



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, November 7, 2024

Day 67

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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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),
Official Opposition Deputy Assistant Whip
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)
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Dyck, Nolan B., Grande Prairie (UC)
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Deputy Premier
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Eremenko, Janet, Calgary-Currie (NDP)
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Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP),
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Hayter, Julia K.U., Calgary-Edgemont (NDP)
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(UC)
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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC),
Deputy Government Whip
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)
Vacant, Lethbridge-West

Party standings:

United Conservative: 49

New Democrat: 37

Vacant: 1

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Calahoo Stonehouse
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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 7, 2024

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

It being Thursday, we will now be led in the singing of God Save the King by Sidney Manning.

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!

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: It's my absolute pleasure to introduce to all members of the Assembly a couple of visitors from the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. Ms Laura Lee Machell-Cunningham and Carrie Fobes are both councillors from Kneehill county. They were attending the RMA's fall convention. I ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

It's also my pleasure to introduce a friend to many around this Chamber and former colleague to many of us as well, Ms Miranda Rosin. Ms Rosin was the 936th member to serve this Assembly. She was the Member for Banff-Kananaskis from 2019 to 2023. During her time she served as the parliamentary secretary for tourism. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's my pleasure to introduce today's anthem singer, Sidney Manning. Sidney has been singing for over five decades. During that time he sang with the Alberta honour choir and various church choirs. When he isn't singing, Sidney is a provincial administrator for plumbing and gas for Alberta Municipal Affairs. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont has a school group.

Mr. Lundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to introduce grade 6 students from the Father Leduc Catholic school in Leduc. I got a chance to meet the students and take some pictures earlier. They were very excited to be here. We're excited to welcome them. Please rise and accept the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose has a school group.

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Everyone wants to be from Camrose. It's my pleasure to stand up and introduce to you and through you the Holden Rural Academy grade 9 class. Will you

please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Chamber.

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance and the President of Treasury Board has a school group.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't get to do this often because we're too far from Edmonton, but I am very pleased to introduce students from the Erskine school, grades 7 to 9. Please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce three guests from Calgary, Asad Khan Shehzada, Ashtar Khan, and Sher Akbar Khan. They are executives of ANP, Calgary chapter, a movement inspired by Bacha Khan's vision of nonviolence and pacifism. They organize cultural events, support humanitarian causes, and provide valuable services to the community. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

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

Mr. Nixon: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and introduce to you and all members of the Assembly Misty Griffith, who's the executive director of FCSS in Rimbey. Her son Tanner is with her as well as my dear friends, councillors from Clearwater county, Genny Mehlhaff and Neil Ratcliffe. I'd ask that all of them stand up and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism.

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise today and introduce to you and through you to the entire Assembly Mr. Syed Najam Hassan, a great philanthropist and a passionate Albertan, along with his relatives Effat, Amman, Emaad and Salaar Khan. The founder and president of Love with Humanity Association, Syed Najam Hassan and his team have established 44 portable community libraries, 15 portable community food banks, several clothing and pet food banks and delivered 3,000 food hampers. Please rise and receive the warm welcome.

Mr. Ip: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you a dear childhood friend and former resident of Edmonton-South West, Mr. Clayton Wong, along with his family: wife, Ruth Wong; daughter Hayley Wong; and son James Wong. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you my incredible office manager, Sunny Johal, and three social work students from MacEwan University. They are Conor McNally, Zak Fedow, and Noah Mascarenhas. If they could please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader has an introduction.

Mr. Schow: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Darren Reeder, the CEO and president of the Tourism

Industry Association of Alberta, and Rachel Ludwig, CEO of Tourism Canmore Kananaskis, and while I'm on my feet, another friend of tourism, a good friend in the gallery, Miranda Rosin.

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

Mr. Wilson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly four members of the tremendous county of Wetaskiwin: Assistant CEO Jeff Chipley, Reeve Josh Bishop, Deputy Reeve Kathy Rooyakkers, and Councillor Bill Krahn. May you please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Member Eremenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague the Member for Banff-Kananaskis I introduce to you and through you four committed constituents from Bow Valley Pride: Ren Lavergne, Sarah Jackson, Finn St Dennis, and Carly Moore. We're honoured to have you here for another day. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

Remembrance Day

Ms Goehring: For more than 100 years Canadians have gathered to remember the countless sacrifices of the people who serve our country during times of war, conflict, and peace. We honour the soldiers, the nurses, and the many others who sacrifice so much to protect the freedoms that we enjoy today.

We gather on November 11 to show our gratitude for the sacrifices made and to demonstrate that the loss of our Canadian soldiers was not in vain but in pursuit of peace, freedom, and democracy. During this week of remembrance it's important that we recognize that our safety and security are made possible by countless Canadians who defend our borders at home and abroad. Our veterans fought in support of freedom, democracy, rule of law, and human rights. As war, conflict, and extreme violence continue within our global community, let Remembrance Day be a reminder to centre these values.

The commitment of our military has earned Canada a world-wide reputation as a country that supports and protects peace. Over the last century millions of Canadians have proudly served our country in uniform, not only contributing internationally but fulfilling important roles on home soil, including their service in search and rescue missions and response to natural disasters such as helping with wildfire efforts in Jasper.

Mr. Speaker, our remembrance should not be limited to a single day. We reap the benefits of our soldiers' sacrifices every day and should not take them for granted. So as Canadians let us honour those who fought for us and continue to fight for us and the values that we hold so dear. Let us pay tribute to the soldiers who sacrificed their lives for us, those who have served, those currently serving both at home and abroad and to the families and friends that support our military community to do the selfless work that they do every day for all of us.

Lest we forget.

1:40

Bills 33 and 34

Mr. Bouchard: Mr. Speaker, Alberta's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act was enacted before the commercialization of the Internet. Because it predates modern technology, it does not currently account for an increasingly digital environment or for the

sheer volume and complexity of records that are being managed by public bodies to provide services to Albertans. We increasingly rely on technology and digital platforms in our everyday lives, whether we're shopping online, opening a bank account, or applying for a job.

Alberta's government is proposing to divide the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act into two acts, one focused on access to information and the other focused on privacy. Separating the act will help ensure that access to information and privacy each receive the dedicated attention they deserve.

The new Access to Information Act would bring Alberta in line with the other jurisdictions which have all updated their legislation and align with the Supreme Court of Canada decision that affirmed that cabinet confidentiality is essential to good governance. Changes to access to information laws would modernize the language used to refer to access to information and streamline processes to provide Albertans with faster, concrete response times for access to information requests.

Mr. Speaker, the FOIP Act came into force in 1995 and has not been updated in the last 29 years. As the world has continued to evolve, our legislation has not. We have heard from Albertans that updating our access to information and privacy legislation is long overdue.

The new act would allow public bodies to proactively disclose information, making it easier for Albertans to receive more information from government and other public bodies. It would also help better define cabinet confidentiality in the same way other Canadian jurisdictions have and streamline processes in a way that allows government officials to focus on good governance.

Thank you.

Remembrance Day

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Mr. Speaker, commemorating those who served, those serving now, and those about to serve is more than a gesture. It's an expression of gratitude to those who paid the highest price in pursuit of peace, freedom, and progress. I would especially like to acknowledge the veterans who are still with us today. You all know intimately the challenge of serving your country, the preparation, the training, and the sacrifice away from your families and your nations. It is an extraordinary commitment, and for that we are all deeply grateful.

We gather today, adorned with poppies made of cotton or beads, to honour the contribution of over a million Canadians from all walks of life, background, and race who have made and continue to make lasting contributions during times of war, conflict, or peace, including the enlistment of over 12,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people, a shining example of honouring the relationship of peace and friendship between Indigenous peoples and this country.

You see, a nation's military is not just for defence or foreign relations, but certainly in times of crisis their deployment saves lives at home and abroad. Way up in the north the Canadian Armed Forces ensure that Arctic airspace is respected or that food and the necessities of life reach our most northern residents. During times of intense wildfire or the global pandemic we call upon our Armed Forces to build hospitals, deliver supplies, and respond to disasters beyond the scope and scale even our first responders could imagine.

It is for these reasons that we remember all service members who have received the call to risk life and limb to save their country, because today is also a day to mourn the loss of those who paid the ultimate price, those who never came home. May we forever preserve their memory. Lest we forget.

Hay-hay. Nanaskamon.

Remembrance Day

Mr. Wright: Mr. Speaker, Monday is Remembrance Day, a time for sombre reflection. It is a reminder of the sacrifices made by Canadians who fought for our freedoms and security. It is a time to reflect upon those who faced unimaginable horrors on the battlefield, standing resolute in the face of danger. These brave men and women have dedicated their lives to serving our country while facing the horrors of war with unwavering determination, all while ensuring the protections and freedoms of generations to come.

My constituency is home to the South Alberta Light Horse. As a reserve unit they serve both our country as well as our community. Their tireless efforts demonstrate the vital partnerships between our military and the communities they serve in, all while cultivating resilience and unity. They also remind us how close to home our protection is and how many of those who serve in our military serve right in our own neighbourhoods.

To our Canadian Armed Forces members, veterans, and their families: thank you. Your sacrifice, bravery, and commitment are the backbone to our nation's freedom. It is the dedication of our veterans that serves as inspiration for future generations, exemplifying the strong culture and strength of Alberta and Canada.

We will not take our freedoms for granted, Mr. Speaker. We will always honour the men and women who have served and continue to serve our country, and we will support and protect them, just as they have protected us. We will always acknowledge the profound loss that families and friends of the fallen have endured, and we will always remember the sacrifices made by so many so that freedom can exist for all Canadians. Our veterans are not merely heroes in uniform; they're the embodiment of resilience and courage. Each poppy we wear symbolizes a life given, a story untold, and a legacy left behind.

Lest we forget

Hindu Heritage Month

Member Kayande: It's Hindu Heritage Month, Mr. Speaker, a month to recognize the contributions of the Hindu community to Canada and Alberta. I am Hindu. My father arrived in Edmonton in 1967 to study engineering. My mother followed in 1969. My parents thrived here in the land of freedom. My dad told me: I can make an honest living here without paying off some politician for favours. He's very clear that freedom, democracy, justice, and prosperity go hand in hand and can only exist in a society without corruption. As a Hindu I want the same thing other Canadians want from life: health, a roof over my head, food on the table, a little extra for a vacation, and safety and security.

Certainly, Hindus are unfortunately feeling unsafe in their places of worship right now in the wake of the unrest in Brampton over the week. People I've talked to in the Hindu community are committed to maintaining and growing their relationship with other communities, but the fear is present. I hope that the Brampton episode is investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice. The essence of Hinduism is pluralism. Rig-Veda states, "Let noble thoughts come to us from all sides." From all sides, Mr. Speaker. I believe this history and reality of accepting different points of view will help the Hindu community move forward as long as we're safe and our safety is taken seriously.

That pluralism, of course, manifests itself in different ways of living life. Hinduism, in its massive corpus of literature, scripture includes transgender heroes in some of its earliest works, going back two and a half thousand years. Trans people have always been with us. The Mahabharata includes this couplet: "What is here is

found elsewhere. What is not here is nowhere." Now, I see this as aspirational rather than definitive – clearly, quantum mechanics is not in the Mahabharata – but its purpose was to document the entire totality of human experience, and transgender people are a part of that. It makes me proud to be Hindu and live a life of love for all.

Community Safety

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, every Albertan, from Lethbridge to La Crête, deserves to feel safe and welcome in their community, but after five years under the UCP they don't. Sixty per cent of Albertans feel crime is getting worse where they live. Two-thirds of women don't feel safe in their neighbourhood. Nearly 1 in 4 Albertans have been a victim of crime, and 50 per cent fear they'll be next. That's on the UCP. Ask Albertans what they think is making our communities less safe, they'll tell you: issues with addictions and mental health, inadequate court systems, poverty and inequality, a bad economy, and unemployment, all issues that are the responsibility of this government.

Under the UCP deaths from drug poisonings have hit record highs. Public drug use has soared. We have the second-highest rate of unemployment in Canada, highest for insurance, third highest for utilities, and the lowest minimum wage. Across the province the number of people living without housing is soaring. Courts are so backlogged and overwhelmed that judges are warning that serious criminal cases could be dropped. The UCP have slashed, slowed, and pulled back funding for crucial programs and services from income support to affordable housing, to women's shelters, to community-led programs for family and youth in need. That's left Albertans less safe.

Albertans are clear. They want a government that will take real action to help those in need, address root causes so police can focus on actual crime, a government that funds our courts so they can function efficiently and support justice, a government that actually does the work to bring costs down and wages up so Albertans can get ahead. After five years we can see that's not the UCP. Mr. Speaker, it's clear. This government has no plan to make Albertans' lives better, to build safety in our communities.

1:50

But while the UCP focus on sitting in skyboxes, chasing conspiracies, the Premier's pet political projects, Alberta's New Democrats and our leader, Naheed Nenshi, well, we're in the community actually listening to, talking to, working with Albertans. And unlike this government, we have a plan to undo their damage, rebuild safety. With the Alberta New Democrats better is possible, and it's coming.

Statement by the Speaker

Table Officer Aaron Roth

The Speaker: Hon. members, you may notice another new face at the table today. Mr. Aaron Roth will be spending some time in the Chamber learning duties of a table officer this fall. Although new to the table, Aaron has been with the Legislative Assembly Office for many years, and many of you will already know him. Aaron began his work in House services as a committee clerk in 2016. He has a bachelor of arts degree from the University of Lethbridge, a master of arts degree from the University of Alberta, and a master's of theological studies from Newman Theological College. Please join me in welcoming Aaron to the table.

Oral Question Period

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

Electoral Boundaries

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, the UCP's new legislation mucks about with the rules that govern how the next Electoral Boundaries Commission will make their decisions when redrawing Alberta's provincial constituencies. The UCP have removed what used to be a mandatory requirement that the commission should consider municipal boundaries as they draw the lines between ridings. This is an effort by the UCP to further reduce the voices of those who live in municipalities from being heard in this Assembly. What possible excuse is there for the government removing municipal boundaries from mandatory consideration of the new constituency lines?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member would be better served to approach this in a more positive way. This is about flexibility. This is about enabling the commission to conduct its work with as many tools available as possible. This is not foreign language. This is not new language. Other jurisdictions have adopted this language. The courts have provided us with direction. We're simply applying what we have learned from the jurisprudence and from other jurisdictions.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, the minister seems to be projecting "nothing to see here," but there is nothing more important than the change they are making. The electoral commission is already considering population, geographics, the need for clear boundaries in how they draw up the lines. The only reason the UCP want to change this is to break apart communities and create riding maps that they see as more politically advantageous for themselves. Albertans have not called for this change, and the UCP never campaigned on it, so why are the UCP breaking the long-standing practice of constituency seats respecting municipal borders?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we're living in 2024, not in 1974. The communities all across this province have become so closely connected, through virtual and transportation means and in many other ways, that communities share unique and common experiences. We're allowing the commission to use all of the tools available to it, tools that are already in place in many other provinces, many other areas, and come up with the best possible electoral boundary redraws that they can.

Ms Gray: We know the UCP are worried. They lost the popular vote in Calgary. They got completely wiped out in Edmonton. We know there are UCP members who love how Republican-style gerrymandered districts work for politicians and not the people, but Albertans don't want that. Municipalities like Red Deer, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Grande Prairie, and Fort McMurray deserve to have fair representation. Will the Premier assure Albertans that her hand-picked members of the next boundary commission will not break apart ridings just for the sake of their political gain?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, trust the process. Respect the process. The NDP can continue to disparage and speculate on an independent commission that's going to do good work in this province. We prefer to take a positive approach. Our province has grown in unprecedented ways over the past year. In fact, 204,000 people have moved to this great province under the leadership of

this great government. That never would have happened if the NDP were in power, and hopefully that'll never happen again.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has the next question.

Market Access to U.S.

Ms Pancholi: Mr. Speaker, the new President-elect of the United States has said that he will introduce new tariffs on global imports. With the U.S. accounting for 82 per cent of Alberta's exports last year, tariffs would pose a significant risk to many Alberta industries, particularly energy and agriculture. Alberta will need a clear, action-oriented plan to secure and expand our market access. We will have to work collaboratively with other provinces and the federal government. What is the Premier doing to support a Team Canada approach to secure Alberta's economic future?

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question and thank the member for recognizing that there is a new government in the United States right now. Just as with any new government, we're going to work with them to do whatever is in the best interests of the people of Alberta. We're going to be working with the Canadian government. We'll be working with all provincial partners here to do whatever is in the best interest for not just Canada but, of course, the province of Alberta.

Ms Pancholi: Alberta's agriculture industry is critical to both our economy and our communities, and Alberta farmers rely heavily on access to the U.S. market. With the potential for new tariffs on imports, Alberta's agriculture sector faces an incredibly uncertain future. Can the Premier tell us how her government is working with the federal government and our industry partners to secure fair access for our farmers in the U.S.? What specific assurances can she offer today to Alberta's agriculture producers?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

Mr. Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, there is going to be a new administration down in the United States. I look forward to bringing forward Alberta's value proposition on agriculture. We know that when there's free-flowing trade in agriculture that doesn't have tariffs burdening it, it's better for food affordability and food security. We are stronger together as two nations. I look forward to getting down to the U.S. at any opportunity possible, working with this government and this Premier to be able to communicate with this new President-elect and be able to talk to him about how we're stronger together and how we can combat food affordability.

Ms Pancholi: The incoming U.S. President's stance on immediately deporting undocumented migrants will inevitably result in more people seeking asylum in Canada. This has direct implications for our province, particularly along unsecured border points in southern Alberta. Has the Premier made any preparations or held any conversations with federal or other governments to prepare Alberta for an influx of asylum seekers, particularly given the strain it could place on already stretched thin provincial infrastructure and services?

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

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, hon. member, for the question. We continue to work with the federal government on asylum seekers and other immigration issues here

within Canada. We have been working on this with the federal government. We want to make sure that anybody who comes to Alberta, whether they're asylum seekers or otherwise, comes to Alberta with the health package that comes from the federal government as well.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a question to ask.

Health Care System Capacity

Ms Hoffman: When speaking to Rural Municipalities, our leader, Naheed Nenshi, asked delegates if they had to drive at least an hour to get to a hospital. About a third of the folks in the room said yes. When you or someone you love is sick or dying, every minute matters. Far too often Albertans arrive at the emergency department outside of Edmonton and Calgary and find a sign telling them it's closed and to travel even farther. Will the minister tell this Assembly how many hours emergency departments in Alberta were closed last year?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is certainly the reason why we are continuing to work with our rural communities and make sure that we have a rural health strategy. I find it ironic that the members opposite are so concerned about rural health. They didn't care about it before. In fact, they took the Red Deer hospital, which is in a rural community but still has a catchment area of rural communities, off the capital plan. I find it ironic now that they're talking about rural health.

Ms Hoffman: I'll put my record on public health care up against the minister's any day, Mr. Speaker.

It was 38,000 . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Ms Hoffman: . . . probably it will be higher this year. This last week Fairview, Lac La Biche emergency departments were closed multiple days, 38,000 hours . . . [interjections] Rural MLAs shouldn't be laughing at that. They shouldn't be proud of it.

2:00

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

Ms Hoffman: Rural MLAs should be standing up for their constituents, and they should be making sure that they have access to health care. [interjections] So why is the minister sitting there on her hands instead of signing the contract that she negotiated with doctors and already promised she would sign months ago?

Mr. Sabir: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2 o'clock from the Government House Leader, followed by a point of order at 2 o'clock from the Official Opposition Deputy House Leader.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite wants to put her record up against mine already? I'm happy to do that. Let's take a walk down memory lane. Under her leadership as Health minister wait times for cataract, hip replacement, and knee replacement surgery all rose by 30 per cent or more. Cataract surgery wait times soared from 10.6 weeks to 16.9 weeks. As of August of 2024 the current wait time for cataract

surgery is 12 weeks, way below the members opposite. I'm happy to put my record up against hers.

Ms Hoffman: And in every major municipality in Alberta you could get a family doctor when I was a minister, and that's certainly not the case today. Nearly a million Albertans don't have access to a family doctor, and this Premier and minister promised that they'd focus on health care. People thought that meant that they would improve morale, that they'd hire more staff, but it's been 177 days, Mr. Speaker, since the Premier went to doctors and promised she would sign the new contract. What's happening? Closed emergency departments, nearly a million Albertans without a family doctor, 20,000 in Lethbridge alone. So to the Premier: is she going to keep her word and sign that contract? Is it that she didn't mean it, or is it that she can't convince her cabinet?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, everyone could find a family doctor because they drove out hundreds of thousands of people out of Alberta. Under her record hip replacement waits increased from 13.1 weeks to 18.9 weeks, and knee replacements rose from 14.7 weeks to 19.1 weeks. As of August of 2024 the average wait time for a hip replacement is 15.9 weeks, much lower than the 18.9 under her watch; 18.3 weeks for knee surgeries, lower than under her watch. I'm happy to put my record up. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Indexation of Taxes and Benefits

Mr. Ellingson: Thank you. Bill 32 creates a floor for the indexation of tax brackets. The legislation decouples indexation from inflation, and when inflation rises, the floor becomes the default. Let's be clear. This is deindexation, and the last time the UCP did this, it cost Alberta families \$650 million. We are in an affordability crisis, Mr. Speaker, yet this government brought in legislation to take money out of Albertans' pockets. Why is the Premier focused on chemtrails instead of affordability?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, we certainly aren't deindexing anything. The changes that we will make in Bill 32 are about standardizing rates across government programs. As the Premier said, we had different rates, a different calendar year, fiscal year dates in January, June, fall, and she found it indefensible that a program could increase at a different rate than another. We're certainly not doing what the member opposite just said; 2 per cent is the rate for 2025. It closely aligns with September-over-September inflation for Alberta.

Mr. Ellingson: Conveniently, yesterday it was the rate of inflation, not over the last five years.

Bill 32 creates a floor for the indexation of AISH, income supports, and seniors' benefits. Hundreds of thousands of Albertans who struggle to pay rent and buy groceries will suffer higher expenses and lower incomes because of this deindexation. Why is this government so focused on conspiracies instead of helping Albertans deal with the affordability crisis?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I can see the members opposite or any member of this House being concerned if we would have set a ceiling, but that's not what we did. We set a floor: either 2 per cent, which is the target rate for the Bank of Canada, or Alberta's CPI. And then Treasury Board and the government have the discretion to make it what it needs to be for that year and ensure that it's standardized across government. This is a good-news story with

about a \$200 million cost to government. We're proud to hold that commitment for our programs and for Alberta taxpayers.

Mr. Ellingson: While this government promised to decouple the budget from the roller coaster of oil prices, all they have done is decouple themselves from the reality faced by everyday Albertans. Inflation might be 2 per cent today, but it has averaged 3.28 per cent since this government came to power in 2019, the highest in the country. The Premier has already admitted that she's having trouble balancing the budget due to their poor financial planning. So why is the path to balance through the pocketbooks of Albertans by taking their money without them knowing about it through this deindexation legislation?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, this is about standardizing rates across government, as I already said. I like how he mentioned the roller coaster ride of oil. We're in a unique position in this year. We're still in a very strong position. I'll be happy to update Alberta at the end of November for our second quarter, but Budget 2025: everyone can see the forecast for oil that's upcoming. There is a lot of pressure down with all of our forecasters. I think Scotiabank came in at \$66 for 2025. Even with that coming towards us, we're still committed to indexing in Alberta.

Minimum Wage Rate

Member Hoyle: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked about Alberta having the second-highest jobless rate in Canada and what the UCP government plans to do to make sure that Albertans have good-paying jobs. The minister replied that things are looking "not too shabby." Alberta has one of the highest unemployment rates at 7.7 per cent, and we now have one of the lowest minimum wages in the country. Can the minister please enlighten me? How is it that Albertans are struggling in this current economic climate and things are looking "not too shabby"?

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the demands Albertans are facing, especially with high inflation and elevated interest rates. The average minimum wage across Canada right now is \$15.80. In Alberta 94 per cent of workers earn more than minimum wage, and over the last five years the number of Albertans earning minimum wage has dropped by 53 per cent, from 270,000 in 2018 to 126,000 in 2023. Changes to the minimum wage can impact small business, youth, and part-time workers, and we're committed to thoughtful review.

Member Hoyle: Given that Alberta hasn't raised its minimum wage since 2018 and given that antipoverty experts say that this government needs to look at raising the minimum wage so families can keep up with rising inflation and expenses and given that the UCP could implement gradual changes to wages through inflation indexation to support families while not straining Alberta businesses, is the minister content to keep telling Albertans that everything is "not too shabby" and that they need to keep struggling to take care of their families?

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, Alberta offers the lowest provincial income tax rates and the highest basic personal tax exemption in Canada. With no provincial sales tax or health premiums Albertans, including those on minimum wage, keep more of their hard-earned money in their pockets. It seems that – well, actually, let me add this. The average hourly wage in Alberta is between \$32 and \$34 an hour, which is about 10 to 25 per cent higher than the rest of Canada. So it's clear why record numbers of Canadians are choosing to make Alberta their home.

Member Hoyle: Well, given that it sounds like the minister is telling Albertans to stop complaining yet these families are still facing the challenges due to the UCP's inaction on affordability and given that Albertans pay the second-highest premiums in car insurance, some of the highest in utility rates, and one of the highest inflation rates in the country and given that Albertans deserve more than "not too shabby" from this UCP government, that cares about building a strong economy for businesses and families, when will the UCP get to work on prioritizing Albertans instead of settling on the bare minimum?

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, it seems like that "Not too shabby" statement has turned the NDP upside down here. Alberta is doing well. Alberta continues to be the leader in Canada for economic growth, productivity, investment, private-sector job creation, and the list goes on. With the lowest income tax rates, the highest basic personal tax exemption, no sales tax, a competitive cost of living, all Albertans, including those making minimum wage, keep more money in their jeans. Again, we are evaluating minimum wage, and we will take the time to consider all factors and potential.

2:10

Bills 33 and 34

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, the government of Alberta is taking significant steps to modernize its access to information and protection of privacy legislation. Privacy is important to Albertans, and the Minister of Technology and Innovation has said that it's important to this government as well. Yesterday the minister introduced Bill 33, the Protection of Privacy Act. Can the Minister of Technology and Innovation explain how splitting the FOIP Act into two separate pieces of legislation will enhance privacy protections for Albertans and improve the government's ability to adapt to technological advancements?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Technology and Innovation.

Mr. Glubish: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the fact is that our privacy legislation has not seen meaningful updates in over 20 years. That means that our privacy legislation predates modern technologies like social media, mobile phones, and, yes, even the Internet. One of the reasons why this legislation has not been updated in so long is because every time previous governments looked at it, they had to look at both the privacy provisions and the access to information provisions, and getting consensus from everybody involved was really hard. By splitting the act into two acts, we can ensure that as technology continues to evolve, if amendments are required to strengthen privacy protections for Albertans, we can be more nimble and focus exclusively on privacy.

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

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for his answer. Given that Alberta's privacy legislation has not seen meaningful updates in over 20 years and predates modern technologies like social media, the Internet, and mobile phones and given that every day Albertans interact with government services and given that Albertans should always expect their privacy to be protected, can the same minister explain how Bill 33 will help deliver the strongest privacy protections in Canada?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the things I'm really excited about with Bill 33 is that it makes it law that the government will never sell Albertans' data. No government ever should, and

under this legislation no government ever will. We're also making it mandatory that there is breach notification so that you as an Albertan would be notified in the event of a privacy breach that would result in a risk of significant harm. Also, we all know that technology's landscape is moving quickly, and artificial intelligence is a tool that is boosting productivity and automating processes in every industry, including government. Well, we believe that if AI is used to assist in decision-making or predictions that affect you, you should . . .

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

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister for his answer. Given that Bill 33 is an important part of this government's plan to implement the strongest privacy protections and the strictest penalties for privacy violations in Canada and further given that these penalties and protections should give Albertans confidence and trust in how government manages and uses their data, can the Minister of Technology and Innovation share examples of these penalties and explain how we compare to the rest of the country?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Technology and Innovation.

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that the next closest jurisdictions are British Columbia and Quebec. Well, in B.C. a fine for an individual would be up to \$50,000, and a fine for a corporation would be up to \$500,000. In Quebec an individual would be between \$5,000 and \$100,000 and in all other cases \$15,000 to \$150,000. Well, in Alberta when it comes to personal information, the fines for an individual would be up to \$125,000 and for an organization or a corporation up to \$750,000. We're introducing new categories for breaches related to data matching or nonpersonal information. That would be up to \$200,000 for an individual and a million for a corporation.

Wage Growth and Cost of Living

Mr. Haji: Mr. Speaker, the average annual growth in nominal weekly earnings for Alberta workers was just 2.3 per cent over the past five years since this government came to power, the slowest of any province and significantly below the Canadian average of 3.8 per cent. This is coupled with Alberta's job creation lagging population growth more than in any other province. Will the minister acknowledge that Alberta is falling behind the rest of the country in both employment growth and wage increases?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, thank you. Alberta's economy is thriving under our government's leadership. Alberta has emerged as the economic stronghold of Canada. This is after the NDP did everything they could to destroy that, but with less than 12 per cent of Canada's population, Alberta punches way above our weight. Over 20 per cent of Canada's nonresidential investment is located right here in Alberta. Over 25 per cent of Canada's goods exports, over 40 per cent of net private-sector jobs gained over the last 12 months have been right here in Alberta.

Mr. Haji: Given that the questions are so specific and given that 10 years ago Alberta's average hourly wage for employees was 17 per cent above the national average and given that the average cost of living in Calgary and Edmonton is now 8 per cent higher than the average of all major cities today and the province has the lowest wage growth in Canada with minimum wage frozen since 2018, can

the minister explain why wages are failing to keep up with the cost of living?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Guthrie: Yeah. Mr. Speaker, I just don't know where they're coming from. Our government has worked to bring back and restore the Alberta advantage and our reputation as a world-class investment destination. Major projects like Dow's \$11.6 billion petrochemical facility in Fort Saskatchewan, the Linde \$2 billion hydrogen project: these are proof that Alberta is a global investment destination. Through our investment and growth fund alone, we've attracted more than 1,000 permanent full-time jobs, 800 temporary jobs, and capital investment of almost a billion dollars, just in that one program. We are well on our . . .

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

Mr. Haji: Given Albertans pay the second-highest auto insurance rates in the country, which the Minister of Finance has admitted, and given that this government has done nothing to encourage wage growth so people can pay the higher cost of living that the Premier ignores every single day, will this government commit to bringing down the cost of living that is burdening Albertans every single day?

Mr. Guthrie: During the NDP's time in office Alberta experienced a staggering 3 and a half per cent decrease in real GDP. Now, let's couple that with unemployment rates that soared over 8 per cent, which were the highest in the country at the time. The NDP's heavy-tax, antibusiness, antienergy policies resulted in Albertans and Alberta businesses packing up and fleeing and, even worse, going out of business. NDP policies not only stifled growth, but they cost tens of billions of dollars of investment, and we're not going to be taking advice from the other side.

AISH Indexation

Ms Renaud: The UCP opened assured income for the severely handicapped in 2019, then disabled Albertans lost four years of inflation-proofing because the UCP deindexed AISH. Disabled Albertans dropped deeper into poverty. They are four times more likely to experience homelessness; they rely on food banks; they face long wait-lists for specialized disability supports. Now, the UCP did reindex AISH benefits just before the last election – better late than never, I say, Mr. Speaker – so to the minister: tell Albertans why it was so important to index AISH benefits.

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the NDP never paid one index rate to AISH the entire time that they were in power. Quite disappointing, and our side of the House recognized that was a mistake of the NDP to do that and brought in stable indexation, which we're going to continue to have. I had the largest rate increase for AISH this last time around because of what has taken place with inflation, in the history of the province, and we will be increasing it by 2 per cent, as the Finance minister has already said, this year, which will take AISH payments up to \$1,901, which is almost \$1,000 more than Ontario, because we stand with people with disabilities.

Ms Renaud: Given that 1.3 million Albertans are living with a disability, we should all be concerned that the unemployment rate for them is twice what their nondisabled peers is and given disability-related unemployment depleted personal and spousal resources, insufficient private disability insurance often means

applying for AISH and given that 77,000 disabled Albertans live on AISH at about \$1,900 dollars per month, which amounts to about \$10 an hour for a full-time job, to the minister: with a failure to actually inflation-proof AISH – 2 per cent is not inflation-proofing – what is your government doing to address unemployment of disabled Albertans?

Mr. Nixon: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, the NDP – and that member was with the government caucus – did not index AISH. So if she was so passionate about that issue, she should have certainly made sure her government did it. Who did it, though, was the Conservative government because we know that it needs to take place. Two per cent is right in line with inflation this year. As the Minister of Finance has already explained, that's over \$200 million worth of increases to programs so that they're going to be able to help Albertans going forward, a significant amount of money. Only the NDP would laugh at a number like that. Again, we have the highest rates in the country. There are some provinces at almost \$1,000 less than what is taking place in Alberta. We continue to lead the way. We are not going to stop.

2:20

Ms Renaud: Well, that was a defensive word salad.

Given Alberta is one of the last provinces in the country without a legislative framework to remove barriers for disabled Albertans so they can actually participate in all aspects of life and given disabled Albertans are unemployed and underemployed at alarming rates, living in deep poverty as a result, and given the fact that severely disabled Albertans living on AISH earn what amounts to \$10 an hour, to the minister: why is the UCP messing again with AISH benefits by capping possible increases instead of actually indexing to inflation?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I know that this is a really hard thing for the NDP to understand because they struggle with economics and those types of issues, but again, it is indexed. It's indexed by law. It will be indexed this year at 2 per cent, keeping up with inflation, and this government is the only government in Alberta history to do it. So unlike the NDP who like to sit inside the Legislature and complain about things and not fix things, we complain about them. That's the difference between us.

I've got to say that at this point it's probably time for the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona to get back up in the leader's chair and start asking questions because she was better at it, and she was never scared of an election or trying to change things, unfortunately unlike what we see with Naheed Nenshi's NDP.

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

Addiction Treatment and Recovery

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd first like to start off by acknowledging the hard work from our minister. I understand that reworking our health care system is complex and it takes time; however, many Albertans are concerned about a perceived lack of tangible improvements. It is my understanding that the move to divide the health system into four sections was to better manage and view how it operates. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can you explain how this restructuring will lead to meaningful outcomes?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On November 8 of last year we started refocusing our health care system to one that works for all Albertans, places patients first in every health decision, and gives front-line experts the ability to provide world-class care. It will prioritize the needs of all Albertans to find a primary care provider, get urgent care without long wait times, have access to best continuing care options, and ensure that every Albertan struggling with addiction and mental health challenges has access to treatment and recovery supports. We're working hard to make sure that we have a responsive, effective health care system.

Mr. Yao: Thank you to the minister for that answer. Given that the Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction has been bestowed with all aspects of AHS dedicated to the province's addiction supports and given my understanding is that the minister now has direct access to information on these services, which was previously obtained through requests, can the minister explain what this enhanced visibility means for the delivery of addiction services and how it will improve outcomes for those in need?

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

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to that member and, of course, to all of our front-line staff that are now operating under the established Recovery Alberta. The truth is that before we came into government, there was no Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction, and we have now grown to a full minister with a budget and the work that needs to happen so we're no longer doing mental health and addiction off the side of our desk, with \$1.5 billion spent annually for the care of Albertans. My new ministry, along with Recovery Alberta, needs to be as connected to the recovery of people through the emergency room as we are in the classroom, which is why this new culture and new lens of doing mental health, addiction care first is so important.

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

Mr. Yao: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for his response. Given that in Fort McMurray the Tawaw Housing First Partnership aims to support Indigenous individuals yet concerns have been raised about the misuse of supportive housing for drug-related activities – and I've even confirmed this with my own municipal officials yesterday – given that with AHS funding, nurses are at these facilities and it raises the questions about their intended purpose, could the minister address these concerns and provide assurances that our housing initiatives will prioritize safety and well-being for all community members?

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

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the member for that important question and for bringing it to my attention here in the Chamber. The truth is that my ministry along with every other ministry that works together has a mandate for a recovery-oriented system of care. So I can tell you now that the big heavy lifting needs to happen for us to look at the work being done with Recovery Alberta and make sure all of those services line up with the government mandate of recovery-oriented care. I'll be crystal clear. As we do that, if there are services that are continuing to encourage drug use over recovery, we're going to have to have some changes with the alignment of those services and the delivery in the community.

Affordable Housing

Member Tejada: In my economically and demographically diverse riding, folks from all walks of life are worried about how they can afford a place to live. We know that Calgary has some of the highest rents and now the lowest minimum wage. So many folks tell me that they are now fearing that they'll lose their homes, and wait-lists have grown to the thousands for affordable housing. Will the minister tell us today what steps his government has taken to actually build affordable housing in Calgary? Please be specific.

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

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. First of all, what we've done is been able to increase capacity by 40 per cent through our stronger foundations program. Unfortunately, the NDP saw wait-lists go up by 77 per cent when they were in government. So we've done a great job being able to tackle the problems that we inherited from that socialist government going forward. The number one thing I will talk about, though, is the \$9 billion investment that is taking place right now in this province when it comes to affordable housing, creating upwards of 82,000 more affordable households, on top of the work that's happening in the free market in this province, which is building the most houses anywhere in the country.

Member Tejada: Given that working people's wages haven't kept pace with skyrocketing home prices and homeownership has become a distant memory and given that purpose-built rentals can help but even those require a salary of twice the minimum wage to afford a two-bedroom unit and given that the CMHC fall housing report credits municipal initiatives, not provincial, for increases in housing starts and purpose-built rentals, why has this government failed to build accessible, affordable homes so people can stop couch-surfing in their parents' basements and just find a place of their own?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, this government came up with a plan a year ago to work with our municipalities to reduce red tape that the CMHC refers to in every report as the only bright spot anywhere in Canada. That's why our residential construction industry has doubled its capacity. Most importantly, the hon. member is right, purpose-built rentals are absolutely critical. For the first time in the history of Alberta one-third of all construction taking place in this province is purpose-built rentals, which is why we remain the only affordable place for housing anywhere in this country. We're going to continue to work with our great industry to get the job done.

Member Tejada: Hopefully we won't get in the way of federal funding.

Given that building supply of affordable housing units is critical but folks need rent relief right now and given that this government has refused to legislate any sort of protections for renters in terms of rental increases and given that this government has failed to plan appropriately for population growth and has irresponsibly blamed newcomers for housing pressures, why hasn't the minister committed to increasing the number of rent supplements available so that folks have secure housing this winter?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have increased rents and supplements to a quarter billion dollars. That program is working very, very well, and we're going to continue with it. Unlike what the member just said, calling for things like rent control right after

she asked questions for us to build more houses and then stands up in this House and continues to push the NDP's agenda to bring in rent control, which would drive our construction to zero, which would make more people homeless, which would drive up the cost of housing and would make it impossible for Alberta to go forward: we are not going to do that. We're going to continue to bet on Albertans, and that is why we have the best residential construction industry anywhere.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Taber-Warner has a question to ask.

Police Services Funding Model

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this week during the Rural Municipalities of Alberta convention, Alberta's government announced it is temporarily freezing the total amount that rural municipalities are responsible for paying for front-line policing costs served by RCMP under the provincial police service agreement. This action is a much-welcomed funding relief to our rural communities, further demonstrating our provincial government's support to rural Alberta. Can the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services please share why this freeze was needed and why we need the police funding model?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services and the Deputy Premier.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member, of course, for the question. Of course Alberta's government is stepping up and is going to support our folks within municipalities, especially in rural Alberta. There's a funding increase of 39 per cent that was kind of imposed upon us. We were a little shocked when we heard about this, but we're putting a freeze on it for one year. We know that municipalities deserve stability and predictability when it comes to funding. The police funding model, when we put this in place, was able to provide \$235 million of investment for policing in rural Alberta for the RCMP; 285 front-line police officers and 244 civilians.

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the hard work he's doing. Given that the province will carefully consider all factors to ensure we provide an updated funding model that is sustainable and given that the freeze will be in effect for one year until March 31, 2026, can the same minister please explain to this House how much this will cost Alberta's government while the funding model is updated?

The Speaker: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you. We're going to engage with municipalities, discuss, of course, all the options. The simple answer to the question, Mr. Speaker, is that it is going to cost \$27 million. That is what we are going to be saving those municipalities. We knew that was a figure that would be thrust upon them, that certainly wouldn't provide the stability and predictability that we would be hoping that they would have. So we're going to continue to work with municipalities. We're going to consult with them. We're going to do really in-depth engagement with them to make sure that they explore all options, to make sure that they have the best policing possible for their communities.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that municipalities knew the funding model was about to expire but did not know about the 39 per cent increase in costs with no increase in services by the RCMP and given that municipalities are unprepared for a jump in policing costs, can the same minister please explain to the House why these costs are increasing?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you. That's correct. The member is correct. There were going to be no increases in services and certainly no more officers. There were several factors. There were inflationary increases on goods and services. But the main reason, Mr. Speaker, for the increase is the negotiated collective agreement with the National Police Federation, including a retroactive pay increase and other settlements due to higher costs from recent RCMP collective agreements. We've been very clear on this side of the House. We're going to do whatever it takes to keep Albertans safe. We're going to work with all municipalities, and we're going to make sure the folks in rural Alberta have the resources they need you.

Thank you.

Continuing Care System

Ms Sigurdson: The government this fall moved responsibility for continuing care from the Health ministry to Seniors, Community and Social Services. But instead of expanding wraparound services and supports, Albertans have already seen how the ministry is unable to meet its existing responsibilities. After millions in cuts to special needs assistance, a lack of investment in affordable housing, and long wait-lists for many services, chronic issues remain. To the minister: where's the plan for continuing care?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, you've seen the plan take place right now, which is unprecedented investments in continuing care, hundreds of millions of dollars coming in for new capital, a billion dollars being invested in the transformation to be able to go towards the four organizations that the Minister of Health has put forward to be able to bring in true wraparound services and move away from the NDP's approach, which was taking away decision-making power from the front lines, putting it up in ivory towers here in Edmonton, making it so seniors, particularly in rural Alberta, could not remain in the communities that they built. Instead, going forward, our plan is to make sure that Albertans could be in the right community in the right place where they need, receiving the right services.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that the UCP cut minimum daily care hours from 1.9 to zero, something no Alberta family called for, and given that families across the province have reached out to my office reporting that their loved ones are now facing neglect and a lack of care and given that operators are cutting the number of staff because they no longer have any minimum-hour standards in the legislation, is this what the Minister of Health had in mind when she indicated she wanted to be flexible for operators, inadequate care for vulnerable seniors?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you what the Minister of Health had in mind. She wanted us to move our system away from what the NDP had created, which was our elderly and those who we should care for the most lying in acute-care beds, not receiving the appropriate services for their circumstances, lying in hallways and not being cared for and ending up costing more money for the system but, worst of all, not being in the right spot. She's come forward with a great transformation plan, which includes the work

we're doing on continuing care. We're going to make sure that we provide wraparound services for those individuals, and we're going to care for them in the right spot, unlike what the NDP did.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that evidence-based research reports that the best outcomes for seniors are in public and nonprofit continuing care facilities and given that for-profit facilities focus on profit over care and given that instead of focusing on these basic standards of care for seniors, this government has chased conspiracies like chemtrails, why has the Premier said that they would be uberizing services further, creating more for-profit services, rather than focusing on the models that have the best outcomes for residents of continuing care?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the focus is on the care. That's where it should be, unlike the NDP, who want to focus on what's business or what's union or what's that. It's irrelevant for the people that we're going to care for. We want to make sure that they're cared for and they're cared for fast and appropriately and not lying in beds that are inappropriate. That's what the Premier is referring to when she talks about uberization, about making it efficient for patients and families to get to the care they need. That's the number one objective of this government, and we will not be fazed by what the NDP say. I know the NDP would like us to go back to the system that they built, which was grandma and grandpa lying in hospital hallways. This government will not do that.

Energy Industry Property Tax Payments

Mr. Kasawski: Rural municipalities are still struggling to collect millions of dollars owed to them by oil and gas companies due to failed policies and inaction by the UCP government. Last week the Minister of Municipal Affairs said that the government has made it harder for oil and gas companies that don't behave to transfer wells. That's strange because in August the energy minister reversed that policy and removed the requirement for industry to pay the property taxes before selling wells. Are the ministers of Municipal Affairs and energy not talking to each other?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, we've made regular and great efforts with rural municipalities to help collect the oil and gas taxes. We put in Bill 77, made it possible to sue people. The energy minister through the AER has made changes designed to help. He's now working with the RMA, looking for another way to get it done. But at the end of the day, the job is not done, and I can assure all Albertans, especially those in rural Alberta, that we won't quit until it's done, and we won't be satisfied until rural Alberta municipalities are satisfied.

Mr. Kasawski: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister said that under his watch rural municipalities go bankrupt all the time and it's not unusual and not extraordinary and given that the outgoing president of the RMA said that it's this government whose policies have made it so financially difficult for municipalities to stay afloat and given that municipalities deserve a government that will help them get their taxes paid from industry, will this government stop chasing conspiracy theories and actually get to work building rural municipalities, starting with helping them collect taxes that they are owed?

Mr. McIver: Well, if the hon. member was paying attention, he'd know we're already doing those things. We are working with rural municipalities. We are helping them to get the taxes collected, and we acknowledge that that job is not done yet, Mr. Speaker. We have many programs who work with them to help them build roads and

bridges. Our LGFF program was designed by municipalities. It will provide 13 per cent more funding next year than this year; 3 per cent less the year after because the municipalities themselves asked for that revenue to go up and down with the province's revenue. We have always worked closely with municipalities in rural Alberta, and we'll continue to because they matter to Alberta.

Mr. Kasawski: Given that the Minister of Municipal Affairs doesn't know what the minister of energy is doing in relation to taxes and how it impacts municipalities and given that under this minister's watch it's apparently not unusual to see municipalities end up in bankruptcy and given that the RMA has said that this minister's relationship with rural municipalities has been strained, will any cabinet minister explain to this Assembly how rural municipalities are supposed to have any trust that this government will help deliver services for Albertans?

Mr. McIver: Again, the hon. member is not paying attention. I kind of hate to be immodest, Mr. Speaker, but the president of RMA actually described me as an ally this morning in front of about a thousand of their members. I'm proud of that, but that's not to say that the job is done. We have a lot more to do. You know what? As far as the issue of unpaid oil and gas, every company that is not paying their taxes: the AER should put them out of business sooner rather than later. I have no patience for anybody that doesn't pay their taxes, no matter what industry they're in, whether it's a restaurant, oil and gas, or whatever. That's what I think should happen.

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

Health Services in Rural Alberta

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rural Albertans need a little help when it comes to health care access. We've got large areas, big populations spread over size. For example, mine is 47,000 residents in about 5,800 square kilometres. Challenges also come to the zones themselves. Some of the rural communities are considered city areas, as we've seen, and that's causing difficulty retaining docs because we're competing with the big cities such as we've seen out at the Onway regional medical clinic. Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Health minister: what is the minister doing to improve quality and access in health care, especially in those rural parts of the province?

2:40

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

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is taking action to improve access to rural health care in a variety of ways. In fact, we recently announced two new grants that will help strengthen primary care in our province. The rural team recruitment grant will give organizations and clinics the ability to hire additional team members, and the municipality supported clinics grant will provide municipalities the opportunity to become owners or support clinical operations of an existing primary care clinic in the community. Through these grants and many other things that we're doing, we are enhancing team-based care and ensuring rural clinics can remain operational.

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

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for that answer. There's always a balance between getting access and the wait times for the essential service. Given that wait times and access in rural are challenging and when we do go to the city, sometimes

those backlogs are also a difficulty, both with the challenge of the driving, the extensive travel to get there, and then the excess waiting times once we are there, to the minister: what actions is the minister taking to reduce these wait times and ensure that rural communities have timely access to the health care system they need and deserve?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We are working hard to increase timely access to care for rural Albertans through the health workforce strategy. We're supporting multiple initiatives to recruit and retain health care workers across the province such as preparing to train over 100 additional physicians per year both in Lethbridge and in Grande Prairie. So that's one of the initiatives. We also recently announced a \$16 million rural and remote family medicine resident bursary program, a physician bursary pilot program to support family medicine residents who are interested in practising in rural and remote regions. This new bursary will lead to more family doctors working in rural areas across the province. I'm hearing great things about it already.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister again. Thanks for the answer. Given that many rural Albertans are struggling to access essential health care services due to the ongoing staffing constraints in our medical facilities, given a number of medical professionals who told me that AHS has become a big, calcified, cash-hungry monster that doesn't listen to the front-line health care workers and given that the patients or front-line workers should be put as job number one, again, when it comes to health care, could the minister tell the Assembly how the government will ensure that rural communities have enough support to access and maintain a high standard of care?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to share the news. We are committed to creating a modern, more responsive, and unified health care system that prioritizes patients and empowers front-line health care professionals. Primary care Alberta is the new provincial health agency that will oversee and coordinate the delivery of primary health care services right across the province. The immediate priority of the agency is to ensure every Albertan has access to high-quality primary care services so all Albertans and their families are supported in their day-to-day health needs throughout every stage of life. It's a high priority, and we are doing the job.

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

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Tourism and Sport.

Bill 35 All-season Resorts Act

Mr. Schow: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being Bill 35, All-season Resorts Act.

It is my honour today to rise and move first reading on that bill. As you know, our government has set a bold and ambitious target of growing Alberta's tourism sector from \$10 billion in annual

visitor expenditures to \$25 billion by 2035, an increase of more than 150 per cent. The development of all-season, year-round resorts on provincial Crown land is key to reaching this goal, as outlined in Alberta's provincial tourism strategy.

If passed, this act will establish a clear and straightforward development process for applications to follow, ensuring projects maintain our province's world-class environmental standards and meet all Indigenous engagement requirements, and will provide a one-window approach to attract investment into our tourism sector. More importantly, these resorts will benefit Albertans, creating jobs, bolstering local economies, and giving Albertans more opportunities to enjoy the beauty of their own backyards.

Mr. Speaker, I hereby move first reading of Bill 35, the All-season Resorts Act. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 35 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Are there tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a tabling today from the Canadian Women and Sport organization. It's a report that they've written. I certainly won't read the entire report, but the three key messages that are in this in relation to Bill 29 are:

- This policy is not based on evidence.
- This policy will significantly harm transgender girls and women.
- This policy will not reduce the main barriers girls and women face in sports.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday, followed by Edmonton-South.

Member Arcand-Paul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite copies of an *Ottawa Citizen* article about a doctor that the Premier referenced in her remarks in second reading for Bill 26 in which he refers to himself as a right-wing nut and he defends sexual assault.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South, followed by Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Member Hoyle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling five copies of an e-mail sent to me and the Premier from my constituent Frederic Layden. He's very upset about the Premier and UCP government's authoritarian-style leadership and serving special-interest groups instead of serving all Albertans on key issues.

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

Mr. Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great honour to rise and table a beautiful poem written by grade 6 student Nash Hove and read out during the Remembrance Day ceremony today in the rotunda, titled *Enlisted*.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by Calgary-Edgemont.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table many e-mails. Again, I've got thousands of e-mails from folks across Alberta. These are three e-mails from parents Avery Letendre, Natasha Chiam, and Marianne King, all parents urging the UCP to withdraw their horrific antitrans legislation.

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

Ms Hayter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of a letter from my constituent Tina to the government, telling them that her daughter is on the safest path and that is only possible due to pausing testosterone. Tina would like the government to reconsider their bills for the safety of our next generation.

As well, I have five copies from Amanda, a Hawkwood resident, stating that it's been proven time and time again that denying access to gender-affirming care increases the risk of suicide in young people. Amanda urges the government to resend the bills now and allow trans and gender-diverse people the bodily autonomy they deserve.

The Speaker: Are there other tablings? Did I see the Member for Sherwood Park or no? No. Are there others?

Seeing none.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of hon. Mr. Horner, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, pursuant to the Conflicts of Interest Act and the Legislative Assembly Act the report of selected payments to the members and former members of the Legislative Assembly and persons directly associated with Members of the Legislative Assembly for the year ended March 31, 2024.

On behalf of hon. Minister LaGrange, Minister of Health, pursuant to the Regional Health Authorities Act the Alberta Health Services 2023-24 annual report; pursuant to the Health Professions Act the College of Acupuncturists of Alberta 2023-24 annual report, the College of Hearing Aid Practitioners of Alberta 2023-24 annual report, the College of Alberta Psychologists 2023-24 annual report, the College of Midwives of Alberta 2023 annual report, the College of Alberta Dental Assistants 2023-24 annual report, the College of Alberta Denturists 2023 annual report.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that brings us to points of order. At 2 o'clock, the Government House Leader rose on a point of order.

Mr. Schow: Withdraw.

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

Shortly thereafter at 2 o'clock the Official Opposition Deputy House Leader rose on a point of order. I'm not sure if there's someone who wants to argue it on his . . .

2:50

Ms Gray: Withdrawn.

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

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 28

Meat Inspection Amendment Act, 2024

[Adjourned debate October 31: Mr. Sigurdson]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

Are there others wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and to speak to Bill 28, a bill that I am happy to say that I believe both sides of the House can come to an agreement on and that we'll be able to, hopefully, move this bill forward quickly.

Mr. McIver: Question.

Ms Sweet: But as much as I appreciate the minister opposite saying we should just call the question, I have thoughts, so I'm going to share them first. I don't get an opportunity very often to stand up and talk about rural Alberta and agriculture in the House, so I'm going to take my time to do that now.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Again, Madam Speaker, I do want to recognize that the Meat Inspection Amendment Act is an important piece of legislation. It may not be one that people would recognize or think about as often as, I would say, some of the other pieces of legislation that we've seen in this House in relation to, like, the health bills or some of our finance pieces of legislation, but it does speak to the reputation of Alberta, it does speak to the importance of food security in our province, and it does speak to how we engage in our international trade with our trade partners across the world.

I do have some questions and thoughts that, I mean, as we move through debate and through the different phases, I would like the minister to be able to respond to, maybe when we get into Committee of the Whole, that are just around how we got to a place to have the maximum fines from \$10,000 to \$100,000. When I talked about this and looked into this, I noticed that in other jurisdictions the fines are quite different than they are even with the changes that the government is currently making. It is a \$100,000 fine and up to a \$100,000 fine, so of course it's at the discretion of the judicial system to decide in Alberta what those fines should be, which is fine.

But if we look at what happens in Saskatchewan and we look at what happens in Ontario, you'll see that the fines actually are at different levels throughout the different offences. In Saskatchewan, for example, it's a \$75,000 max fine for the first offence – that's an automatic – \$100,000 for the second offence. If you're a corporation, these numbers are \$100,000 to \$200,000 respectively. So there is a very clear definition within Saskatchewan around first and second offenders.

In Ontario first offence: only \$25,000 for each day, actually, that the offence occurred and then \$50,000 for each day or part of the day in which the offence occurred, but there's also an imprisonment component for up to two years. This can be combined with the fines, and those fines are \$100,000 to \$200,000, so Ontario has taken it even a step further. They've made sure that there's actually some imprisonment time, and there's also an ability that this can also have other offences that can be found under the Animal Health Act. So there are other mechanisms in Ontario outside of just this piece of legislation that also can provide penalties.

I think, you know, the minister might be able to address some of that. That probably exists in Alberta, but it's not incorporated jointly into the current legislation. Then I would say that, again, in B.C. the fines are somewhat similar: \$25,000 first offence, \$50,000 second. But there's also, again, in B.C. an imprisonment term, which doesn't exist currently in the legislation in Alberta. Again, the corporate fines are about similar across the jurisdictions, \$100,000 to \$200,000. I mean, again, to the minister, I would be curious why the decision was made to not have an imprisonment component as we've seen in other jurisdictions and then why it was \$100,000 when we see in other jurisdictions that it's actually quite

larger than that in our two neighboring provinces, which I think can create somewhat of a conflict.

Now, I recognize and I do think it's important that we know that these fines did need to be increased. I mean, we've had reports now that some of the seizures of meat that have happened have been worth up to, like, \$500,000. Obviously, a \$10,000 fine when you're able to sell \$500,000 worth of meat is not really going to hurt your pocketbook, so it's not going to discourage you from changing your behaviour and not engaging in this activity.

Of course, I support the change, and I do think that this needs to be taken seriously. I mean, we've seen recently the E coli outbreaks that have been happening in different jurisdictions in the province. We know that puts our public health at risk. Being able to make sure that people are being held accountable when they are putting our public health at risk I think is important. They're also putting our industries at risk. When we start seeing contaminated meat entering into our food chain, it does start to bring up questions about the viability of the market and whether or not the market and the meat is safe. Of course, we don't want that reputation. We don't want people worrying about whether or not the meat that's being consumed or being sold in Alberta is contaminated. It's very important, obviously, that this bill comes forward and that these people are dealt with and the issue is hopefully resolved.

There are some other pieces, though, that I think, as we're talking about this conversation, the minister could be doing and strengthening other areas within our food security system that would ensure that our meat is being kept safe. We know that the U of C does a lot of testing in regard to ensuring livestock health and works with many of our producers, whether they're our poultry producers or our beef producers, to ensure that we don't have a cross-contamination of viruses between animals and humans. And we have seen where things like the avian flu have been transferred from dairy cattle to humans. There was an article that came out this morning – and it didn't happen in Alberta; I mean, it happened in Saskatchewan – where there was some mismanagement around an avian flu outbreak in a turkey facility, that in hindsight could have been dealt with much differently.

So I think that, you know, as we have conversations around safe meat, public health, safety, our economy, that we're looking at what's happening with our partners in the south and what that could potentially mean for our markets, that we make sure that we're putting all of the mechanisms in place to keep our food safe.

I've brought this up with the minister in the past, and I'm going to take the opportunity to talk about it again. I believe that we need to make sure that the U of C is getting the funding that they need so that they're able to test these different sources to ensure that we don't have contaminated meat and, if we do have contaminated meat, that we're able to identify where it's coming from and whether or not it's a risk to human health or if it's a risk to livestock health. The only way for us to do that is to ensure that we still have the testing facility at the U of C.

We know that when we have to ship products to other provinces, like we have had to do in the past to Saskatchewan – we were even sending testing material out to Saskatchewan in 2022 because we didn't have the capacity here in Alberta. I know that we're building more capacity at the U of C, but they don't have guaranteed funding. That is a partnership between the feds, and that's a partnership with CFIA. We recognize that that model is funded between Alberta and the feds, but I think we're at a place where we need to recognize that there needs to be long-term, consistent funding. This annual, year-after-year negotiation – is it going to happen; is it not going to happen? – is not sustainable. Other jurisdictions don't necessarily do it that way.

Our treatment areas and our lab is also funded the least in the whole country, yet we have the most livestock in the country. We have the most cattle in Alberta than we do anywhere else, yet we fund our safeguards – our labs and our testing facilities – the least. That doesn't line up. Let's be fair. Like, the producers pay a fee to even use that service. It is shared with producers. I think producers would rather be able to have that service here in Alberta than to have to send their testing material to other jurisdictions. That's another consideration when we're talking about, you know: how do we keep our public health and how do we keep our food chain safe, ensuring that we're using those resources that exist in the province and we're building capacity and we're expanding on those resources and we're creating funding and certainty for that?

3:00

You know, it's early days, and I recognize that we have a new president-elect in the United States and that the government opposite wants to be hopeful and optimistic. I would like us to be hopeful and optimistic as well, but I've seen, when the current president has been in power in the past, what happened to our dairy industry. I've seen what has happened with our softwood lumber disputes in the United States. I think that there is a real concern, and I think it's a valid concern by many economists looking at our agriculture sector in Alberta and Saskatchewan and Manitoba, who are looking at the U.S. administration that's going to be coming into power and are really concerned about what that means for our economy.

We are an export nation. We are highly dependent on those relationships, and we've seen the protectionism that happens in the United States under the current president-elect. I believe that the minister needs to really look at what that means for planning for our economic growth in Alberta. I think it's time that we focus more on diversification. I think it's time that we start doing more value-add.

I think that there's an opportunity here to look at, even if we want to talk about the Meat Inspection Amendment Act that we're currently talking about, what we do around butchers and whether or not we should be helping with abattoirs and supporting, you know, young people in learning about how to become butchers, like they've been talking about doing in some of our high schools, and being able to build on more of that value-add and being able to encourage young people and being able to engage in different aspects of agriculture and building on Lethbridge College and building on Olds College and all of that amazing technology and innovation that's happening through our ag postsecondaries and really look at how it is that we can do more value-add here so that we're less dependent on exporting it to the United States and we're less dependent on having to worry about if the administration in the south starts to talk about our trade agreements and starts to increase tariffs.

We are seeing, as we've talked about in this House as well, the tariffs that the canola producers are currently facing with China and the fact that now they're going to have to go through the whole antidumping review and have to defend the industry at the international level, which is just another example of how, if we don't come up with good strategies in being able to do value-add in the province, our agriculture producers are the ones that are impacted.

We don't necessarily have to export. We could have more crushing facilities in Alberta. We could be doing those things, and it would help drive the economy. It would help deal with public health and food security, which is what this bill is supposed to do. The Meat Inspection Amendment Act does help ensure that we're doing public health and that we're ensuring our meat is safe, but

there are many other ways within the jurisdiction to be able to do that and within agriculture.

My hope is that as we continue this conversation, we can talk about: what is that economic outlook? Like, what is the potential in our economic outlook? We can get into whether or not the government is happy about the current administration or not. I don't even think we need to talk about it. I think we just need to talk about the reality of: if protectionism starts to come back into play with the United States, what does that mean for us as Albertans? And what does that mean from an economic sense? Remove the party politics out of it, and let's just be realistic about the fact that we have to be very careful and we have to be very aware and we have to be prepared so that if or when, unfortunately, the president-elect starts to implement his policies, our economy doesn't get washed out while he does it.

I mean, there's an example already in Saskatchewan, that one of the Saskatchewan economists was talking about, where there's a crusher for canola that's like 10 miles away from the U.S. border. If they just move it out of Saskatchewan into the U.S., they won't have to pay a tariff. They know that tariffs are already coming.

So there is a shift, and there are going to be economic penalties, and there is going to be a reality that's going to be hitting our agriculture producers that if we can get ahead of the potential of what is coming or what we know is probably going to arrive and figure out the mechanisms and the tools to off-set, then we'll be fine, and we'll be successful. Or we can wait and say that that is alarmist or fearmongering or whatever words members like to use in the Chamber to discuss realities. We can create a good economic policy that will say that if the U.S. decides to do what they did with dairy, this is what we would do in response, or if this is what the U.S. decides to do with our canola producers, then this is going to be our response.

When our cattle are going back and forth across the border, which they do all of the time, what does that look like? What do we think might happen? We saw this during the drought, right? All of a sudden feed was going south. The U.S. was putting a ton of money into supporting their agriculture producers, and they were flooding and taking our resources out of Alberta to feed their livestock. It had huge detrimental impacts on our producers. There is a reality to this, and we've seen it happen, so I'd like us to have really good, honest conversations as we move through about how we get prepared and what our opportunities are.

Like I said, both sides of the House support this bill. I mean, it's about public health, and it's about keeping meat safe and making sure that we don't have any type of health outbreak, E coli outbreak, or even a contamination of other food sources or other meat sources. We don't want that to happen, and I think there's a way that we can support this and move this forward through the House quite quickly. But at the same time I think we can also use it as an opportunity to talk about other opportunities. Let's work collaboratively across the House around those economic opportunities so that we can ensure that Alberta's economy is a strong economy.

I just think that we have to be honest and we have to work together when it comes to the potential of what can happen in the next four years. I don't think there's a member in this House that would disagree that some of the protectionist stuff: we were seeing it, and it was starting to impact our economy already. A 30 per cent increase on tariffs for softwood lumber is huge, and that's here. That's happening. It's significant, and that's just one example of what we already know.

I'm just putting a hand out across the way to the minister to say: let's work together on it. Let's talk about value-add. Let's talk about how we get more investment. Let's do this in a way where it's really

in the best interest of our agriculture economies and our rural economies, because I think we're going to be in for a little bit of some tough negotiations, will be my polite way of wording it, over the next couple years.

If we can do that in a way where both sides of the House can write letters together, no different than talking about what's going on with China with canola – I mean, the reason I wrote the letter was not because of what the minister was doing across the way. It was because we knew the federal government wasn't doing what they needed to do. So there are opportunities for us to work together to support the federal government in making sure that we're supporting our Alberta economy.

That's all I'll say. That was my little "let's work together and do some good work while we manage what's happening in the south." With that, I would encourage all members to support this bill, and maybe the minister during Committee of the Whole can just answer some of my questions around how we landed on the fines.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others that wish to join in the debate on Bill 28 in second reading?

Seeing none, would the minister like to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a second time]

3:10

Bill 26

Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (No. 2)

[Adjourned debate November 5: Mr. Williams]

The Deputy Speaker: Are there members wishing to join the debate on Bill 26? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Member Arcand-Paul: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to not only speak against this piece of legislation but to denounce it for the harms it causes to less than 1 per cent of Alberta's population, who will also feel the pains of this legislation far beyond what is written down in Bill 26, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (No. 2).

The reality is that this legislation is not only an attack on the rights of a slim number of folks in Alberta; it reflects a reality that is just not happening on the ground here in Alberta. Children are not being forced to undergo any surgeries, no doctors are undertaking any surgeries on minors for gender-affirming care, and legislating this is nothing but fearmongering and discrimination against the 2SLGBTQIA-plus community in Alberta.

Since this government announced this discriminatory suite of legislation on the personal freedoms of trans, gender-diverse, and two-spirit Albertans earlier this year, I have met with countless trans folks, doctors, teachers, parents, and allies who have shared their deep concern that this government would attack the very freedoms that this government purports to uphold in another piece of legislation it has introduced. But I digress. I wonder: are trans, gender-diverse, and two-spirit folks not allowed to participate in being a free person? Are the schools and health care professionals that have consent from the parents or the patient to obtain gender-affirming care not free to provide medical services, free from incursion from their government? This bill and this suite of bills that attack trans rights in this province would say no.

Alas, despite this government's attempts, we are still part of Canada, and the Constitution Act of 1982 still applies. Yes, Madam Speaker, that means the Charter of Rights and Freedoms still applies in Alberta. I would like to take the time to thank organizations such as Skipping Stone and Egale Canada for upholding the rights of trans, gender-diverse, and two-spirit folks

in this province since this government is not. But of course the UCP would not understand the legal ramifications of laws it creates. We've seen it from the UCP passing its first piece of legislation under its current leader, and we are seeing it now.

The UCP's hypocrisy knows no bounds. What we have seen this fall is the following message to Albertans: you are free only so long as you are not trans, gender-diverse, or two-spirit. Shame, UCP. Shame on this government for legislating hatred and stoking these divisions even further.

I think now is a good time for a little story time, don't we think? After all, my people are orators and come from a tradition of storytelling, and, yes, Madam Speaker, I promise to tie this to the bill. Through you I ask the members in attendance to practice a bit of humility, because in Cree traditions storytelling is part of our tradition.

Indigenous peoples have had many laws on these lands since before government existed or even before the regressive Wildrose members, cloaked as the UCP members, were elected in this House. I've spoken a few times of these laws here and there, and I'm very cautious about doing so because I, too, recognize that this is a colonial space. It is not a safe one for my people. It has created many divisive and hurtful policies. As the first two-spirit member this House has ever seen, I find it my duty and my honour to share this information tied to this bill.

On this land that Alberta finds itself situated on, Indigenous peoples had a myriad of governance systems, many of them situated on matrilineality. In other words, our mamas, aunties, and kokums were decision-makers for our families, communities, and tribes. These matrilineal societies often found themselves within Nehiyaw culture, whereby these big decisions were made collectively among the women of the nation.

Fun fact: I had the honour of emceeding the Indigenous Bar Association Conference a few weekends ago on the Enoch Cree Nation, where the concept of matrilineal decision-making came up. What also came up during the panels of criminal law and Indigenous peoples was the importance of having folks on the bench that were able to personally connect with those that appear before them, meaning judges better understand the people which appear before them if they can see their own self or their family in the people appearing before them. What really drove this point home to me was speaking to women justices who formed brief connections with the people appearing before them because of their motherly instinct.

But empathy is a trait that has been governing these lands long before settlers arrived here and long before whatever the Member for Chestermere-Strathmore tried grasping at the other day in this Chamber when it came to progressives or governments. These traits governed everything from the health of our people, peace treaties, child welfare, economies, housing, education, land management – and I could go on – but when the missionaries and settlers started to fill these lands with their backward ways, our people's governance systems were weakened.

Along with this are concepts of two-spirit, ahyahkwêw or tastawiyiniwak. Although relatively new concepts in the English language, they were people that were revered on these lands long before the arrival of Christian missionaries. Gender-fluid, gender nonconforming, nonbinary, trans, and two-spirit folks, gay, lesbian, or bisexual members of our beautiful rainbow family were all natural parts of our community and, in fact, took up prominent roles in our society. In some ceremonies we were even held in such high esteem that we were put above all others because we were seen to be so connected with Creator that we must be put closer to Creator.

Madam Speaker, I know this bill will show trans, gender-diverse, and two-spirit folks in this province that they do not matter and that

we are not putting their rights ahead of scoring political points with the most extreme on the right. I can assure you that trans, gender-diverse, and two-spirit folks are certainly not feeling the love from this government.

Would this world not have all of this harmful rhetoric that seeped up from the United States and other parts of this world where the far right have overtaken this conversation about human rights if Indigenous mechanisms were still in place? What a society we could have with a strong matriarchy that still recognized the pre-eminence of two-spirit folks in a society that did not have any gendered language in the way we communicated with each other.

That's right, Madam Speaker. Nehiyawewin does not contain gendered language. Let that sink in. Our society, our culture does not distinguish speaking with each other in gendered language. This is beautiful; Cree beautifulness. Miyo nêhiyâwiwin, a concept embodied in some phenomenal works by Nehiyaw legal academic Darcy Lindberg. One of the first lessons that second-generation survivors of residential schools like myself learned in Nehiyawewin – I took my classes at the University of Alberta with the amazing Dorothy Thunder. What we were taught was the lack of gender in our pronouns. [Remarks in Cree] These are all references to self and the people around you that aren't gendered. There's no he, she, they; it is us as people.

Dr. James Makokis references this in an article in the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta. For the other side, that loves to do this, that's at: www.cpsa.ca. If you need help finding that, let me know. I can surely help you out, through the chair to the other members. In that same article he mentions that our fluent speakers sometimes misgender people even for cisgendered folks because our language does not translate equally.

Could you imagine a world where we would not even be having this conversation, one in which the UCP does not hyperfixate on what someone is discussing with their doctor and their parents or a world where Alberta's government is not hyperfixated on the freedoms of some and not for all, one in which they are focused on affordability, housing, and issues that matter to Albertans that they need help with? This is a world I daydream about often, because this government makes it so difficult to be a queer person in Alberta. When a gun purports to have more freedoms than a trans, gender-diverse, or two-spirit person, you know your government has the wrong priorities in place.

3:20

And where did these priorities come from? Well, let's look at what we heard from the Premier in second reading. A few days ago the Premier referenced Dr. Eapen. I tabled an article today in which the same doctor referenced himself as a, quote, right-wing nut, end quote, and defended sexual assault and harassment by the hands of some very illustrious people that have done some major harms in world history. We rely on these experts to create legislation that is not rooted in the realities of what trans, gender-diverse, and two-spirit folks live in today. Madam Speaker, if these are professionals which this government has relied on for this legislation, why has there been no reliance on local professionals? Why were we not talking with professionals that were doing this work, gender-affirming care, in this province?

I can think of experts like Dr. Chronopoulos or Dr. Wynick, who I've spoken to about this legislative regime, about the proposals from the Premier when she made them, who inform much of my understanding on gender-affirming care in this province. They've taught me that puberty blockers are necessary in cases of precocious puberty. They've also informed me that the regret rate for gender-affirming surgery is under 1 per cent. Meanwhile the regret rate for knee surgery is up to 30 per cent. I can tell you that my own dad

had both knees replaced, did not enjoy the process. Definitely had a regret in getting that surgery, yet when we provide gender-affirming care, that regret rate is not there.

Let that sink in. We are not basing this legislation on science; we are basing it on misinformation and fear, on a lack of understanding, on YouTube videos, on TikTok videos where people gather their information that is incorrect, and that is unfortunate that we are making legislation that relates to affect people so deeply, so intimately based on these assertions, based on this misinformation.

The Premier very intentionally did not refer to any of these experts locally, because we know what the science and the facts say about this, that this is life saving, that us legislating this will harm the trans, gender-diverse, and two-spirit community. Suicide rates and ideation and attempts go up 70 per cent whenever we have legislation like this. We've seen the examples. We know what the facts are. We know what the numbers are. We need to do better. This cherry-picking of information is dangerous and has no basis in making very real, life-threatening legislation against a small number of folks in this province. I think there's a word for this, but I can't quite put my finger on it.

Madam Speaker, I'm thankful that we're having this conversation because I need to put on the record the conversations I'm having with trans, gender-diverse, and two-spirit folks in this province. This legislation purports to do so much. Look how thick it is. There are four pages that relate to gender-diverse care and the surgeries that physicians are prevented from doing, four pages in a booklet of 38. The rest: well, Alberta, you're going to have to read this.

We are changing the way health care is operating in this province as well in this legislation at the expense of trans folks with a smoke-and-mirrors game where trans folks are the target. The most vulnerable in our communities are being affected by this piece of legislation. I am concerned what this will look like when we start losing members of our family, when we start hearing about the pains suffered by trans and gender-diverse and two-spirit folks in this province. I urge you: attend the rallies, talk to trans folks, subscribe to the social media pages where we talk about this, because I promise you this legislation does nothing but hurt.

I fear for those trans kids that are watching today, and I want to tell you I love you, you matter, and we will not stop fighting to ensure that we build an Alberta where you are seen, where you are heard and you feel valued. That's the Alberta I believe in. That's the Alberta the Alberta NDP believes in, and we will never stop fighting.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others that wish to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very happy to provide some comments on Bill 26. I just want to thank my colleague from Edmonton-West Henday for framing this situation very, very well and very carefully. We know that there's a lot of consternation amongst not just our transgender and gender-diverse and two-spirit community but all Albertans in regard to this bill and the intentions of this bill because we all live in the same place, and we are all experiencing similar circumstances.

Here we are in the fall of 2024, where we, quite frankly, have an affordability crisis here in the province of Alberta. We're facing some of the highest utility bills, and it's difficult for people to put food on the table. Unemployment is the second-highest rate in Canada; very, very high here in Edmonton. We haven't seen an affordability crisis and an economic crisis like this in Alberta for probably almost 40 years, yet this UCP government comes in with most of their legislation for this fall session around making

deliberate attacks on the transgender community, on the sexually diverse community, and putting restrictions on people having access to sex ed. I mean, that's their priority when we are literally sitting in an affordability crisis where all of us are suffering.

We all have mechanisms by which we can alleviate that, but instead they choose to go after these political things – right? – that they know are divisive, they know that they can use in certain targeted ways to try to get votes. That, quite frankly, is not just an inappropriate use of this Legislature, but I would suggest that it's a deeply cynical and narrow-minded and irresponsible use of this Legislature as well, and for all of those things I say: shame. Shame on the UCP government for bringing these things forward, shame on targeting vulnerable people here in the province of Alberta, and shame on not doing your job.

When I go through legislation like this – right? – I see that it's a health care bill, yes, and the Member for Edmonton-West Henday was quite right to point out in passing that this is part of the dismantling of our public health care system here with Bill 26 as well. It seems like almost all of the legislation that I see passing my desk here for this fall session has one thing in it, but it also has poison pills built into it in other parts of legislation; in this case health care structures that we need here in the province of Alberta. The bill is so thick because, of course, if it was just like, "Yeah, we're going to go after transgender people, and we're going to, you know, make their life more difficult and not let them access the health care that they need," that would be just one piece of this bill, but this bill has lots and lots of other elements continuing to dismantle our public health system here in the province of Alberta.

They think that maybe people wouldn't notice – right? – as if Albertans can't read, as if people can't see the words printed on the page, that, yes, you are going after transgender, gender-diverse, and two-spirit people, and you're also going to take apart the health care system at the same time, you know? I mean, that's the kind of disjointed and just very deeply cynical kind of legislation that we're seeing here in the fall session.

3:30

Again, I can see, you know, that there are obviously things that need to be dealt with in our health care system right now. There are a million people in the province that don't have access to a family doctor. We have wait times for accessing not just those family doctors but for surgeries and different treatments and so forth that are literally making people sick. We have an education system that is bursting at the seams. We have thousands of students that are not being given the education that they deserve and a postsecondary system in the same position. So with all of those things that obviously need to be dealt with, here we are debating limiting rights and discriminating against transgender, gender-diverse, and two-spirited people. It's absolutely appalling.

I have seen this kind of thing for a long time in this Legislature, and quite frankly I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that every time someone tries to do that, they fail, and it comes back to bite them. I know what this government is doing. They're trying to set up these issues for now, and then they'll bring them back during the election, too, and they'll say, "Oh, well, you know, all we're trying to do is protect your family, and the transgender people are going to somehow compromise that, and you've got to vote for us," right? Spreading misinformation, spreading hatred, and spreading, obviously, an attack on people's understanding of what this actually is.

Some of this legislation doesn't even make any sense, right? Most of it doesn't, actually. You know, for example, there's legislation that would ban certain kinds of procedures and surgeries on minors. Well, guess what, Madam Speaker? The law already

does that. We already do have restrictions on minors receiving certain treatments here in the province of Alberta around transgender issues. They just made that up. It's like they said: we will protect you from people attacking us from outer space. Well, guess what? That doesn't happen anyway. You set up something that's false and then say that you're going to fix it somehow; you're going to save people from it. The whole thing just smells of hypocrisy.

We know that there are transgender, gender-diverse, two-spirited people here in this province and all across the country and all around the world that need our help. There is an attack not just here in the province of Alberta, but these guys are not even original enough to create their own new attack on vulnerable people. They're just copying it from somewhere else because they thought it worked politically for other people in other jurisdictions, right? So not even original sort of small-mindedness but borrowing other people's small-mindedness from other jurisdictions. Wow.

Why are we not using or employing science in the pursuit of any of these things, right? Why is the government choosing to override the medical consensus of leading organizations like the Canadian Psychological Association, the Canadian Paediatric Society, and many other institutions across this country and around the world that endorse gender-affirming care? They know that it is a medically necessary procedure and indeed has been going on for a long time.

When we ban these things – right? – how can we possibly justify forcing families to travel out of province for the medical care that they are currently safely receiving here in this province? It's not as though they're just going to say: "Oh, yes, of course. The Minister of Health knows better than my doctor and myself and my family. We'll just conform to this new rule, and we won't do anything." No. They will have to go somewhere else to receive that care because it's medically necessary. They're making a choice about these things, and that's what they are free to do right at this moment.

Freedom, Madam Speaker. It's an interesting concept. How is it that the Minister of Health has the audacity to think that she can stand between a family and their choice of how to receive care for themselves and for their loved ones? Absolutely ridiculous and absolutely ironic considering how this UCP government likes to throw "freedom" around so speciously and in such a small, limited sort of way. Opposite of freedom, this legislation restricts people's ability to make medical choices for themselves. How does preventing parents from accessing physician-recommended care for their children line up with this government's supposed commitment to parental rights, right?

We see that in the other legislation that's also, you know, at least equally ridiculous, with this opting in for sex ed in the province of Alberta, not opting out but opting in. They say it's because of the parental rights that they have. Well, guess what? This bill is in direct contradiction to parents' rights. That other legislation is just falsely framed as well, by the way, right? You need to have sex ed as part of a program in public education, and you don't limit the access to it by compelling people to opt themselves in instead of opting out. I mean, that other bill is a deliberate way to block people from actually receiving that information. But we're talking about Bill 26 here today.

Again, there are other, way better things that we could deal with in terms of the health care system here in Alberta in 2024. We have a health care crisis around access to service. We have people living regionally without essential care that is available to them in a timely and geographically accessible way. All of these MLAs here today – right? – from rural areas or different places know better than all of us that there is a limitation and there's a shortage of care in many corners of our province. Instead of dealing with that

in a reasonable and honest sort of way, we have a government tilting at windmills here, creating problems that don't exist, and literally targeting some of the most vulnerable people we have in our province, the transgender, gender-diverse, two-spirited community.

The Member for Edmonton-West Henday is correct. Legislation like this will result in people's deaths. It will result in higher suicide rates, in people requiring self-care, in psychological problems and physical problems, too, lots of them. We know that. It's been statistically and experientially proven in other jurisdictions around the province. Why would we do that? Our job is to respect and to create a secure and safe place for Albertans.

Do you know what, Madam Speaker? If they do that to one group, what's to stop them from doing it to another, right? Again, I know that some of the members over here are trying to set this up for the next election, when they'll go into certain communities and say, "We're just trying to make your family safe" and, you know, "We're trying to protect them somehow" and spread misinformation and lies about those things in order to get votes in the next election. I can't think of a more cynical way to approach politics here. No wonder people are cynical about politics, when people behave like this with legislation like that. It's absolutely shameful.

Obviously, you know, we will push back as we can. It's all a matter of votes in a parliamentary democracy, and certainly we have the largest opposition in Alberta's history, but we don't have quite enough votes to deal with this, which is a problem. Members from the opposite side can perhaps go to the Legislature break here for this next week and think about it, actually talk to their constituents and hear what they have to say, right? They think that people will buy this. They're absolutely wrong. If you run this through and say, "Is it acceptable to target and persecute a small minority of vulnerable people?" people will say, "No, it's not." They know it's wrong. They do. They know it's wrong.

I would strongly recommend for all members to take a hard look at these things. Certainly, we have been in the last while. We know that there's a lot that needs to be dealt with here in the province of Alberta right now. We know that it's never been less affordable to live here. We know that we have a lot of safety concerns in the province. We have a lot of accessibility concerns and education and health care and all of these other things. This is not one of them, Madam Speaker, and I strongly advise the government to take two steps back, remember what they're here for, and not just stop producing bills like this but start to actually do their job, which is to govern for the people of Alberta.

Thank you very much.

3:40

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

Member Hoyle: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll be honest here. It is with great sadness here that I rise in this Chamber to speak on Bill 26, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (No. 2). This week has been incredibly heavy, not just for members of our caucus but especially for families of gender-diverse youth, who now know that the UCP have no intention of keeping them safe or supporting them. It's also heavy for millions of other Albertans who continue to see this government not listening to them.

Everyone wants their kids to be safe, their families to be close, their schools to be a space where kids can be themselves, feel safe and confident. The UCP is obviously choosing to bully marginalized Albertans as opposed to demonstrating leadership and addressing the number of crises facing this province. If they were truly listening, they would be addressing things that Albertans are really concerned about: having good-paying jobs, stable jobs,

affordability, health care. The list is endless. Instead, the Premier and UCP would rather infringe on the autonomy of families, parents and interfere with the essential decision-making processes within households.

Bill 26 prevents minors from accessing gender-affirming care even if they have consent from their parents and recommendations from doctors. It also restricts hormone therapy for youth under 15. So, essentially, this bill will interfere directly with parents' freedoms and rights to make medical decisions for their minor children with their family doctors. I can tell you as a parent that this has me livid, the fact that my rights as a parent are being taken away from me. It's unacceptable, quite frankly, Madam Speaker.

While the UCP talks of freedom, of the need to enshrine individual rights through amendments and the Bill of Rights, they're all too happy to turn around and take away those freedoms in order to pander to their special-interest groups for political reasons. Along with bills 26, 29, and 27, this is all – Bill 26 just seems like a means of enshrining legislation that undermines rights of Albertans, of parents, of families, and especially gender-diverse youth. And this is a very challenging time. We all know that puberty and youth have so many challenges that they're already coping with. For the government to infringe on family decision-making in such a personal way is an abomination, in my opinion.

It's sad to see that the UCP feels so strongly about bullying kids in this way that they had to address it in three different bills, making it incredibly difficult to walk back those policies. So, Madam Speaker, let's call these bills for what they are: prejudicial policies that are targeting a minority group. As I stand here, it is not lost on me that I am the first and only Black woman in this Chamber. As a minority and the only one it really hits on me to see minority groups being targeted like that. It is a disgrace and a disrespect to all Albertans.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

You know, these are not just my words; they are also the words of thousands of medical experts and my constituents and those across the province who see through the UCP's poorly constructed facade. As the director of Friends of Medicare, Chris Gallaway, stated:

Enacting these new barriers will only serve to put the health and safety of young people at further risk.

This legislation will dictate what health care services Albertans can and cannot access. It is an appalling abuse of government power.

As experts have noted, the UCP has introduced what is widely acknowledged to be the harshest antitransgender legislation in Canada. Again, I ask the members opposite: who asked for this? Everyday Albertans are struggling to pay their rent, buy groceries, keep the lights on, to feel safe, and this is the response they get from the UCP? You know, Mr. Speaker, even as I asked the question, I think it's clear that Bill 26, along with bills 27 and 29, is being introduced because of the Premier's need to pacify her party's radical base. As much as the UCP likes to say otherwise, it is clear they're only interested in serving their political interests at the expense of Albertans.

Since Bill 26 specifically places restrictions on gender-affirming care through a health care lens, let's take some time to actually discuss challenges Albertans are facing with health care. We have 650,000 Albertans, many of them in rural communities, who still don't have a family doctor. We know that a lack of accessible community and primary care creates a ripple effect throughout our health care system, when patients are forced to instead seek care from already strained emergency departments. Bill 26 does nothing to address this.

Cancer treatments are being delayed, which we saw at the end of 2023, when capacity issues forced hospital staff to postpone some children's chemotherapy treatments. Why not focus on these children who need chemotherapy? Instead, we're talking about trans children and these decisions. How about supporting parents with kids suffering with cancer and needing cancer treatments?

Just recently I had a constituent of mine reach out trying to get care for her father with accelerated carcinoma. I'm saddened to say that he passed away shortly after our office got involved, without ever receiving cancer treatment or even an appointment with an oncologist due to delays and wait time. Instead, this government puts forth Bill 26 to talk about gender-affirming care. We should be looking at care for these youth who are trying to figure out who they are and care for these families. Where are the medical doctors? Why aren't we bringing in the medical doctors who can help families? Now this constituent of mine is looking to leave Alberta, saying she "has lost faith in our health care system here in Alberta and lost complete faith in the UCP government and is flabbergasted when Bill 26 talks about health care for gender-affirming care," and her father couldn't even get an appointment and passed away.

I mean, this government is completely off base in what matters to Albertans and instead is pandering to their special interest groups. Essential medical care is taking a hit because while doctors have been calling for help from this province to tackle long wait times in emergency rooms, capacity challenges, staffing shortages, the UCP has done nothing to address these issues. But you know what they're going to do with Bill 26: target gender-diverse youth.

Not only does Bill 26 not address our most pertinent health care problems, it is there to harm trans kids and two-spirit kids in Alberta. Rather than offer a plan or a timeline to get facilities built, open, and staffed, they instead cancel crucial facilities like the south Edmonton hospital. They're picking fights with gender-diverse youth and kids and blocking the freedoms of family and parents to make these decisions with expert medical doctors.

It's no wonder our emergency rooms are overrun, ambulances are waiting outside hospitals, people are being put in care areas that were not designed for it, and patients are being sent home who should not be sent home. The UCP is so focused on telling families what they can and can't do with their kids that they're unable to pay attention to the real issues at hand in health care. Who's going to pay for this? Albertans. We have dozens of facilities across this province that continue to face repeat temporary closures, especially in rural communities. Just this week AHS reported service disruptions in Barrhead, Cold Lake, Edmonton, Edson, Fairview, Lac La Biche, Manning, Rimbey, Rocky Mountain House, Slave Lake, Stettler, Three Hills, Westlock, and that's not even the whole list. But, no. Bill 26 must target trans youth and prevent the freedom of families to make these pertinent health care decisions. It does nothing to address our actual needs.

3:50

To make this list all around more disturbing, over half of Alberta's doctors are currently considering leaving our health care system. Why isn't this government focused on getting more doctors, more health care professionals in? What this bill should be saying is: the support to help families when you're making decisions for your children, underage, and especially those needing gender-affirming medical care. There is a desperate need for a health care workforce plan focused on retention and recruitment.

Rather than putting their focus where we need it most, on stabilizing health care, the UCP is continuing to push forward with their chaotic restructuring privatization plan, which is simply creating more confusion and destruction. They've threatened layoffs,

implemented a hiring freeze, created chaos through restructuring our health care system. Bill 26 does nothing to address this either. But, wait, the UCP is going to target gender-affirming care and families' freedom to make decisions with medical doctors on the needs for their families.

As one constituent told me the other day, you can't say, "Alberta is calling" for years and brag about record population growth then act surprised when that same growth increases demand on our public services and look at someone else to point the finger at. End quote. We know that these are complex problems and they require complex solutions. So how does it make logical sense that Bill 26 would be considered a priority to introduce in this House when the problems that I've listed are not new. We've been going on for years under the UCP's abysmal leadership.

To remind the members opposite, who supposedly value individual freedoms so highly, it is parents who should have the right to make decisions, collaborative decisions with health care professionals about their child. It is parents, in consultation with their doctors, who should get to say if their child moves forward with hormonal treatment, puberty blockers, and gender-affirming care. Parents don't need the UCP to meddle in personal family decision-making. For sure, no government knows more or cares more than a parent to protect their own child's well-being. This UCP government has no place in this conversation for trans youth, for family, for parenting, or gender-affirming care. Period.

To be frank, Mr. Speaker, the rate at which the UCP continues to target medical autonomy under the guise of individual freedom is raising flags with many residents in Edmonton-South. Today it is the issue of gender-affirming care. Tomorrow what would it be? Access to vaccinations and reproductive health care? Yes. Women in Edmonton-South are reaching out to me because they are concerned that Bill 26 will open the door for more pseudo-science, misconceptions, conspiracy theories, and top-down control. They're asking me if they need to be worried about their right to bodily autonomy, including seeking an abortion. What would be next on the chopping block?

Bill 26 clearly dictates what an individual can and cannot do, what parents are allowed to decide or not with their own bodies or children's bodies. Let's not mince words here. It is an overreach of power, an underpinning of medical freedoms. This lays the groundwork for the Premier to implement even more restrictions in the future, depending on the UCP's political agenda of the day. The challenge is that the Premier and this UCP government are fickle and carelessly trying to appease their party's extremist base at any cost.

I do not support Bill 26, and it's a darn shame that this UCP government has put this bill forward.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The Member for Edmonton-Manning has risen.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 26. I mean, I'm disappointed that I have to rise and have a conversation about Bill 26, but here we are. As many members in this House are aware, I was a social worker before I was elected, and my career focus primarily was around working with who at the time were referred to as high-risk youth. We don't use that term often anymore. Basically, the youth that I worked with were between the ages of 12 and 22. A lot of them had struggles at home. Many of them didn't live at home. A lot of them lived in group homes or were couch surfing, were gang affiliated, had a lot of involvement in different things happening in the city and sometimes outside of the city.

Part of that, of my journey through my career, was also working with youth from the trans community who weren't able to live at home because their parents kicked them out, because their parents didn't understand who they were, and because at times they just didn't feel safe. Now, at that time there were two group homes in the city that were identified as communities that were safe spaces, where kids could go and they could live and they could support each other and they could have those relationships. I spent a lot of time with iHuman and a lot of other great organizations in the city that also worked with our youth.

So when I hear this conversation happening and when we start talking about Bill 26, I think about those kids, those young adults, actually, many of them, who had more lived experience than I had even in my years as a social worker. They brought more knowledge to our conversations than I did a good majority of the time. I think about what happens now.

When I was with children's services, my responsibility was to be the guardian of the kids that I worked with. I had a delegated authority and a responsibility on behalf of the province to make decisions in the best interests of the child that I was working with at the time. Because I worked with youth and because the youth were living on their own or they had their own apartments or they were living in group homes or with, like, friends or whatever that was, my philosophy was: "Well, they get to have a voice in these conversations, and they get to decide. It's their life; it's their body; it's their direction. I'm just here to be a support person in this conversation." I had the ability to do that because I didn't have legislation that told me that I couldn't do that.

You know, when I was a social worker, I took some of my kids to access their reproductive rights and held their hands while they went through having a termination of a pregnancy and made sure that they were able to access their options and have those conversations. I want to know from the government what the policies are going to look like now that this bill is in front of the Chamber. Those social workers that are going to be working in children's services, that are supposed to do what's in the best interests of the child – and let's be clear. Social workers don't get into this job because they want to tell kids what to do. They don't listen anyway. They'll tell us how it's supposed to go.

If I was a social worker today, my first question would be: how do I engage in conversations with kids that have a right to choose bodily autonomy and to do what they want to do with their own body? That's my job. My job is to ensure that the youth that I'm working with have the right to make those decisions, have the right to engage in those conversations and tell me, as the person that is working with them and their support person, what direction we're heading and where we are going to go next.

4:00

And let's be clear. Anything that's in this piece of legislation when it comes to health care, I, as a social worker, wasn't the expert in that anyway. Their health care professionals are the experts in that, but it's my responsibility as a social worker to make sure that they have access to that information so they can make the choices that make sense for them.

So for the government to bring this in – we've heard from the Minister of Health talking about it. I haven't heard from the minister of children's services telling me what the policies are going to be. What does it mean for kids that are in the system right now that need that support, that want to engage in this conversation, that have a right to engage in the conversation to decide their bodily autonomy and the decisions they're going to make for the future of their lives? What are you telling the workers that are working the front line with kids? Are they allowed to have these conversations?

Are they going to be reprimanded for doing what's right and working with kids and being able to be their support person and ensuring that they have access to health care and ensuring that they're doing the work and that youth have the knowledge to make these decisions? Are there going to be policies around that?

It is a privilege to work with kids when you're a social worker in foster care. It is absolutely a privilege, and the privilege of that is being able to live their journey with them and support them as they guide themselves through that experience. It's not about me as an adult because, let's be clear, as a social worker, I was their guardian. I could decide yes or no and I could sign a box and I could check off consent. I could deny consent. But as a social worker with strong ethics who believes in empowering my clients to do what they feel is in the best interests of themselves, checking off the boxes wasn't a thing because they were telling me what they needed to do. As long as it didn't put them at risk, I'm here to help. I'm here to support you. Let's find you somewhere to live. Let's support you in living your best life.

So what does it look like? What does this mean in practice for those who are working within the government systems? Is the government asking or is the minister asking people who are taking on the role as guardians within children's services to deny kids these conversations, to deny them the right to explore who they truly are and to not be able to get the health care and information that they deserve to have access to until they leave the system? Because that's not acceptable whatsoever.

Yet I see, through these pieces of legislation, this need by this government to deny information to young people to allow them to make the decisions on their own. Kids are pretty smart. Youth who are in the system are way smarter than most of the adults sitting in this room. They have experienced things in their lives. They know things more than many of us would ever know because they've seen it in real life, in real time, and they have a right to be in those conversations. They have a right to be in the room and to be able to make those choices, and they need information to be able to do that. So denying it through education, to deny experts in health care the ability to have those conversations so that people can be who they truly are is completely unacceptable, and I am disappointed that the minister hasn't stood up and talked about it.

These are kids that are under his responsibility. He, ultimately, is the guardian and yet seems to be okay with just removing fundamental human rights because that's what this is about. This is about human rights. You don't have to agree. You don't have to disagree. It's really nobody's business. It's fundamentally just about human rights, and kids have the right to human rights. It's built into the legislation. They have the right to a safe home; they have a right to be protected; they have a right to be safe. They have a ton of rights. They have a right to health care.

This legislation goes against the basis of even the act in itself and what it says around the basics of the rights of the child. Yet here we are. The minister is not listening to a word I'm saying, which is, you know, a thing. Nobody over there really wants to listen to anything that we say because it's about human rights and it's a really important conversation and as long as it doesn't impact the individual sitting on the government side, the government doesn't seem to be all that worried about it.

What I don't understand is why this government is so fixated on removing human rights, like, from Albertans? I don't get it. I've been in this place a long time, and it is becoming more and more frequent that we are having more and more conversations around fundamental human rights in this province that for some reason, because the government personally doesn't agree with it, they decide they're going to take away the rights of the individuals that they don't agree with. That's not the basis of human rights. How

can you have a bill introduced in this place, like, a week ago, that's about the Charter of Rights or whatever it is, and, here it is, "You have the right to bear arms, and you have the right to do this, and you have the right to do that," and then the very next day say, "but we're going to take away the fundamental rights of trans people and kids"? Like, what's the thought process over there about this? I don't get it. I don't get how you can sit in a caucus meeting and just be, like: "Well, this makes sense. Let's introduce a bill on rights, and then let's take away a whole bunch of rights." That must have been a really great meeting.

I really think the government needs to be open and transparent about what it means for the kids that they're guardians of. It is going to keep removing more and more rights away from the kids that live in care. I mean, we've heard the members opposite say that, you know, kids that live in care are just, like, taking advantage of the system and they're too reliant on being part of children's services. So there's a clear bias by the government already about how they feel about kids that are in care, which is completely disrespectful and ignorant to the experiences of what these kids go through.

To hear the disrespect that I've heard from the members opposite in regard to kids in care – the government seems really keen on, like, the babies, the 0 to 5s, the kids that are really cute. They live in care and, you know, foster parents are great and kinship parents are great. And they are. But you know what? Our teenagers are strong, resilient, and they're future leaders. They're amazing human beings, and they deserve the exact same respect as our 0 to 5s. They deserve more, really, because they've lived through things, a lot of things, and they deserve a voice.

I haven't heard that voice being provided or given in this Chamber by the government. It's like a forgotten conversation. Yet we know statistically that they are the kids that have higher rates of suicide. They are the kids that are more likely to be kicked out of their homes. They are the kids that are more likely to live in group homes and more likely to engage in foster care. But we aren't talking about their experiences. The government has a responsibility as their guardians to do that and to think critically through these pieces of legislation about how it impacts their lives, and they're not.

At some point are we going to hear what this actually means in practice? It's one thing to talk about parents and their relationship and conversations they're going to have with their children. Honestly, I mean, you're removing that conversation, too, from parents, which also just blows my mind. That's not parental choice or whatever the government likes to say. I mean, parents should have a right to be able to take their kids to a doctor and have a conversation about their health care. Really healthy, strong parents are able to do that and talk about who they are and who their kids are and who they're going to be. That's part of this conversation, but many of my colleagues have talked about that part.

There is a deficit by this government around their responsibility to the kids that they are the guardians of, that they have a responsibility to provide care for, and there has been zero conversation about that. Zero accountability by this government, zero recognition of the impacts of what it's going to mean for kids that live in a system where their social worker may not be able to take them somewhere to have this conversation, or if they do – well, I would still do it. I don't even care. I got myself into a lot of trouble when I was a social worker, and I'm fine with that because kids have a right to information and they have a right to make a choice.

4:10

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood-Park.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the other members who have spoken today on this debate. Bill 26 will move continuing care from the Ministry of Health into the Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services. That's probably something worth having a great discussion about. Then somehow the government has decided, maybe through all their friends at Take Back Alberta, that they need to bolt on some antitrans legislation here. It's unsettling, it's disturbing, and I think we're reaching a point in our history where we should give great reflection and look deeply at what we are doing to create for the future of this province.

I went to speak to a class recently of grade 9s who came to visit as well, and they wanted to talk about what's going on in the Legislature. What that group of grade 9s was most concerned about was antitrans legislation that could be brought forward, and now it's being brought forward. We have this opportunity here to debate it, and I'll work to implore my colleagues to reconsider. Bring forward Bill 26 again with the administrative requirements that it's going to create for continuing care, but please take out the legislation that is going to harm our children and harm our families in this province.

It feels like we're back to where we were with Bill 20, Bill 18, Bill 21 in the spring, where this government is trying to control everything, everywhere, all at once. And not just trying to control municipalities; now we are going into the exam room with doctors and patients and telling them how they should operate. We're trying to bring in and codify legislation of what doctors can and cannot do with their patients, which is of the best interest for their health.

In preparation for this I've got a few things. I've got a couple of letters from constituents who have written with their concerns. I sat down with some members of the faith community in my riding of Sherwood Park to understand where they're coming from with this legislation. Then I've got some personal experiences with a person whom I've known since they were a child, and now they have grown up and they've gone through their own journey of gender affirmation. It's been a beautiful journey that they've been on.

With that, I don't know if this is a good time, but if the members on the other side want to take the AirPods out of their ears and stop listening to their YouTube videos, I wonder if any of them want to stand up and just take a stab at how they interpret the difference between sex and gender. All right. We thought we might get into a little bit of dialogue here, but maybe the marching orders are just keep your lips shut tight here.

Let me start with some letters from my constituents.

Dear Premier . . .

As a lifelong Albertan, I urge you to reconsider your actions stripping away rights for trans and non-binary children in our province.

I find your legislation to be in stark contrast to your changes to the Alberta Bill of Rights. While you've acted to strengthen the Bill's commitment to individual freedoms, your changes to healthcare, education, and sport represent government intrusion into the lives of minors and their families. Parents are now forbidden by the government decree from accessing the most appropriate health care for their children . . . I'm disappointed that a self-styled advocate for freedom and bodily autonomy has decided that the state has the power to intrude into the personal healthcare choices of Albertans, and that a champion of parental rights believes that this government (and any government in the future) can dictate to parents how to raise and support their children.

Is Alberta supposed to be the freest place in Canada, or only the place where you are free to do what the government of the day allows? The hypocrisy of bolstering the Bill of Rights and then stripping away rights from a group of scapegoated children is not lost on me. I hope that if you look in your heart, you will see that the justifications ring hollow compared to the harms

caused by a government inserting itself into the most private and personal lives of these children and their supportive families.

Another letter from a constituent:

I'm writing as an Albertan. I want to address your plans to introduce legislation that will remove access to vital health care for my daughter and the gender diverse community by banning access to numerous forms of affirming health care.

They write:

Here's why I'm opposed to the legislation:

- It will force my daughter into an even deeper depression, along with many other children.
- It has already opened the gender diverse community to hatred and harassment. That includes my daughter.
- It is upsetting a large number of Albertans. Albertans that possibly supported you in the last election, may not in the next.

The misleading and incorrect information you have been provided, and then sharing is causing more harm than good. Children deserve to be happy and feel safe. By introducing these policies, you will make Alberta a place where safety and happiness will no longer exist for a handful of children who didn't ask for [this change.]

Mr. Speaker, when I sat down with some members of the faith community, I was struck. There is a 10-week course that is offered through ministries on what is the best way, what the scripture teaches on interaction with our trans family and our nonbinary family, and it is grace and truth. It is: love them; treat them well. In this province we must look to ways to protect our community, and we must look to protect our vulnerable communities. This legislation isn't doing that. It's the opposite of protection, it is massive interference, it is gross overreach by a government, and it is disturbing to have it happening here under our watch.

Trust people. Trust parents. Trust your doctors. This government wants to control everything all at once. They do not trust anyone. They do not trust colleges of professionals to govern themselves. We've seen that they've gone and taken on the college of teachers and said: teachers, we're going to take on any complaints against professional conduct. There is a two-year backlog now on any reports that would have been handled by the ATA within weeks.

This government is not good at administration. They are top-down on all things that they take on, and this is going way too far into the personal lives and personal freedoms and what is best for Albertans. We need to get back to basic principles and do unto others as we would want them to do unto us. When you are telling me how I need to get my health care, it is going too far, government.

We seem to be at this pivotal moment in Alberta's history, one where we must reflect on the values that guide us as a society and as a province. Bill 26 proposes to amend the Health Professions Act in ways that would significantly restrict health care options for transgender youth. While the intent behind this bill may be driven by a desire to protect children, it could have unintended consequences for the freedom of parents to make informed decisions about their children's well-being and for the medical professionals tasked with providing the best care possible.

Today I want to discuss why this law is harmful overreach into the personal freedoms of families, the autonomy of doctors, and why it could ultimately hurt vulnerable youth who are already at risk, which have been – these stories have been highlighted by other members of this Assembly. At its core Bill 26 interferes with one of the most fundamental rights we have as individuals, the right to make decisions for our children. The relationship between a parent and a child is one of trust, love, and guidance. Parents, not the government, are best positioned to talk to doctors about a child's health and well-being, especially when it comes to something as

personal and sensitive as gender identity and the journey they have gone on through their life and the struggles they have gone on.

4:20

I have talked to members of the other side. If there is discomfort with other people, that is one thing, but to be cruel and hateful is beyond understanding. We should be treating each other with grace and love as people go on their own journey of gender affirmation in this province.

Under Bill 26 the freedoms of parents and children are being severely restricted if this passes. Parents are often the first to notice changes in their children's behaviour and emotional state. They are the ones who understand their child's pain, confusion, and struggles and who seek to help them through the complex journey of self-discovery. The relationship between parents and doctors is built on trust as well and shared decision-making. By introducing laws like Bill 26, the government is removing that fundamental autonomy from parents and placing bureaucratic restrictions in its place.

Now might be a good time to talk about Nic. Nic is someone who I've known since they were preschool, and I've watched this person grow up from a little boy, as I saw them, into a beautiful woman. Their journey has been full of love and support from their family, with careful advice and consideration from their faith community and from the medical community. It has been the healthiest development I have ever seen in a person. I'm so sad and afraid that with this Bill 26 legislation people that have gone on Nic's journey will not have that opportunity in the future after this passes. It is a terrible situation to imagine in our province.

Our culture is constantly changing. It's constantly evolving, and our understanding of ourselves and each other is changing. It should be a more welcoming and loving place, where people get to be their most authentic self and live their best lives in our province because that is the way we will get forward in this society together and build a better province, where we know better is always possible.

Back to that doctor-patient relationship. For years the health care system in Alberta has been built on the principle that decisions about medical care are best made by parents and their health care providers, guided by professional knowledge and ethical considerations. Bill 26 upends this model by limiting the discretion of health care professionals, particularly those in the fields of endocrinology, psychiatry, and pediatrics by prohibiting them from offering treatments like puberty blockers or hormones to youth under certain ages regardless of the patient's individual circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you a story of someone who I grew up with, who at age 14 the doctors advised that maybe it was time to have hormone therapy because they weren't reaching puberty. He has grown into a happy, healthy man that is raising a family and doing all the things in life that he would have maybe been limited from if the doctors did not give the best advice, in consultation with the family, that it was time for him to have some hormone therapy. Bill 26 will restrict that opportunity in the future.

The medical community, including organizations such as Alberta Medical Association, has emphasized the importance of individualized care when it comes to gender-affirming treatments. Many of these treatments have been shown to reduce anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation in transgender youth by helping them align their physical bodies with their gender identity. Gender-affirming care is not a one-size-fits-all approach; it is based on careful considerations of the patient's needs, mental health, and long-term well-being.

I had a discussion last night with someone who is responsible for sports in their region, and they discussed intersex people, something

I had not even been considering. If you can imagine someone who has genitalia that presents as female but has testes inside them, and that changes them and makes them unique. They need the best care possible, and they need the best opportunity to participate in our society. Under Bill 26 health care providers would be forced to deny care to patients who may benefit from it or, worse, delay care that could alleviate their suffering.

Mr. Speaker, I hope we vote against this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

The Member for Edmonton-City Centre to speak.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recognize that I only have a brief time before we're going to reach the end of our sitting day, but I wanted to speak to this bill. I wanted to start by sharing an e-mail I received at my office regarding bills 26, 27, and 29. In writing to the Premier they say that they were here in the gallery of the Legislature last Thursday, and they were shaken to see this government's support for these bills. They wrote to the Premier, wanting to share a personal experience that illustrates why they are fearful of the direction things could go under this heavily politicized legislation that this government is choosing to introduce. I will quote.

On Friday evening, the day after these bills were introduced, I was walking alone on a quiet side street in downtown Edmonton when I had a frightening encounter. Three men in a truck spotted me and started screaming transphobic slurs, and as they started getting out of their truck, my fight-or-flight instincts kicked in and I ran. I was left deeply shaken and filed a police report for a hate incident in the morning. This was not an offhand intolerant remark – for the first time in my life I felt physically threatened and afraid for my safety because of who I am.

This experience has left me wondering about hopefully-unintended consequences of the policies you are proposing. I worry some may see these bills as tacit approval to act on harmful beliefs, creating a climate of increased intolerance, hate and hostility in our province, and making public spaces feel less safe for people like myself.

As your constituent, I ask you to reconsider these bills, as well as further policy resolutions on similar topics approved at the UCP's AGM over the weekend. Though I recognize we may hold deeply different political beliefs, I believe we all want Alberta to be a place where everyone feels safe and valued.

Mr. Speaker, again, I recognize that I don't have much time. As I sat and prepared my remarks I went through the history of where legislation like this began. Over the last two to three years, largely in the U.S. in Republican states, driven by heavily – heavily – politicized groups looking to inflame culture wars, looking to gain politically off the backs of a vulnerable population: those are the roots of this government's legislation that it's bringing in here today, driven by fear, conspiracies spread by social media, false accusations that, like this situation, have led to threats on people's lives, have led to increased hatred and violence in communities against gender-diverse individuals.

It breaks my heart to read this e-mail from someone who themselves is not trans. This individual wrote back to me later to clarify that they are not trans. This is someone who someone decided looked trans and therefore thought they should threaten and harass on the streets of my constituency, and this government is introducing legislation that inflames that hatred. They are spending a full quarter of their legislative capacity this session on bills that endanger the safety of Albertans, Albertans who already face unprecedented levels.

Trust me, Mr. Speaker, I'll have much more to say on this bill in the debates to come.

The Acting Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt. Pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the Assembly stands adjourned, and pursuant to Standing Order 3(6) we stand adjourned until Monday, November 18 as next week is a constituency week.

I hope all members have an enjoyable week with their constituents next week and return refreshed on Monday, November 18, at 1:30 p.m.

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

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

Activity to Thursday, November 7, 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)

Royal Assent — (May 16, 2024 aft.) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2024 c4]

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)

Third Reading — 1448-55 (May 14, 2024 aft., passed on division)

Royal Assent — (May 16, 2024 aft.) [Comes into force May 16, 2024, except section 1, which comes into force on proclamation; SA 2024 c6]

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)

Royal Assent — (May 16, 2024 aft.) [Comes into force May 16, 2024; SA 2024 c3]

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)

Royal Assent — (May 16, 2024 aft.) [Comes into force May 16, 2024, with some sections deemed to have come into force on March 21, 2024; SA 2024 cR-5.3]

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*)

Committee of the Whole — 1456-60 (*May 14, 2024 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1490-92 (*May 15, 2024 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 16, 2024 aft.*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2024 c7]

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*)

Third Reading — 1464-66 (*May 14, 2024 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 16, 2024 aft.*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2024 cC-1.5]

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.*), 1533-40 (*May 21, 2024 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1540-42 (*May 21, 2024 aft.*), 1569-77 (*May 22, 2024 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1664-68 (*May 28, 2024 aft.*), 1692-99 (*May 28, 2024 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 30, 2024 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2024 cP-35.5]

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.*), 1455-56 (*May 14, 2024 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1460-64 (*May 14, 2024 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1492-96 (*May 15, 2024 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 16, 2024 aft.*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2024 c8]

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.*), 1562-69 (*May 22, 2024 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1591-94 (*May 23, 2024 aft.*), 1669-75 (*May 28, 2024 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1699-1700 (*May 28, 2024 eve.*), 1712-13 (*May 28, 2024 eve.*), 1729-35 (*May 29, 2024 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 30, 2024 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation, except ss 2(24) and (25), which come into force on January 1, 2025; SA 2024 c11]

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

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

Second Reading — 1508-19 (*May 16, 2024 aft.*), 1542-48 (*May 21, 2024 aft.*), 1634-41 (*May 27, 2024 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1649-50 (*May 27, 2024 eve.*), 1675-81 (*May 28, 2024 aft.*), 1683-84 (*May 28, 2024 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1700-01 (*May 28, 2024 eve.*), 1704--11 (*May 28, 2024 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 30, 2024 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 30, 2024; SA 2024 c9]

Bill 22 — Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (LaGrange)

First Reading — 1447 (*May 14, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1594-1600 (*May 23, 2024 aft.*), 1641-48 (*May 27, 2024 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1650 (*May 27, 2024 eve.*), 1684-90 (*May 28, 2024 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1700-01 (*May 28, 2024 eve.*), 1713-15 (*May 28, 2024 eve.*), 1735-41 (*May 29, 2024 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 30, 2024 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2024 c10]

Bill 24 — Alberta Bill of Rights Amendment Act, 2024 (Amery)

First Reading — 1754-55 (*Oct. 28, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1788-1805 (*Oct. 29, 2024 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1819-36 (*Oct. 30, 2024 aft., adjourned; amendments introduced*)

Bill 25 — Early Learning and Child Care Amendment Act, 2024 (Jones)

First Reading — 1818 (*Oct. 30, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1855-56 (*Oct. 31, 2024 aft.*), 1907-12 (*Nov. 5, 2024 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 26 — Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (No. 2) (LaGrange)

First Reading — 1848 (*Oct. 31, 2024 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 1900-07 (*Nov. 5, 2024 aft.*), 1969-77 (*Nov. 7, 2024 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 27 — Education Amendment Act, 2024 (Nicolaides)

First Reading — 1848 (*Oct. 31, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1912-20 (*Nov. 5, 2024 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 28 — Meat Inspection Amendment Act, 2024 (Sigurdson, RJ)

First Reading — 1818 (*Oct. 30, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1854-55 (*Oct. 31, 2024 aft.*), 1966-69 (*Nov. 7, 2024 aft., passed*)

Bill 29 — Fairness and Safety in Sport Act (Schow)

First Reading — 1848-49 (*Oct. 31, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1934-40 (*Nov. 6, 2024 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 30 — Service Alberta Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (Nally)

First Reading — 1868 (*Nov. 4, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1946-53 (*Nov. 6, 2024 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 31 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (Amery)

First Reading — 1898 (*Nov. 5, 2024 aft., passed*)

Bill 32 — Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (No. 2) (S) (Horner)

First Reading — 1868 (*Nov. 4, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1940-46 (*Nov. 6, 2024 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 33 — Protection of Privacy Act (Glubish)

First Reading — 1931 (*Nov. 6, 2024 aft., passed*)

Bill 34 — Access to Information Act (Nally)

First Reading — 1931 (*Nov. 6, 2024 aft., passed*)

Bill 35 — All-season Resorts Act (Schow)

First Reading — (*Nov. 7, 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)

Royal Assent — (May 16, 2024 aft.) [Comes into force May 16, 2024; SA 2024 c5]

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.), 1417-20 (May 13, 2024 aft., defeated on division; not proceeded with)

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

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

Second Reading — 1420-29 (May 13, 2024 aft., adjourned)

Bill 209 — Reconciliation Implementation Act (Arcand-Paul)

First Reading — 1868-69 (Nov. 4, 2024 aft., passed)

Bill 211 — Arts and Creative Economy Advisory Council Act (Ceci)

First Reading — 1590 (May 23, 2024 aft., passed)

Bill 212 — Organ and Tissue Donor Information Agreement Act (Metz)

First Reading — 1663 (May 28, 2024 aft., passed)

Bill 214 — Eastern Slopes Protection Act (Notley)

First Reading — 1729 (May 29, 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*)

Second Reading — 1633 (*May 27, 2024 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1691 (*May 28, 2024 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1711 (*May 28, 2024 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 30, 2024 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 30, 2024]

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*)

Second Reading — 1633 (*May 27, 2024 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1691 (*May 28, 2024 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1711 (*May 28, 2024 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 30, 2024 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 30, 2024]

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*)

Second Reading — 1633-34 (*May 27, 2024 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1691 (*May 28, 2024 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1711-12 (*May 28, 2024 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 30, 2024 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 30, 2024]

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