on buildings and land that the province owns here in the city of Edmonton.

3:10

I understand that in 2019 the government of the day was in a rush to cut public spending, and they decided to reduce the grants in place of taxes program that had been a long-standing practice of this provincial government, but I think that we can all agree that the fiscal fortunes of the province have changed dramatically, thank you to the sustained price of oil and the fact that a number of our oil sands mines have now reached a postpayout period. It's only fair that the city of Edmonton now get the tax dollars that the province has arbitrarily decided to stop paying in 2019 for reasons of controlling public spending.

Now that the fiscal fortunes have changed and the government finds itself with more money than they know what to do with, Mr. Speaker, I think it's only fair, if we're truly interested in restoring effective governance of public property, provincially owned property, that the government step up and start paying the taxes that it owes to the city of Edmonton, because ultimately it's the people of Edmonton who are paying the price for the fact that the government has decided to fall short of its obligations.

You know, the property taxes in the city of Edmonton went up almost 5 per cent this last fiscal year.

Mr. Eggen: Eight point nine.

Mr. Schmidt: My friend from Edmonton-North West is saying 8.9. I must have been dreaming, I guess, when I thought it was only . . .

Mr. Eggen: But I'm going to pay my taxes.

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. I don't have a choice. I have to pay my taxes. My friend from Edmonton-North West is also going to pay his taxes. It doesn't seem fair to me, it doesn't seem fair to my friend from Edmonton-North West or to any resident of the city of Edmonton that we still have to pay our property taxes but the government of Alberta can arbitrarily decide not to pay its property taxes, Mr. Speaker. So I would encourage the government to consider that if it were truly interested in managing provincially owned property in the public interest, it would restore the payments in taxes that it has made prior to 2019.

The, hopefully, final point that I want to make, Mr. Speaker, is on this idea of efficiency. The minister mentioned a number of times in his introduction of this bill at third reading that he was interested in the efficient operation of provincially owned buildings and land, and I share that goal, but I'm extremely concerned about the comments that we continue to hear from members of the government about their refusal to pursue energy efficiency and renewable energy projects here in Alberta. That extends to the buildings that the government of Alberta owns. We know that the government has, in principle anyway, committed itself to reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050, but to date it hasn't really taken any meaningful steps forward in achieving that goal. One meaningful step forward that the government could take in achieving that net zero carbon emissions goal by 2050 is to retrofit existing government buildings to a net-zero standard.

Now, Mr. Speaker, retrofitting government-owned buildings to a net-zero standard would have a number of benefits. Not only would it spur the local economy, putting thousands of skilled tradespeople to work installing solar panels and retrofitting HVAC systems and increasing insulation and improving or replacing windows and all of those kinds of things; it would save the taxpayers money over the long run. Could you imagine if our schools, our hospitals, our libraries, our provincial courthouses, and our other provincial buildings didn't have to pay electricity bills anymore? How much money would that save the people of Alberta year over year?

You know, Mr. Speaker, I recently retrofitted my own home to a net-zero standard. I got my electricity bill yesterday, and it turns out that because the solar panels that I installed on my house produced more energy than my house consumed over the last month, the electricity company actually owes me money. They owe me a hundred bucks, which is a pretty great position to be in when the electricity company owes you money. It's a day to celebrate.

Imagine how jubilant the people of Alberta would be if they knew that they didn't have to pay electricity bills for this Legislature, for example, the Federal Building, Government House, or the Alberta museum. All of those buildings, Mr. Speaker, if the government started investing in renewable energy retrofits right now, within six or seven years could be completely free of electricity bills, and that would save the people of Alberta significant amounts of money.

But we know that the government is ideologically opposed to the idea of renewable energy. We've seen that in their rush to ban wind and solar panel power plants from being built. We know that they're interested in giving themselves the power to repeal or replace any municipal bylaw that might require builders within those municipalities to reach some kind of green standard. We know that they're desperately concerned about the possibility that some municipality might make it illegal for new builds to connect to natural gas, for example.

These things are incredibly short sighted and will end up locking Albertans into buildings that cost more in the long run. I think that the government would be wise to reverse its stance on this and actually lead the way by starting to retrofit the buildings that it owns to a net-zero standard and showing people that here in Alberta we can meet our net-zero goals, and we can save money at the same time.

Mr. Speaker, those are a number of the things that concern me about this bill, and I look forward to hearing the comments from my other colleagues on this vitally important matter. My House leader is saying that we've reached the point where the running of the Legislature is no longer at risk, so I'm no longer obliged to just speak to fill time, so I will take that opportunity to end this and take my seat.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any others wishing to speak? The Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Dr. Metz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I am pleased to rise to speak today on Bill 13, the Real Property Governance Act. I believe that it is very important that publicly owned buildings are managed in a transparent manner. However, I'm concerned that this bill will give the Minister of Infrastructure the ability to override local decisions. The bill gives the Minister of Infrastructure the authority to sell surplus properties or to repurpose them. It overrides other legislation such as the disposition of property regulation within the Education Act. This really is another bill where the Premier attempts to control everything everywhere all at once.

My major concern is about local decision-making being lost. Albertans are often complaining about decisions being made in Ottawa, and we hear talk about this every day from this government, that Ottawa is always interfering in what needs to be decided in Alberta. But we need to also recognize that our Alberta government needs to not take all authority away from all our localities. I'm sure that all of us in our ridings hear this from our people locally, that they're not being heard and that there are things that could be done better if their voices were part of this.

3:20

A healthy democracy requires our citizens to be at the table with our leaders, floating our ideas, discussing alternatives, and making decisions together. Perhaps this lack of participation really derives from the fact that many of us see government as being distant, dictatorial, and inflexible. Public engagement is rarely held or is advertised in such a way that the public can't conveniently participate, or the questions being asked are totally biased, and you're not really able to address the real issue. The public is really rarely involved in local decisions. People often feel that they are not being listened to.

To increase the faith in our democracy, we must make local decision-making more accessible and meaningful to everyday people. This means that some of our decision-making authority needs to be at the neighbourhood level. This means recognizing that local municipal governments and sometimes school boards may be the easiest level of governance for the average citizen to interact with.

One way to solve the problem of distant, dictatorial, and inflexible government is by employing the theory of subsidiarity. In subsidiarity theory decisions in government are made at the most local level possible. When decision-making is drawn closer to the people, we gain a government that is more responsive and adaptive without being overbearing or aloof. This applies to Bill 13.

To understand how the concept of subsidiarity can be applied to government, remember two countervailing rules. If the reasonable externalities of a decision can be confined to the jurisdiction of a lower government level, the decision should be delegated to that lower level until any reasonable externalities are confined to a single jurisdiction. If the reasonable externalities of a decision exceed the jurisdiction of a governance level, the decision should then be elevated to a higher level until the reasonable externalities are confined to a single jurisdiction. A reasonable externality can be understood to be a consequence of the decision that a reasonable person would be concerned about. Certainly, use of schools and school properties would fall within a more local level.

Governments should definitely adopt the stay in your lane ethos by trusting the most local government decisions to make decisions for themselves so long as those decisions do not infringe on other

peer governments. We hear this often from this government when they are talking about the federal government – stay in your lane – but we need to also do that when we're talking about provincial issues.

Bill 13 applies directly to our schools. We're desperately short of schools, but we're lacking in per-student funding. School boards now are scrambling to educate our students. How can they even develop longer term plans using the meagre resources they have now when they risk losing even more of those resources or having no say in how to use their properties? Taking this power away and moving it centrally just consolidates central power. I agree that inventory is important, but that doesn't require legislation.

We have seen that removing local decision-making in health care has definitely created problems. Centralization that began shortly after 2010 has created a lot of advantages in Alberta, but over time we've seen that that comes with a price, and we need to adapt and make some of the decision-making more local. We hear that all the time from local communities and from our front-line health care workers, who often know solutions to problems that could be better applied than a top-down approach. I'm very concerned that another lack of local decision-making is breaking up our health care system into four pillars and only putting in an integration council at the very top. We need to pay attention to what is needed at the local level, and we don't want to go down this route that Bill 13 will allow.

Our communities are much more aware of their changing needs. For example, new communities may initially have many children and overfill the schools. Often they don't have schools, and it requires busing them to other communities. But over time the homeowners often stay there, so the population demographics change, and the proportion of families with children that need schools is going to change. But the turnover happens gradually, and as this happens, it is the local communities that are going to be feeling it and know better where they're going to need to adjust with their infrastructure needs.

In one of the communities that I represent, Silver Springs, there is a piece of land that had been destined for a school, and the community has been desperately trying to find a way to get that land so that it could be used for supporting seniors, which is now also a large proportion of the community. Taking away the ability to work locally doesn't sound like a way of reducing red tape.

My last comment on local decision-making in health care also applies to masking. We need to allow the decision about when it's appropriate medically to mask to be made at local levels. We need to allow hospitals and units to apply masking rules.

I cannot support Bill 13 because it is another example of centralizing government power. As I stated earlier, this is an attempt by the Premier to control everything everywhere.

I would now like to cede the rest of my time to my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Any others wishing to speak? The Member for Edmonton-Meadows has risen.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 13, Real Property Governance Act. I had a chance to go through the bill. Actually, I would say I have read it very thoroughly. I had a bill briefing with the deputy ministers and with the minister, and I have my own assessments and assumptions and opinions based on a number of things.

One was that a lot of questions I raised during the bill briefing – one was actually being told what turned out not to be exactly what is in this bill. Then the media reports and minister's briefing actually also distanced from what actually initially the ministry was

claiming when they introduced the bill. I do have my own opinion based on a number of experiences, maybe not within the Canadian jurisdiction. These kind of drills have been already practised in many different jurisdictions under similar political ideologies to what is happening in Alberta. Those moves and those changes turned out to be disastrous.

3:30

More than that, when we see the background of this bill, the minister claims something else, but its roots: at least you can see into the MacKinnon panel report recommendations, what she recommended in 2019 under the previous UCP government. It is not only a coincidence that the UCP leader then was also campaigning on selling Crown lands to pay for its debt. When I see it, it looks very funny. It looks very, actually – how would I say? – clever. When we see it, it looks very nice. When you say that it's an attempt, an effort to actually streamline the list of surplus properties at one place and want access and more transparency, but under the guise of that action, what is happening is that it's taking away our local autonomy from the number of institutions who actually own those properties right now.

The education institutions are one of the biggest stakeholders that are going to be affected by this. My friend the MLA from Edmonton-Gold Bar actually spoke very eloquently in his lengthy 20-minute speech about this. If this bill is passed, school boards, universities – and I asked this question during the bill briefing, and I was told that nothing is being changed, that the practice will remain as it is right now. But that was not true. Now the school boards, before making a decision about their surplus properties, have to assign that surplus property to the Ministry of Infrastructure, and the province will have the right of first refusal on any decision-making the local institution would have. That was not the case before.

Once again I will refer to my colleague who has very effectively spoken with an example in his riding that once that area was called “mature population,” where the schools were at one point struggling to route the students. That situation changed dramatically, and it didn't take very long. If those properties there right now that – the Headway School is actually operating. If the school board had not had property in their possession, this wouldn't be the case. There would not be any opportunity for the schools like Headway School or the opportunity for the city of Edmonton. In that case the city of Edmonton would not have the property back into their possession or they could not have done anything in that case, and the school wouldn't exist. The worst case scenario for me is that this began when the MacKinnon panel – actually, I would like to read it for the record.

The idea in the MacKinnon panel. The MacKinnon panel report recommendation 16 says:

Redefine [the government's] inventory of land assets to include the broader public sector and create a definitive policy to clearly define surplus assets and a process for disposal of surplus assets.

That is changing exactly what we have right now.

Providing an increased ability to core government and the broader public sector to dispose of surplus assets can act as an offset to the capital cost of new investments . . .

That is a dangerous part of this.

. . . or provide revenue for the province.

This drill has been practised in many places, in those places where people have seen their educational institution, the schools, being sold, shut, and Crown lands being sold and the majority of the time below market values to the insiders, to the friends. The loss is downloaded to everyday people, ordinary Albertans in many

ways. Not only will they lose their asset as a property but the lack of operation that has in their communities.

I know during the briefing the ministry has actually referenced some of the old health care spaces as an example that can come under this regulation, directly under the jurisdiction of the ministry that is not right now. Those places still belong to the health institutions. They still have jurisdiction and power to decide what they're going to do with that. Are they going to re-establish those services, reintroduce those services from those places, or are they going to convert into something different for the public benefit? When this bill will be passed, that will not be the case anymore.

I have a lot of questions around this bill. I believe this is not only the time to speak – is this bill . . . [interjection] Third reading. Yeah. I'm sorry to say that I cannot really support this bill. My view about this bill is based on what we were told and what information is coming out now. The ministry is not actually addressing those concerns and the questions raised in the House, raised in the media articles, raised by the local authorities, teachers' associations, school boards.

I would encourage basically all members, even the members from across the aisle, to actually rethink this bill. This poses a very unique and different threat. I look at this bill in the same pattern when we see this, when we're discussing Bill 18, Bill 20, Bill 21. So looking at Bill 13, we are not going in a different direction at all. It's not only over a power grab thing. It is a direct attack on the local assets of the local communities, cities, and the local institutions.

With that, I would conclude my remarks, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

3:40

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any others wishing to speak to Bill 13?

Seeing none, the Minister of Infrastructure wishing to close Bill 13? Waive the close.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:41 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

Boparai	Goehring	Metz
Chapman	Gray	Pancholi
Dach	Ip	Renaud

Deol	Irwin	Schmidt
Eggen	Kasawski	Shepherd
Totals:	For – 44	Against – 15

[Motion carried; Bill 13 read a third time]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 19

Utilities Affordability Statutes Amendment Act, 2024

[Adjourned debate May 7: Mr. Williams]

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction was speaking at the time of adjournment. He has 14 minutes remaining should he choose to use it.

Mr. Williams: I'll pass.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 19, The Utilities Affordability Statutes Amendment Act, 2024. What we have here is another weak attempt by this government to try to erase their history of some of the worst electricity rates that Albertans have seen in quite some time. It has been a punishing four or five years under this government for Albertans in terms of the cost of utilities. It was a major concern for affordability for folks across this province.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

I just want to take a moment as we look at this government putting forward what they are claiming is a solution. How did we get to this point? Now, what we know is that one of the UCP's first actions after taking office was to remove the caps that we had placed on utility rates, and that had an immediate impact on Albertans, Mr. Speaker. After they removed that cap, we watched rates quadruple in this province.

4:00

In the midst of a pandemic, in the years following Albertans saw some of the worst electricity rates they had seen in years due to the actions of this government, and this government sat back and did nothing. They sat on their hands for those first few years, Mr. Speaker, until 2022. On March 7, 2022, the then Premier, Mr. Jason Kenney, committed to three months of \$50 electricity rebates. That was the best this government could offer. His own MLA the Member for Lac Ste. Anne–Parkland called that paltry. That was the best this government could offer as Albertans, again, were paying some of the worst electricity rates they had seen coming out of the pandemic, in the midst of an affordability crisis. This government offered Albertans \$150 at a time when their bills were in the hundreds of dollars per month.

Even that paltry sum: they could not be bothered to get that to a large number of my own constituents. That payment, that rebate, was not available to anyone who lived in a condominium or apartment building where they did not have separately metered suites, which is hundreds, thousands of Albertans. Those folks were left out regardless of the fact that many of those individuals were seniors, many of those were individuals of lower income. This government could not be bothered to find a way to help those individuals. They simply wrote them off, left them to deal with the soaring electricity prices due to this government's decision to remove the cap that was there on utilities.

Now, the current Premier, when she came into office, talked about how she was going to try to do something about it. She promised she'd look into that and find a way that she could extend that rebate to them, and the now Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade in January of last year, Mr. Speaker, spoke to the press. He said: well, my ministry is working on a way to get those rebates to customers that are currently excluded. Now, he didn't offer a timeline. He said that it would be in the coming weeks. He said: that work continues on that, and it's a priority for me. Well, apparently not much of a priority because he never got it done. It never happened. He said: in the coming weeks. Well, we are a year and multiple months past that point. He never got that done for Albertans. That is the legacy of this government on addressing affordability for Albertans on electricity.

What we did see the Premier do in spring of last year, Mr. Speaker, as there was an election on the horizon: she tried to look like she was doing something; she introduced a utility rate deferral program from January to March. But that program did not actually help any low-income Albertan, not one bit. What it did is that it deferred costs. It did not reduce any cost for any of those individuals; it simply deferred the costs down the line. It was a deferral program. It shifted the costs onto a debt repayment program that Albertans would then have to pay off between April and December of last year.

A few of those folks, if they were able to get off the regulated rate option: yeah; ducked out on having to pay that back. But any individual who was not able to do that, if they were in a situation where they did not have good enough credit to be able to get off that and onto one of the rate plans with one of the utility operators, was left to pay for this government's supposed largesse. Again, this is not a government that has in any way taken real action to create more affordability for Albertans on electricity.

What we do have is the government now renaming the regulated rate option. It's not actually going to help anybody who's still stuck on the RRO, mind you, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't provide any better options for them. It doesn't help them to get onto anything else. It simply renames it. It leaves them still in the situation where they are struggling with those costs.

Now, we are seeing a drop in the cost of electricity, finally, Mr. Speaker, for a number of reasons, as we are seeing more capacity come onto the market. None of these reasons is due to any action of this government. They're going to try to claim that. They're going to try to take credit for what has naturally happened in the market. But the fact is that when the market was not working for Albertans, this government sat on their hands. They did nothing for Albertans, and they have no right to try to take a victory lap now.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, what we have seen under this government is instead subterfuge. This government has attempted to pull the wool over the eyes of Albertans. What we have seen is that as they bring in Bill 19, the Utilities Affordability Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, we are getting more information about their decision last year to cut off additional supply of electricity because it would have come from renewable projects. What this government did was that it put in a ban on renewable projects for multiple months, claimed that this was requested: we were asked to do this; we didn't want to do this; this is something that came to us from the independent regulator.

Well, we just had documents released, Mr. Speaker, showing that was absolutely false. This government intimidated the regulator. They hung the authority of the ministry over the regulator to intimidate them in providing a letter, which this government then used as cover for a decision that has driven millions of dollars of investment out of the province, that has done deep damage to the renewables industry in the province of Alberta, and is now leading

to the cancellation of projects that would help to bring a lower price for electricity into this province. But, hey, they're renaming the RRO the rate of last resort. This government has no credibility when it comes to affordability and electricity in this province. This bill does absolutely nothing to change that.

We will see, Mr. Speaker, if the minister is going to be willing to come clean about his behaviour on this file, about this government's decisions. Not likely, as we see this government is in fact moving forward instead and taking more and more power into its own hands, centralizing more power in the hands of the Premier. This is not a government that's interested in collaboration, doesn't seem to be a government that's terribly interested in transparency and honesty either, but we will see as we continue to debate and speak to this bill. I'm sure I have some colleagues who will have some more to add.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Any others wishing to speak? The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A pleasure to rise and deliver some thoughts on the bill before us, Bill 19, the Utilities Affordability Statutes Amendment Act, 2024. I'll start by harkening back, as I often do, to simpler times, when we really never thought too much about our electricity bills. You may recall, sir, on the farm when the electricity bill was something that just got paid on a regular basis without really a lot of concern because indeed it was an affordable bill. Everybody received a bill that was based upon their share of power that they consumed at a rate that was based upon pretty much a provincial use of that power. It was an affordable necessity that we paid for and didn't have a lot of concern about it being overly expensive.

It only was later on in the Klein era where things started to happen, where we started to have some brownouts, where there was obviously a mismanagement of the system we had in place, where new power generators weren't coming on stream to supply enough demand. The then government under Mr. Klein reacted and really made a wholesale change to things, which ultimately ended up with where we are now.

Now, some will debate the benefits of an energy market versus a capacity market. That's a debate for another time on the floor of this Legislature, Mr. Speaker. But in the time frame that I first started paying utility bills, after, you know, getting my own apartment and then my own property in the '70s and '80s, this wasn't a concern for Albertans. Now it mostly is a concern for those who are least likely able to afford this new designated RLR, the rate of last resort. It's a pretty scathing name, a scary name to encourage people to get off the regulated rate option, as it's now called. The bill contemplates changing the name to the rate of last resort. In fact, it might be humorous if it wasn't so unfortunate that people who are on this last resort rate are those who are least able to afford the most expensive rates that are offered under the program.

4:10

The question is, Mr. Speaker, and it remains: who are these people? Who are these people who are stuck, as the Member for Edmonton-City Centre used the word "stuck," on the now named regulated rate option, who would be similarly stuck on the rate of last resort? The answer to that question is that it's people who don't have any options. I mean, the rate of last resort really should be the rate of the only resort, the only option left to these individuals. Otherwise, of course, they would enter into a contract to have stability in price and a lower cost of electricity if they possibly

could. These people are stuck for a variety of reasons on this rate of last resort, as it's going to be known, because they are either people with poor credit through perhaps no fault of their own, people with disabilities in many cases who are making decisions about whether to pay the electricity bill versus buying groceries.

I know people in this position myself, who are close to me in my constituency, who, unfortunately, have had their power cut as a result of not being able to pay the regulated rate option power prices that they are forced to suffer because of their difficulty in managing their finances and their low income. They've ended up not paying the bill on time as a result. What happens, Mr. Speaker, is that the utility company will now not necessarily cut the power off, but they'll install a meter which allows power to operate at about half the current, so you will end up with the ability to maybe operate your dryer but nothing else in the house. You might be able to turn the stove on, but if the dryer is on, it'll pop the breaker.

This may be seen to be a friendly change from what used to happen in the past, Mr. Speaker, where when somebody didn't pay their power bill, the power was cut off completely, but in fact it's really an attack on people of low income that I think should be changed. I think that the bill should contemplate making a change to this policy of power companies across the province who are cutting the power in half to those who can't afford their bills.

Now, I venture to guess, Mr. Speaker, that it's certainly not going to be an onerous amount that the power company would perhaps be putting at risk by having them prohibited from cutting people's power because, of course, a person's credit rating is still affected if they don't pay their bill. It's not a fun experience to go through when you have a family and perhaps young children and it's wintertime and you're not paying the bill and it ultimately gets to the point where your meter is changed and altered so you get a meter on your power source coming into the property which only allows you to operate certain things in your house.

It's a serious business. It affects your life. It affects your mental health to be in a house – let's imagine you can only operate a couple of burners on your stove, but you can't do it if the furnace is running, so you have to be careful that you don't pop the breaker because your furnace is running and you want to cook something on your stove and you've got kids who need to eat. This is happening a lot, Mr. Speaker. I know families in my riding who this is happening to. I mean, it's perhaps a little better than getting the power cut off completely. But this measure affects those who are least able to afford it, and the continuation of the regulated rate option under another name is not going to solve the issue.

I think that if it's at all possible at this stage of the game for the minister to consider an alteration in this bill, it would be, I think, a humanitarian gesture, at the very least, to eliminate the ability of the utility company to diminish the power that's going into a house because somebody has either not been able to pay their full bill or they just have an inability to pay the bill. It's something that I hope the government gives serious consideration to. The people who are on the regulated rate option now, which will become the rate of last resort, are fairly numerous, but it's only about one-third. Less than 30 per cent of Albertans are currently on the regulated rate option. About one-third of the commercial users, 46 per cent of farm customers, and 29 per cent of residential consumers are currently on the RRO.

In the last quarter, Mr. Speaker, the total number of residential RRO customers fell by about 66,000. It's the highest net reduction since 2012. That's good news, that people are able to get off this horribly high-priced option for power consumption. But there are those who are remaining who just don't have any choice. They're either financially unable or have a bad credit rating. In fact, what happens quite often is that if you're a new customer, if you're

moving here from other parts of Canada, which is happening – and we’re welcoming them with open arms – what they get when they open their first power bill is a smack in the head saying: “Welcome to Alberta. Here’s your regulated rate option, and here’s the rate that you’re paying. Because you’re a new customer, you don’t have an established credit rating with the company, and you’re not eligible to enter into a contract at a much more affordable rate for electricity.”

That’s something else, Mr. Speaker, that the government should consider changing now that they have this piece of legislation before the House. Indeed, if you’re coming to Alberta, you have a credit rating, obviously, elsewhere. Perhaps there’s a mechanism where a newcomer to Alberta could actually have that welcome sign put up in the form of a happy face on their electricity bill when they get the first one and allow, if they have proof and can verify their creditworthiness, for the utility company not to be able to deny them access to a negotiated rate or a contract rate just because they happen to be newcomers to the province or newcomers to the jurisdiction where those companies provide electrical service.

It’s basically a matter of consumer protection and, I think, good governance that the government take a look at how confined people are if they are coming to the province and looking to get their first agreement with a power company and are forced to take the regulated rate option versus having access to a contract rate that people who establish themselves in the province will enjoy, so two things that occur to me where I think the government could take small steps to help those who are currently on this regulated rate option program.

The cost of electricity is something that is a barrier to people enjoying even a modicum of a lifestyle that allows them to feed their family properly. If you’re coming to the end of the month and you’re on a low income and you have a regulated rate option, that could mean the difference between actually making sure that your family is properly fed or that you’re going to the food bank. It’s not a choice that we should be forcing people to make simply because they don’t qualify to enter into a contract with the electricity-supplying companies.

4:20

The other element, of course, that I did mention is a matter of, I think, generosity. It’s a matter of ensuring that people who are least able to afford it are not forced to make tough decisions about eating or sending their kids to the food bank by having them look at the prospect of having their power cut off or at least having it cut down to about half of what they normally would have. I’ve been in a house, Mr. Speaker, where that actually took place. It wasn’t my place, but I know the people, and it’s not a happy place. It’s an embarrassment. It’s probably better than getting your power cut off, but through no fault of their own they were unable to pay the high electricity costs, and they were making choices between actually paying the grocery bills, so buying groceries, and buying the power. Of course, there is no choice in that. You’re not paying the power company; you’re actually going to the grocery store instead.

I think that, with that, I’ve made my points, and I will cede my time to others who may wish to speak on the matter.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any others that wish to speak? The Member for Sherwood Park has risen.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Happy to rise to speak to Bill 19. I’m just giving some forewarning to the minister that I’m happy to have interventions. I have some questions, that I’ll even

provide in advance, and then I might go down a little bit of a journey, and you’d have some time to think about it.

Member Irwin: You’ve only got eight minutes, though.

Mr. Kasawski: Well, I’ll be quick with my journey, then.

Questions I’m going to ask would be: Minister, how does it help customers with bad credit? How does it stabilize and lower the RRO to the RLR? What are the projected rates in 2025 for the RLR? I want to know how you think it’ll impact competitive retailers.

Also, Mr. Speaker – and this isn’t something the minister has to answer – I wonder if this bill will end the debate on electricity. I’m going to tell you that I’ve been to a lot of doors. Nobody really likes talking about electricity, and, my goodness, we talk about it a lot here. It is far too much discussion about electricity. Electrons moving through wires: some people find that very interesting, fascinating, including me.

Mr. Stephan: It’s even shocking.

Mr. Kasawski: It is even shocking, but I will say that out in the public it is not so interesting. They just want to know how much they have to pay to turn the lights on and whether they should get a better refrigerator so that their power bill will go down.

About the name, rate of last resort, I want to know also: was it inspired by the song *The Last Resort* by The Eagles? I looked at the lyrics. It asks in the song:

Who will provide the grand design?
What is yours and what is mine . . .
We have got to make it here
We satisfy our endless needs [of electricity] . . .
They call it paradise
I don’t know why
[they] call someplace paradise.

Mr. Stephan: It’s Alberta.

Mr. Kasawski: I will take that. Good point. It is Alberta.

But it does warn: when you call it the last resort, it says in the last lyric of the song, “Kiss it goodbye.” So be careful when you name something “the rate of last resort.”

In electricity – and, Minister, I welcome your interventions on my questions any time – how did we get here? My understanding is that a long time – oh, the minister.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the member opposite. I think those are some excellent questions. I will try not to take too much time.

You asked, first, how it will help people with bad credit. One of the most interesting things that we are putting in the regulations, which don’t belong in the same place as the legislation, which is what we have here, is that there will be a 90-day requirement from retailers to go back to those customers and clarify whether they want to stay on that rate or not and provide information on other options that they might have. That’s a very key part in the informing of those customers of what rate they’re on. The second thing that there will also be a requirement for is – sorry. I just lost my train of thought there.

You asked about stabilizing, the cost of that in the regulations. We are putting forward the ability to buy two years out. Currently retailers or providers of the RRO can only buy three months out. So that will also stabilize that cost over a much longer period of time, and this will put on downward pressure.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Minister. The last part was on how you think it will affect competitive retailers, but we can get to that, and we'll find out down the road.

How did we get here, Mr. Speaker? My understanding is that a long time ago in this Assembly there were legislators who thought that competition is the way to do everything, that it's the best solution for every market. They looked at the Liquor Control Board. They looked and they said: "You know what? We've only got about 80 stores in this province, and it's not open on Sundays. There are only about 200 SKUs, so only about 200 products, we can buy at the liquor stores." And they said: "You know what? Let's privatize this. What we'll do is that we will wholesale the supply. We will allow people to continue to produce their liquor, which is a parallel to generation, and we will then allow competitive retailing." And there have been results.

Oh. I see, about competitive retailing, a good cue to go to the minister.

The Acting Speaker: Minister, go ahead.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to jump back in. I did remember what I forgot. Also in the bill there's a requirement for retailers to provide further information about the Utilities Consumer Advocate to help inform those who are facing challenges about more information and further help. There is a potential for impact on competitive retailers. We are working with them very carefully, very closely, lots of conversations, to make sure that this is putting downward pressure but that it doesn't compete directly with them.

We want to make sure that we provide a very robust retail market. We have 52 providers in the province. They offer many competitive rates for those who are on lower fixed income. They provide services to help those who have problems with their bills. To the other member, who was asking about those who are on, like, load-limiting features: there is different legislation for that, but the retailers also have programs to help them as well.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I actually think that's really good news. If I look at what the marketplace is for this, if you think back to the past, before, it was 100 per cent of people on the RRO. Now we've got more than 60 per cent of people on a competitive rate, and I think that is a good sign that competition is starting to work in this marketplace.

But back to liquor and how did we get here? The success we had with retailing liquor was the model that was, I think, incorporated into electricity. We had about 80 retailers, and we had about 200 products we could buy, and then we brought privatization into that by controlling wholesaling. What do we have now? I don't even know how many retailers we have now. It must be over 1,500 in this province, and we've probably got 15,000 to 20,000 SKUs, different products we can buy, so massive success. Whatever flavour of alcohol you want, there are massive, massive choices, so a great example of how competition works.

I think we looked at that model and said: let's apply that to electricity. The only catch has been: what different flavours of electricity can you get? It's been hard to make that work in our system. Maybe when we're looking at the demand side on this, if I want solar-flavoured electricity, is there a way I can get more solar-flavoured electricity? If I want to make sure that we get to this net-zero flavoured electricity, can I get this net-zero flavoured electricity?

How can we bring this in on the demand side? Bill 19 doesn't take on this challenging thought. I do think competitive retailing would be more interesting in electricity if it was different flavours of electricity. I know I'm calling it flavours, but I don't know how else to describe electrons coming from different sources.

Well, we'll work on it. Where are we now? When I googled, which I know comes up a lot, especially from the Minister of Municipal Affairs, how to understand your electricity bill in Alberta, I was blown away. Can you guess how many pages . . .

The Acting Speaker: I hesitate to interject, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the Assembly stands adjourned until Monday afternoon at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 4:30 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 31th Legislature - 1st Session (2023-2024)

Activity to Thursday, May 9, 2024

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sittings.

Bill 1 — Alberta Taxpayer Protection Amendment Act, 2023 (Smith)

First Reading — 10 (*Oct. 30, 2023 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 57-58 (*Nov. 1, 2023 aft.*), 96-97 (*Nov. 2, 2023 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 145-47 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft., passed*)
Third Reading — 147-54 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft., passed on division*)
Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on December 7, 2023; SA 2023 c6]

Bill 2 — Alberta Pension Protection Act (Horner)

First Reading — 89-90 (*Nov. 2, 2023 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 154-55 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft.*), 274-85 (*Nov. 21, 2023 aft.*), 336-43 (*Nov. 23, 2023 aft.*), 394-400 (*Nov. 28, 2023 aft.*), 424-30 (*Nov. 29, 2023 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 522-30 (*Dec. 5, 2023 aft.*), 552-59 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., passed*)
Third Reading — 565 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve.*), 583-90 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., passed on division*)
Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on December 7, 2023; SA 2023 cA-29.5]

Bill 3 — Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Amendment Act, 2023 (Williams)

First Reading — 22 (*Oct. 31, 2023 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 90-93 (*Nov. 2, 2023 aft.*), 180-87 (*Nov. 8, 2023 aft.*), 272-73 (*Nov. 21, 2023 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 307-09 (*Nov. 22, 2023 aft., passed*)
Third Reading — 334-36 (*Nov. 23, 2023 aft., passed*)
Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on December 7, 2023; SA 2023 c10]

Bill 4 — Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2023 (\$) (Horner)

First Reading — 55 (*Nov. 1, 2023 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 159-63 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft.*), 155-56 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft.*), 187-90 (*Nov. 8, 2023 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 309-13 (*Nov. 22, 2023 aft., passed*)
Third Reading — 336 (*Nov. 23, 2023 aft., passed*)
Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2023 c13]

Bill 5* — Public Sector Employers Amendment Act, 2023 (Horner)

First Reading — 55-56 (*Nov. 1, 2023 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 156-57 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft.*), 190-97 (*Nov. 8, 2023 aft.*), 265-72 (*Nov. 21, 2023 aft.*), 403-09 (*Nov. 28, 2023 aft.*), 430-35 (*Nov. 29, 2023 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 456 (*Nov. 30, 2023 aft., passed*), 519-22 (*Dec. 5, 2023 aft., recommitted*), 559-62, 563-64 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., passed with amendments on division*)
Third Reading — 515 (*Dec. 5, 2023 aft., recommitted to Committee of the Whole*), 564-55 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve.*), 575-83 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., passed on division*)
Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on Proclamation; SA 2023 c12]

Bill 6 — Public Health Amendment Act, 2023 (Amery)

First Reading — 90 (*Nov. 2, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 157-58 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft.*), 313-20 (*Nov. 22, 2023 aft.*), 435-38 (*Nov. 29, 2023 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 456-62 (*Nov. 30, 2023 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 462 (*Nov. 30, 2023 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on December 7, 2023; SA 2023 c11]

Bill 7 — Engineering and Geoscience Professions Amendment Act, 2023 (Sawhney)

First Reading — 111 (*Nov. 6, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 158-59 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft.*), 273-74 (*Nov. 21, 2023 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 400-03 (*Nov. 28, 2023 aft.*), 423-24 (*Nov. 29, 2023 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 514-15 (*Dec. 5, 2023 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on December 7, 2023; SA 2023 c7]

Bill 8 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2023 (Amery)

First Reading — 209 (*Nov. 9, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 299-307 (*Nov. 22, 2023 aft.*), 438-41 (*Nov. 29, 2023 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 515-18 (*Dec. 5, 2023 aft.*), 546-52 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 564 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve.*), 569-75 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2023 c8]

Bill 9 — Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2023 (Schow)

First Reading — 478 (*Dec. 4, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 513-14 (*Dec. 5, 2023 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 546 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 590-92 (*Dec. 7, 2023 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on December 7, 2023; SA 2023 c9]

Bill 10 — Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (\$) (Horner)

First Reading — 673 (*Mar. 12, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 705-16 (*Mar. 14, 2024 aft.*), 868-73 (*Mar. 26, 2024 aft.*), 904-05 (*Mar. 27, 2024 aft.*), 899-901 (*Mar. 27, 2024 aft.*), 970-75 (*Apr. 9, 2024 aft.*), 1003-05 (*Apr. 10, 2024 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1005-09 (*Apr. 10, 2024 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1040-43 (*Apr. 11, 2024 aft., passed*)

Bill 11 — Public Safety Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (Ellis)

First Reading — 685 (*Mar. 13, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 976-90 (*Apr. 9, 2024 aft.*), 1009-15 (*Apr. 10, 2024 aft.*), 1091-96 (*Apr. 16, 2024 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1217-20 (*Apr. 23, 2024 aft.*), 1334-1341 (*May 7, 2024 aft., passed*)

Bill 12* — Consumer Protection (Life Leases) Amendment Act, 2024 (Nally)

First Reading — 727 (*Mar. 18, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1015-22 (*Apr. 10, 2024 aft.*), 1043-46 (*Apr. 11, 2024 aft.*), 1096-102 (*Apr. 16, 2024 aft.*), 1135-40 (*Apr. 17, 2024 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1220 (*Apr. 23, 2024 aft.*), 1239-48 (*Apr. 24, 2024 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1367-74 (*May 8, 2024 aft., passed*)

Bill 13 — Real Property Governance Act (Guthrie)

First Reading — 779 (*Mar. 21, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1102-09 (*Apr. 16, 2024 aft.*), 1132-35 (*Apr. 17, 2024 aft.*), 1161-63 (*Apr. 18, 2024 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1220-28 (*Apr. 23, 2024 aft.*), 1341-43 (*May 7, 2024 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1395-1400 (*May 9, 2024 aft., passed on division*)

Bill 14 — Appropriation Act, 2024 (\$) (Horner)

First Reading — 791 (*Mar. 21, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 855-63 (*Mar. 26, 2024 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 887-93 (*Mar. 27, 2024 aft., adjourned*), 903 (*Mar. 27, 2024 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 920-24 (*Mar. 28, 2024 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2024 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on March 28, 2024; SA 2024 c1]

Bill 15 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2024 (\$) (Horner)

First Reading — 841 (*Mar. 25, 2024 eve., passed*)

Second Reading — 863-68 (*Mar. 26, 2024 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 893-99 (*Mar. 27, 2024 aft., adjourned*), 901-04 (*Mar. 27, 2024 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 924 (*Mar. 28, 2024 aft., passed*), 920 (*Mar. 28, 2024 aft.*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2024 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on March 28, 2024; SA 2024 c2]

Bill 16 — Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (Nally)

First Reading — 935-36 (*Apr. 8, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1127-32 (*Apr. 17, 2024 aft.*), 1248-53 (*Apr. 24, 2024 aft.*), 1279-82 (*Apr. 25, 2024 aft., passed*)

Bill 17 — Canadian Centre of Recovery Excellence Act (Williams)

First Reading — 959 (*Apr. 9, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1156-61 (*Apr. 18, 2024 aft.*), 1272-79 (*Apr. 25, 2024 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1361-67 (*May 8, 2024 aft., passed*)

Bill 18 — Provincial Priorities Act (Smith)

First Reading — 993 (*Apr. 10, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1122-27 (*Apr. 17, 2024 aft.*), 1209-17 (*Apr. 23, 2024 aft.*), 1253-60 (*Apr. 24, 2024 aft.*), 1329-34 (*May 7, 2024 aft., adjourned on amendment*)

Bill 19 — Utilities Affordability Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (Neudorf)

First Reading — 1177 (*Apr. 22, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1344-48 (*May 7, 2024 aft.*), 1400-03 (*May 9, 2024 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 20 — Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (McIver)

First Reading — 1271 (*Apr. 25, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1374-82 (*May 8, 2024 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 21 — Emergency Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (Ellis)

First Reading — 1394 (*May 9, 2024 aft., passed*)

Bill 201 — Alberta Health Care Insurance (Access Fees) Amendment Act, 2023 (Brar)

First Reading — 90 (*Nov. 2, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 114-25 (*Nov. 6, 2023 aft.*), 234-37 (*Nov. 20, 2023 aft., reasoned amendment agreed to on division; not proceeded with*)

Bill 202 — Education (Class Size and Composition) Amendment Act, 2023 (Chapman)

First Reading — 209 (*Nov. 9, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 237-46 (*Nov. 20, 2023 aft.*), 358-64 (*Nov. 27, 2023 aft., defeated on division; not proceeded with*)

Bill 203 — Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Act (Dyck)

First Reading — 111 (*Nov. 6, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 364-70 (*Nov. 27, 2023 aft.*), 479-86 (*Dec. 4, 2023 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 730-43 (*Mar. 18, 2024 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 805-12 (*Mar. 25, 2024 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2024 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on June 28, 2024; SA 2024 cF-16.5]

Bill 204 — Municipal Government (National Urban Parks) Amendment Act, 2023 (Lunty)

First Reading — 332 (Nov. 23, 2023 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 486-92 (Dec. 4, 2023 aft.), 649-58 (Mar. 11, 2024 aft., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole — 812-17 (Mar. 25, 2024 aft.), 938-48 (Apr. 8, 2024 aft., passed on division)

Third Reading — 1059-66 (Apr. 15, 2024 aft., passed on division)

Bill 205 — Housing Statutes (Housing Security) Amendment Act, 2023 (Irwin)

First Reading — 510 (Dec. 5, 2023 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 658-62 (Mar. 11, 2024 aft.), 948-50 (Apr. 8, 2024 aft.), 1066-71 (Apr. 15, 2024 aft.), 1178-81 (Apr. 22, 2024 aft., defeated on division; not proceeded with)

Bill 206 — Child and Youth Advocate (Parent and Guardian Advisor) Amendment Act, 2024 (Cyr)

First Reading — 917-18 (Mar. 28, 2024 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 1181-90 (Apr. 22, 2024 aft.), 1294-1300 (May 6, 2024 aft., passed)

Bill 207 — Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Education (Valuing Skilled Workers) Amendment Act, 2024 (Hoyle)

First Reading — 1152-53 (Apr. 18, 2024 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 1300-09 (May 6, 2024 aft., adjourned)

Bill 208 — Psycho-Educational Assessment Access Act (Hayter)

First Reading — 1359 (May 8, 2024 aft., passed)

Bill Pr1 — St. Joseph's College Amendment Act, 2023 (Sigurdson, L)

First Reading — 289 (Nov. 22, 2023 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills), 421 (Nov. 29, 2023 aft., reported to Assembly; proceeded with)

Second Reading — 455 (Nov. 30, 2023 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 515 (Dec. 5, 2023 aft., passed)

Third Reading — 530 (Dec. 5, 2023 aft., passed)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on December 7, 2023; SA 2023 c14]

Bill Pr2 — Community Foundation of Medicine Hat and Southeastern Alberta Amendment Act, 2024 (Justin Wright)

First Reading — 918 (Mar. 28, 2024 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills)

Bill Pr3 — Providence Renewal Centre Amendment Act, 2024 (Calahoo Stonehouse)

First Reading — 918 (Mar. 28, 2024 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills)

Bill Pr4 — Rosebud School of the Arts Amendment Act, 2024 (Petrovic)

First Reading — 918 (Mar. 28, 2024 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills)

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