
Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, November 27, 2024

Day 74

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**
**The 31st Legislature**
First Session

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# Legislative Assembly of Alberta

**7:30 p.m. Wednesday, November 27, 2024**

## Government Bills and Orders
### Committee of the Whole

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, the committee is back in.

### Bill 25
### Early Learning and Child Care Amendment Act, 2024

**The Chair:** I am seeking speakers to Bill 25 in Committee of the Whole. The hon. Member for Calgary-Acadia.

**Member Batten:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I actually want to first start with an amendment.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A1. You may proceed.

**Member Batten:** Perfect. Thank you. The amendment amends by striking out section 3 and substituting the following:

> 3 Section 6.1 is repealed and the following is substituted:
>
> Safety codes
>
> 6.1 It is a condition of every facility-based licence that the licence holder must
>
> (a) comply with all applicable zoning, health and safety legislation, including the Public Health Act, the Safety Codes Act and applicable municipal bylaws, and
>
> (b) establish and comply with a written policy respecting handwashing at that facility.

Of course, I'm delighted to stand and speak to this amendment. You'll recall that in the second reading of the bill, I shared a little bit or maybe a lot a bit about E coli, and I had provided some basic ways to help prevent its spread. Today I bring forward a possible solution to one of my largest concerns that I had brought forward, which is that it does not address any prevention whatsoever. It is highly reactive. It's not enough. It's not going to stop future outbreaks.

Now, as legislators we are responsible for bringing the best solution possible, which means learning from others' mistakes and learning from our own. The practice of keeping children safe through methods such as handwashing is not unique to Alberta or Canada, of course, Madam Chair. I'm sure you're not surprised to hear that hand hygiene is supported around the world.

The United Nations Children's Fund, or UNICEF, is a well-known humanitarian and developmental aid group for children world-wide. This group works in war-torn areas of the world. They face some of the most horrific environments for children, and they speak very strongly to the need for safe water and not just for consumption, Madam Chair, but to, and I quote, keep children alive.

In my past life as a neonatal intensive care nurse we would start our 12-hour shifts with a two-minute up-to-your-elbows scrub: no rings, no watches, no pretty nails. This was because these items could carry pathogens into the NICU and wouldn't wash off. Did it dry up my hands? Absolutely. But did we keep our patients, the smallest of the small, most vulnerable babies, safe? Yes.

Let's think back to the E coli outbreak in September 2023 and all the complexity of providing correct resources to support all involved. We think about the child, their parents, their siblings, their grandparents, and anyone who would have come into contact with them when they were infectious. We have the early childhood providers, the food transportation people, the food preparation team, and the owners, of course, at the centre of the outbreak. This, of course, is not an exhaustive list. We know that this particular outbreak spread across the city of Calgary through several child care facilities. We will likely never know how many Albertans were affected, but we can confirm that almost 500 Albertans were made ill by this outbreak.

> We the undersigned are parents and supporters of children who attend daycares impacted by the recent E. coli outbreak. Many of our children began falling ill at the end of August. Over the following days, many passed not just blood but their own flesh as they screamed in pain, unable to sleep for days while others became lethargic and despondent, all of them struggling to make sense of what was going on.

I pulled this quote from a letter sent to the Premier, of course, and copied to me in September 2023 demanding answers as to why this a hundred per cent preventable outbreak ever happened. A little more from the same letter:

> We sat in emergency rooms with their friends and fellow parents, stunned and looking for answers. Some of our children went on to develop hemolytic uremic syndrome, some of them have kidney damage and some are receiving blood transfusions. Many of them continue to be admitted to hospital and terribly ill.

This letter, of course, was signed by parents and supporters of FBA, or Fueling Brains Academy, children.

These concerns may have come on a single letter, but I assure you, Madam Chair, my office has received hundreds of e-mails from other very concerned Albertans and not just from those who are directly affected. This a hundred per cent preventable outbreak shook Albertans' confidence and trust in this government. The Member for Airdrie-Cochrane shared in the House that "parents expect high-quality child care that keeps their children safe." The key word is "keeps." It keeps children safe, not: it will designate blame when the outbreak occurs. That's not addressing the real concern. I walk us through this because it's important to illustrate how far reaching and how devastating a single outbreak can be.

Now, the proposed bill provides clarity in terms of when something happens, which is, of course, very important. We absolutely need a clear plan to address the next outbreak, to co-ordinate the systems, and so on. It's super important, but what is missing are preventative measures. Sure, there are other bills that speak to the prevention of pathogen transfer but not here in this proposed bill. This bill will "build upon the trust Alberta families place in our child care system by improving safety for their children." I once again thank the Member for Airdrie-Cochrane for committing to this goal.

As I mentioned during the second reading, following the bread crumbs currently provided in this bill, I had a hard time locating the information I was looking for, and I knew what I was looking for. Can you imagine trying to navigate them when you didn't?

The proposed amendment provides a beautiful compromise between the legislation being prescriptive with hand hygiene but flexible, allowing the child care centres to modify as they need. This is important because we know that not all staff in a centre have the same responsibilities or the same risk based on their specific job. It would be expected that the centre might have hygiene policy that differs between those who handle food, those who provide intimate care, and those who provide administration support.

The effectiveness of proper hand hygiene has been illustrated through history. Florence Nightingale, a nurse who served in the Crimean War in the 1850s, is credited with bringing forward good hygiene into standard practice. The story goes that Nurse Nightingale was highly observant and noted that wound care healed much faster when the instruments, including the physicians' and nurses' hands, were clean.

Louis Pasteur was a very well-known chemist, microbiologist, and biologist who was credited with a lot of very important scientific discoveries: pasteurization being one, vaccine development being another, and, most applicably, the germ theory of disease. Pasteur's theory might seem very obvious to us now in 2024, but in the second half of the 1800s the idea that something you cannot see with your naked eye could invade a host and make you sick was a little out there and, honestly, a little controversial. But the theory eventually transformed our public health.

Now, earlier in question period today the Member for Peace River provided a quote, something to the effect of: the Member for Calgary-Acadia wants more harm reduction for children in care. End quote. Something along those lines. Apologies; I don't have the exact quotation here. As the shadow minister for Children and Family Services I want to thank that member for acknowledging all my advocacy work. It really, really is great when you hear from the government that they appreciate the work you're doing.

I find it timely because, as I stand here introducing a harm reduction initiative into the Early Learning and Child Care Amendment Act, 2024, I realize that using the words "harm reduction" is a little bit triggering inside of this space, so I'll go back to calling it preventative. Handwashing is a form of prevention. Yep, that's right. The Member for Calgary-Acadia is once again talking about – what? – harm reduction. No. I mean prevention. Pardon me. Now, this government seems to have quite the allergy to the words "harm reduction," so, again: prevention. Away we go.

***7:40***

Back to the amendment. Why not support this? It is win-win, and should anyone feel that this amendment isn't necessary, let me remind everyone that in 2020 – remember all the bare shelves? Yes, there was a whole toilet paper situation, but there was also a huge shortage of hand sanitizer and hand soap. Sure, I'm sure there are people out there who actually needed gallons of hand soap, but I think it's fair to say that people were reminded of the importance of hand hygiene to keep themselves safe.

Let's take advantage of this amendment and reinforce the importance of prevention. Let's together keep Albertan children safe by taking a collective step and implementing this amendment, because it strengthens the proposed bill. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other members to amendment A1?

Seeing none.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Chair:** Any other members on Bill 25 in Committee of the Whole? I will recognize one of you. Let's go with Calgary-Klein. The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Member Tejada:** All right. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and to speak to Bill 25. It's unfortunate. I'm actually just a little bit surprised that the reasonable amendment wasn't agreed upon there on handwashing. We all know how important handwashing is, so I feel like that's – especially in any daycare spaces, any spaces that we share with kids, hygiene would be especially important.

Really, we know that that is the genesis of this bill, that we we've had now a public health situation where either the lack of sanitation practices or any rules around them, any guidelines, strong guidelines and strong follow-through from our government actually resulted in crisis. Then we look into, you know, some of the spaces that we entrust our children to and think about the care that we want them to take with our kids, of course. We want them to be able to educate our kids, to provide that loving support that they can give us every day, give our kids every day, the guidance that they can give our kids every day. That includes feeding and washing and personal care, because we know that those little ones depend on it, right?

So to think that in 2024 we're at this stage where we definitely need to keep this in mind and have it as part of our legislation, it's somewhat surprising but so necessary. And it's unfortunate that we weren't able to accept an amendment on, particularly, handwashing. As it relates to E coli, we know that that is not only standard practice in all of the spaces where personal care is done but that it should just be stated without question that this is something that would be necessary in a child care centre.

I think, you know, when I look at the details of this bill, I'm glad that we are responding, if a little late, and when we look at what the response was to the E coli outbreak, frankly, a less than exemplary response on that account. I in my office received many distressed e-mails from Albertans, from parents, people who were concerned about what protections were in place for their kids. Although I see that this bill is a start, I think that it doesn't go quite far enough. What I'm hoping is, you know, hope against hope, that we'll see some of this show up in other ways, and we'll have a government that does some follow-through so that we can keep our kids safe in the places that we send them.

You know, I was actually just talking to someone just in the hallway about how many hours kids spend in child care, and it can be 10 or more. So when you think of the impacts, those are impacts that will affect not only the kids that we have in that daycare, but it can become a public health issue, which it did, and it can spread to entire communities.

We know that this government has mismanaged early childhood development in child care and day homes. We know that this bill doesn't quite address the issues that led to the E coli outbreak. I spoke to responsiveness just a while ago. What we need is better guidelines on hygiene practices within daycares and also the unlicensed spaces. This is not a knock on unlicensed spaces. I relied on unlicensed child care for many years when my children were small, and they received loving care and great activities, great educational activities as well. But I think it's so important that whatever we put into legislation addresses the commitments that we expect our child care providers to make. And I think that would include across the board not only those licensed spaces but those unlicensed spaces as well.

We need to beef up our oversight. We need to make sure that if we have a department that is in charge of inspections, that's it's well resourced. What I've seen so far, you know, based on that same outbreak, was that we had folks that were doing a pretty important public service in running those inspections on daycare centres. We have such a high demand, and to think that we're not resourcing those departments properly so that they can do the necessary follow-up is really concerning to me, and it's exactly why we're here. What I'm also seeing is that, as my colleague mentioned, there's so much of a focus on that reactiveness after the fact, on determining who is at fault, determining, you know, what possible punishments might be, and then there are so many items that are going unanswered.

I do have a few questions about this bill, and I'm just going to go through a few of those here in a moment. What we learned about what brought us here to be discussing Bill 25 is that we had a list of recommendations from a panel. Again, a really good start. I'm glad that we are seeking that information. I think that whenever we make mistakes as a government, as a community, it's important to focus less on the blame and focus more on the problem-solving aspects.

What we're seeing here is that we got I think it was over 40 recommendations.

**Member Batten:** Thirty.

**Member Tejada:** Thirty? Okay.

So we had over 30 recommendations, and this bill really doesn't address most of them. What I'd like to know is: how are we going to take those precautions to prevent future outbreaks? We've now been in several situations. This isn't new to us. Public health concerns aren't new to us. We've been through COVID. We've been through – what? – two outbreaks now, 2020 and now this one. So how are we as a government taking responsibility and giving the guidance that these centres need to ensure that we're providing protections for families? I think that was one of the biggest concerns that I heard from people who were e-mailing our office and copying I think a few of our offices. They weren't sure that the government was going to take the necessary steps to prevent another outbreak of E coli or of anything else that, you know, we might see result in a public health concern.

One of my other questions would be: what was the process in determining which of these recommendations would be taken? I would assume that the members from the other side were receiving the same e-mails, the same frantic phone calls from people and even phone calls from providers who were perhaps feeling like they were a little bit lost in terms of guidelines and recommendations and what they should follow in order to keep operating.

One of the other things that was mentioned explicitly was E coli and how that spreads both through food – again we come back to handwashing – and through person to person. So what measures are we taking to ensure that those transmissions don't occur or that we are limiting the risk, that we're taking actions to limit some of that risk?

***7:50***

One of the other pieces of this is public reporting. If we're seeing that there are repeated violations and that, you know, we're doing public reporting on the health violations, how are we doing the follow-through on that to make sure that kids are safer, that families are safer? Again, reactive measures.

Who else was consulted on this legislation, would be a big question for me. I know that I've had lots of contact with the families through our office, but it would be great to have some transparency around how we came to this bill and how we came to these solutions and why perhaps we're still seeing some gaps in those solutions.

We know that there's also now an online platform to provide parents with information on daycare centres. It still, again, doesn't address the unlicensed spaces, which – as an aside, I was just talking with my colleague earlier and I remember, you know, it's been a long time since my kids were in child care, but I remember the last numbers probably being about 10 years ago and knowing that we currently only have 17 per cent of the licensed spaces we need. So with all of the different programs that are available to us and different orders of government that are also pitching in, I'm wondering why we're still at such a state in our child care systems to be able to support our families as they re-enter the workforce.

If we know that there are facilities that have had repeated issues with compliance and repeated infractions, what are the steps that we're taking to suspend licenses?

In closing, I'd like to say that while I think we can, in general, be in support of this bill, it needs to go a lot further to assure families that their kids are cared for when they send them to daycare. Thank you so much.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Edgemont.

**Ms Hayter:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 25, the Early Learning and Child Care Amendment Act, 2024. For me, I think that this bill doesn't adequately address the issues that have led to the E coli outbreak in Calgary. It impacted many of our families in our ridings, and this bill doesn't go far enough, you know. As well, we are still waiting. I hear it a lot as well that we don't have the space; we don't have accessible and affordable provincial daycare programs.

I was fully in favour of my colleague the MLA for Calgary-Acadia's much-needed amendment to Bill 25. I think with that amendment it would have been a lot easier for all of us to support the bill. I am also so proud of the Member for Calgary-Acadia, our shadow minister for child care and family services. She has worked so incredibly hard to advocate for our children, our youth, and our families, and your advocacy and your dedication on this file to protect and stand up for our kids means so much to many of us.

To quote her: the health and well-being of Albertans, especially children, that must be the priority of the government. I do know it's a priority for us on this side of the House. So thank you for putting forward the amendment and the condition, you know, that would have looked at actually establishing and having a written policy for handwashing at a facility.

You know, that's my big issue with this bill. Bill 25 doesn't set out any further guidelines for hygiene policies within daycare facilities and help limit further outbreaks. I thought it was a brilliant amendment by the member because it was going to keep our children safe and hygienic. It was simple and an appreciated harm reduction: washing our hands. Well, I'm not a nurse like the member who put forward the amendment. I have worked with children, though, and I know the importance of washing your hands to stop that spread of germs.

The bill, you know, that's been put forth here in front of us: the amendments are in the Public Health Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act, but it's neglecting to include washing our hands. I'm still a little bit confused as to why that wasn't even accepted as an amendment because I think we can all agree that it's a simple thing to encourage and have people washing their hands, especially as my colleague from Calgary-Klein talked about, like, we've had these other outbreaks. I would have thought by now that it would be a common practice, but we still need to mandate it.

You know, in some centres we have our young children and our babies, and some of those babies are wearing diapers. I mean, I'm a mom of three and I've changed a lot of diapers, and I'm sure many of us in this Chamber have.

**An Hon. Member:** Hear, hear.

**Ms Hayter:** Yeah. We all changed diapers.

I think we also all know that they are a gross little biohazard. I'm talking about the diapers, not the kids. They're gross, those little brown things that you wrap up. But the children do also come with, like, the runny noses among other things. So I'm going to just promote again that handwashing is really important when dealing with children to protect ourselves but to also protect them, right? We're also wanting to protect our babies and our children and these kiddos. Yeah.

I'm hopeful now, though, that because, you know, this amendment has not been approved, maybe the government at some point can share with all of us, then, what preventative measurements they're going to put in. How are you going to now prevent future outbreaks of diseases and maintain clean daycare facilities? It would be nice to kind of, if we're not going to be putting an

amendment in, know what the government is going to do to prevent outbreaks and diseases where our children and our babies go.

When kids get sick, they then have to stay home, which now means that one of the parents, the mother or the father, is going to now have to stay home and take care of those children, either using their vacation pay, their sick pay, or maybe not even getting paid and losing out on an income. So when we look at – you know, I know that we like to talk about the economy and affordability. If a parent is not working, they may not be making money as well as they're going to have to stay home as well as some of these daycare facilities are going to have to shut down, leaving many families stranded to be able to get their child into care and not being able to go to work. So it's not good on the economy if we're not washing our hands in these daycare facilities and getting our children sick.

Another one of my favourite quotes that the Member for Calgary-Acadia has put forth is that, you know, every parent at a bare minimum should expect that a facility – they are trusting that the care of their children will be safe and free of harm. And I think it was the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood who also did say, though, like, we value and we love the workers in these facilities that are caring for our children. I was looking earlier today and realized, though, that the people – and mostly these are women – working in the child care facilities are making, you know, $18.59 an hour. That's $33,564 per year. If they're the ones that are needing to take time off work because their children are sick, that's quite bad during an affordability crisis.

I hope that we can hear the answers as to what the government will be doing to help with the hygiene policies within our daycare facilities.

**The Chair:** Any other members to Bill 25?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The clauses of Bill 25 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

***8:00***

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report bills 25, 26, and 27.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

**Mr. van Dijken:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 26, Bill 25. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 27.

Madam Speaker, I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. So carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to seek unanimous consent from the House to move to one-minute bells for the remainder of the evening sitting, including the first bill in Committee of the Whole.

**The Deputy Speaker:** This isn't our first time doing this today. I'll ask one question and one question only, seeking unanimous consent to move to one-minute bells, including the first bill here on out from Committee of the Whole. Is anyone opposed? Please say so now.

[Unanimous consent granted]

## Government Bills and Orders
### Committee of the Whole
*(continued)*

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

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

### Bill 30
### Service Alberta Statutes Amendment Act, 2024

**The Chair:** Committee of the Whole has under consideration Bill 30, the Service Alberta Statutes Amendment Act, 2024. There are no amendments on the floor; just the bill.

Any members wishing to join in the debate? Seeing the hon. member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 30, which is in the Committee of the Whole. This is my first time speaking to the bill so I will just get a copy of the bill.

**The Chair:** I can give you the title.

**Mr. Sabir:** No, I do have that. Thank you.

I think many of my colleagues have spoken to this bill, the Service Alberta Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, and, generally speaking, they have agreed with certain changes that are contained in this bill, but they, however, have also raised concerns or questions that they were hoping that they can get answers to from the government.

But as I said, in general, our caucus agrees in principle with the changes that are contained in this bill, so I will cede my time for my colleagues to expand on that.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to join the debate on Bill 30 in Committee of the Whole? The hon. Member for Calgary-North East – are you standing? – followed by Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Go ahead, Member for Calgary-North East. No? Sorry.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Okay. Good evening. I stand to move an amendment to the Bill 30, Service Alberta Statutes Amendment Act, 2024. I have the required copies here. This amendment reads . . .

**The Chair:** Sorry. Hon. member, just wait until I have a copy, and then we'll let you go.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Okay. Sorry.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A1.

Hon. member, you may proceed.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** I move that

> Bill 30, Service Alberta Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, be amended in section 1(3) by striking out clauses (b) and (d).

This amendment is specifically related to the Condominium Property Act. The amendment under Bill 30 is informed about robust engagement with condominium stakeholders in Alberta.

Following Bill 30's introduction, Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction received feedback from condominium stakeholders on clarifications that could help strengthen the bill. After reviewing this feedback, I recommend to remove Bill 30's proposed amendments to the definitions of "ordinary resolution" and "special resolution."

These definitions would be amended to ensure consistency with new simple vote provisions under the CPA, which focuses on votes rather than persons. However, an unintended consequence of these amendments is that they shift how votes are calculated away from votes eligible to be cast to votes actually cast, which in effect would lower the thresholds for passing ordinary and special resolutions.

Retaining the current wording of these two definitions would maintain the function and operation of unit factor votes to pass ordinary and special resolutions that has been the standard for condominium corporations and is not anticipated to create any inconsistencies or interpretive issues within the CPA.

Madam Chair, this technical but critical amendment is important for ensuring that the legislative framework for condominiums in Alberta functions as intended. With that, I encourage my fellow members to support this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there any other members wishing to join the debate on the amendment? The hon. member for Calgary-North East.

**Member Brar:** Thank you, Madam Chair, for giving me an opportunity to speak to the amendment introduced on Bill 30, Service Alberta Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, the amendment A1.

Madam Chair, this bill makes important updates to Alberta's legal framework for condominium properties and construction projects. By amending this bill, the government is saying that they have heard from various stakeholders and they have talked to people involved who will be impacted by this due to this bill.

Madam Chair, this bill in general makes a couple of amendments to already existing acts, which are the Condominium Property Act, Prompt Payment and Construction Lien Act, and the Public Works Act. This bill touches on critical areas that affect thousands of Albertans, which include homeowners, tenants, contractors, subcontractors, and all other workers throughout that chain.

These areas aren't just legal issues, they directly impact the lives of various Albertans. They impact the livelihood of workers. They impact the livelihood of those subcontractors who show up to work no matter if it is rain or sun and put their best efforts to do the proper job, to build homes that we all need, and try to run their livelihoods.

You know, their financial stability, their sense of security is important. We need to make sure that they get paid on time, especially with the contracts that they do with government. We call those contracts with the Crown.

We already know that Albertans are facing an affordability crisis, and we already know that Albertans are struggling and they're going through a lot, and legal battles can be expensive, exhaustive, wastage of too much time, and can cause mental stress to Albertans.

I want to acknowledge the intent of this bill and the intent of this amendment as well, that government is trying to step forward, align itself with other provinces that have already introduced innovative approaches to manage condominium disputes and ensuring prompt payments within the construction industry.

I have also talked to various stakeholders and I have also heard from various subcontractors, workers who work on various projects, and they have also told me that they had faced various disputes. They had been through legal battles, they had been through lots of stress, and the existing process has not been helpful to them, even though the other provinces have taken the lead on it and they have done so many important things that have helped the subcontractors, workers in other provinces, other jurisdictions.

***8:10***

We were behind in getting things done, and I'm glad that this bill is moving forward. You know, at the same time, we acknowledge that intent is good here, but government is late on making and bringing these important changes. These changes could have been done earlier to make life better for thousands of Albertans. That's why we always stress that, you know, instead of bringing antitrans bills, instead of talking about bills that do not help anybody, it is important to go back and talk to stakeholders and talk about, like, Bill 30 and other important pieces of legislation so that we can collectively work together and make life better for everybody. Whereas we have seen that we have wasted a couple of hours and weeks in debating those bills, which were not helpful and, in fact, are harmful to Albertans. But I'm glad that this bill is going forward.

We need to have a proactive approach that can help residents and small-business owners, workers to reduce stress, financial stability, stability in their homes. You know, at the same time we need to follow what other provinces are doing, like Ontario and B.C., and even Saskatchewan has done some important changes.

With that, Madam Chair, I want to say that we continue to talk about this important piece of legislation and amendment. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on this.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise just quickly to put on the record that we do support this amendment. Essentially, the impact of this amendment is that it will leave the bill as it stands now in the current state. I think that's a reasonable amendment, and we will be supporting this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A1?

Seeing none, I'll call the question on amendment A1 as moved by the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 30 in Committee of the Whole? Seeing the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to speak to any real estate matter at any time in this Legislature. I wanted to touch upon an instance that I don't think this legislation did properly address, or missed the opportunity to address, with respect to condo boards and the relationship that sometimes develops between groups of owners that this conflict resolution panel that is part of this legislation doesn't necessarily address. It talks about the situation where a group of owners may actually be in conflict with the board and that this resolution panel will be struck to address it. But it doesn't really speak to a situation which I found has been prevalent in every centre in Alberta, where there are condominiums. After speaking most recently with members of

the Alberta Real Estate Association at their recent gatherings here in Edmonton, when I brought it up, certainly, all their heads were shaking: yeah, that's happening in my city as well.

That situation, Madam Chair, is where, let's say, a rogue actor or a rogue owner of condominium units in a particular building is acting in their own self-interest to do things which force other owners to either sell their units or pay exorbitant fees that are enacted by a majority of board members, ostensibly being a legal action, but they are actually monopolistic in their intent.

What I'm getting at, Madam Chair, is that there is a situation where an owner may identify a particular property, a multifamily condo property, and decide that they find it attractive for redevelopment and go ahead and buy a unit or a number of units and then successively attempt to acquire more units over time to gain a majority ownership position on the board with the ultimate intent to of course force others to sell at a discount and thereby take over the property at a discounted rate and redevelop it.

Now, where this has happened, Madam Chair, is quite often in lower priced condominium buildings, and what tends to happen is that these buildings are occupied by owners who are either low-income seniors or, quite often, single-parent families. I know of situations myself where I've asked particular realtors in the city here about it, and they somewhat are dismissive of it, saying: well, that's just the market acting and doing its job. Well, in my view, the market does sometimes need to have some guardrails put up.

In this situation I think the conflict resolution procedures that the Legislature is considering adopting now should take into account this particular form of abuse that is happening by individuals or companies that are looking at target condo buildings to take control of them and force people out of them or force them to sell at a loss. What happens, Madam Chair, is that the majority owner will pass a resolution so that expensive improvements to the common property are approved by a majority vote because they own the majority of the shares. Of course, these are not affordable by the low-income owners of the other units. What happens is that the low-income owners are invited to sell their units at a discount to the majority owner of the units in the building.

It's not a very friendly process, Madam Chair. While it may meet the letter of the law in terms of the majority of the board members deciding to create a resolution to increase fees to pay for an improvement in the condo common property and while it may be that an owner may offer to buy another unit from another unitholder – legally speaking, nothing contravenes the law there – it really is a predatory practice that I think that the conflict resolution board that is being contemplated should be taking into account.

If indeed there is a situation where condo owners are forced to sell at a lower price because they can't afford the assessments that are imposed upon them by a majority shareholder whose intent is to actually force these lower income sellers to sell at a discounted market price, if indeed that is the express intent, that predatory practice should be something that those low-income condominium unit holders should be able to take to the board and make a legitimate complaint and a successful complaint against. What I'm saying is that that should not be permitted. That type of predatory practice should not be permitted within a condominium board structure.

It's not being covered, Madam Chair, by this proposed legislation in Bill 30, and I really think that it's something that should be captured by this legislation. It's not something that's widely known and many people are aware of, but believe me; when I was at the Alberta Real Estate Association meet and greet recently, everyone I spoke to from Lethbridge, from Edmonton, from Calgary, from Red Deer shook their heads in understanding when I talked about a building where this type of thing was happening.

If indeed you're a single parent living in a building or a low-income senior living in a building which has been affordable to you for a long time – it's probably an older building; the condo fees are acceptable; the building is in reasonably good shape – and you get an owner who comes along and decides they want to take the unit over, control it, monopolize it so that they can ultimately buy enough units to decide to demolish it and redevelop the land, you're between a rock and a hard place. You end up getting forced out of your property because you can't financially accept the burden of the assessments that the majority owner of the condominium board is forcing upon all the other unitholders, and the result is that you end up with people who have their life savings in a property like an apartment condominium or a situation where a single parent is forced to become a tenant rather than a landowner as a result of this predatory practice.

***8:20***

I really hope that the government will look to address this situation and make it an action that is able to be contemplated by a dispute resolution board and one that is actually outlawed. If indeed it's the intent to monopolize and take over a board to force a sale which has a result of harming lower income unitholders, which are quite often single parents or low-income seniors, then that practice should be outlawed. I mean, I was involved in the real estate market for 30 years. I enjoyed it a lot, but I certainly would like to see that the rules and regulations implemented do protect the interests of those people against the predatory instincts of a very small number of investors who see clear their way to profit off the hardship of others, hardship that they are causing themselves.

That's one thing, Madam Chair, that I really thought I'd like to bring to light. The individuals who would uproot families and seniors, forcing them to sell their homes at a lower price than would otherwise be possible for them to sell it at, is something that the legislation should capture. I know that the government is probably pondering this now and wondering: okay; there is merit to this idea. I think that a well-considered, thoughtful process would cause perhaps a future amendment to be made to this legislation.

I think there are other members of my caucus who would like to add their comments, so I'll cede my time to them and let them bring some new light on different issues with respect to this bill.

**The Chair:** Any members to the bill's amendment? The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Mr. Kasawski:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Happy to rise and speak on Bill 30 debate. You know, condo owners are regular folks, often trying to live more affordably with a smaller footprint than a big house and a yard. I know shovelling snow this week was not my favourite job. I know that condo owners: sometimes all they have to do is push the snow off their balcony and they're done that task. They deserve to have protections in place like anyone else. Bill 30 certainly sounds promising when I've read through it and talked with the minister on it. I just want to be sure nothing falls through the cracks.

Part of what I think about with this bill is that it's interesting which ministry it's coming from. After nearly 50 years of Conservative rule in the province the result is that we have a Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction to clean up 50 years of Conservative Party legislation that just drags Albertans down. You know, maybe when we form government, we need to create a minister of autocratic reduction so we can clean up some of this terrible legislation that has been brought in by this current brand of conservatives that fly under the flag of UCP.

You know, their top-down priorities based on various bills, not Bill 30, that have been brought into legislation tell the whole story. Trapping wolverines: top priority. Removing gift limits on lobbyists for elected officials: top priority. Reducing access to information for Albertans and reducing protection of the privacy of Albertans: top priority. Reducing transparency of the government for Albertans: top priority. Giving themselves a $2,000 Christmas bonus, Madam Chair: top priority. Legislating political parties in municipalities is a top priority, and a decision to undo 15 years of thoughtful land-use planning by the Edmonton metropolitan board, which protects prime agricultural land and preserves natural areas, has become a top priority, because they want unmitigated urban sprawl.

Now, we've seen some of the worst legislation debated in the House today, this antitrans legislation and the opportunity for people to opt in to required curriculum in school.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt. Perhaps you didn't hear me when I said we're talking about Bill 30. I hesitate to hear anything that has to do with this legislation before us as amended, but I'm certain you're getting there right now.

**Mr. Kasawski:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just laying the groundwork.

Let's see what good can come from an administrative bill that doesn't have a poison pill bolted onto it, Bill 30, the Service Alberta Statutes Amendment Act. It addresses some changes in administration to the Condominium Property Act, the Prompt Payment and Construction Lien Act, and the Public Works Act. If passed, I understand this legislation will do two major things which will be important, and I think, as the Member for Red Deer-South would say, they are good, Madam Chair.

Establish a tribunal to adjudicate condo property owners' conflicts: this seems really important, and I'm glad to know that the condo owners will really appreciate it. The north Alberta chapter of the nonprofit the Canadian Condominium Institute is glad to see this being brought forward in legislation.

I also understand this legislation will widen the scope for prompt payment to include Crown public contracts as well as contract for subcontractors. I can tell you, Madam Chair, that contractors need to get paid, and they need to get paid properly and promptly. I can tell stories from my own experience as a subcontractor how important prompt payment is, and I have colleagues of mine with businesses that seem to be operating very well. They were busy. They were buying parts. They were building projects. They were hiring staff. Everything seemed to be going very well. And I know one who was building a school for the government of Alberta.

This is really important to the Minister of Education. I know a subcontractor that was building a school for the Minister of Education at the time, but this general contractor did not pay the subcontractor promptly. They actually stretched them for 120 days. For those who haven't worked in the construction industry, waiting 120 days to get paid is a death sentence for some companies. You feel like you're busy and everything is going well, but if you have to wait 120 days for that general contractor to pay you – and it all seems really good. It's a government contract, should be one of the more secure contracts, but as you go from the government down to the general contractor, subcontractor, and subtrades, you may find that people are not getting paid promptly. So to see legislation brought forward that will encourage prompt payment and not just encourage it but give some teeth is very important.

There are times in the business when it seems like we're doing well, when we are working, you're buying the parts, like I said, and it seems like you're growing, but you can't actually tell if you're profitable until you pay all the bills, and things stop abruptly when bankruptcy happens. It actually reminds me of this province and our municipalities that have a huge infrastructure liability, over $30 billion, Madam Chair, and our energy industry in this province, which has a huge liability of the environment, over $260 billion in tailings ponds and traditional oil and gas liabilities, and we've got $24 billion in our savings account. We haven't paid all the bills, and I'm worried that, like a subcontractor that needs the prompt payment provisions of Bill 30, we might be broke. I'm worried that we might not be profitable. Are we actually getting ahead, or does it just look like it?

Madam Chair, before I give up my time here, I do want to say there's one other group of people that like to get paid promptly, you know, and they are also condo owners. We call them life lease holders. Back to Bill 12, where we had the chance and we have this Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction that can bring legislation forward like jurisdictions like Manitoba that allow existing lease holders to get paid promptly.

***8:30***

I am saddened that this legislation that's addressing the condominium act is not bringing forward anything to help life lease holders. Bedford Village in Sherwood Park is a condo complex that does need to get paid, and there are millions of dollars that are owed to the residents of Sherwood Park that are life lease holders.

Madam Chair, I am happy to have risen to this debate. At this time I think I will let others speak to it.

**The Chair:** Seeking members to Bill 30 as amended in Committee of the Whole.

Seeing none, I will call the question on Bill 30, the Service Alberta Statutes Amendment Act, 2024.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 30 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Any opposed? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report on Bill 30.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. van Dijken:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 30. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any opposed, please say no. So carried.

## Government Bills and Orders
### Second Reading

### Bill 32
### Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (No. 2)

[Adjourned debate November 6: Mr. Eggen]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any members wishing to join the debate on Bill 32? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Member Hoyle:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, as I rise here in this late evening to speak on Bill 32, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (No. 2). You know, while there are definitely components of this bill that are commendable, especially with respect to grieving parents being able to access benefits in as little time as possible – we should be aiming to be as compassionate as possible during these times of great loss – it does continue to feel like this government is out of touch with what Albertans are saying are key concerns for them.

Alberta's unemployment rate soared to 7.7 per cent in August while Edmonton's jobless rate climbed, to become the second highest of any Canadian city, up to 8.6 per cent compared to 8 per cent in July. Albertans need good-paying jobs to support themselves and their families, especially as we continue to see exponential population growth.

Between the second quarter of 2023 and the second quarter of 2024 Alberta's population increased by 204,209 people. That's a growth rate of 4.36 per cent, the second-highest quarter year-over-year growth rate the province has seen since 1981. It was also the largest population growth of any province in Canada.

Everyday life is getting less and less affordable as Albertans struggle to put food on the table and keep lights on. Bill 32 falls extremely short of addressing these concerns. This bill effectively means Albertans will pay higher taxes and receive lower benefits in times of high inflation. According to the 2024 HungerCount report by Food Banks Canada Alberta ranks fourth nationally for food bank visits with 172,832 monthly visits, an over 90 per cent increase between 2019 and 2024, all under the UCP government. The same report shows that children comprise nearly a third of food bank clients with approximately 700,000 monthly visits. And 18 per cent of food bank clients are employed, showing that many working Albertans cannot afford the basic necessities.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Albertans are barely keeping their heads above water, Mr. Speaker. They are dealing with high inflation, high unemployment, and the lowest minimum wage in Canada, and they're struggling under a cost-of-living crisis, with no end in sight because affordability just isn't top of mind for this UCP government. The new living wage in Calgary is $24.45 per hour, almost $10 per hour, or 63 per cent, higher than Alberta's minimum wage. In Edmonton it is $20.85. This is the standard needed for Albertans to cover costs of utilities, housing, food, child care, and insurance, and it's just not keeping up with the real costs that Albertans are facing. This government is letting Albertans literally fall through the cracks.

The UCP seems to have no issue with making the situation worse because now they're going to remove caps on rate increases for auto insurance. Instead of stepping up and finding ways to give people real financial relief, the members opposite are letting rates climb higher exactly at the moment when Albertans can least afford it. At what point will this government take real action on what matters to Albertans? For as much as the Premier talks about an affordability crisis, it's remarkable just how absent it's been from the government's agenda. They seem far more interested in introducing legislation to consolidate power and undermine public institutions. Time after time they're missing the mark, and this Bill 32 is no exception.

A big issue I have with Bill 32 is this government's insistence on penalizing any attempts made by Albertans and industry professionals to support renewable energy. The majority of other provinces in Canada offer $5,000 incentives on lease and purchase of electric vehicles or hybrids. Some even go as high as $10,000. We're talking Ontario, Quebec. I mean the list goes on. Instead, this UCP government decides to implement an annual $200 tax on all electric vehicles.

I'd like to remind the members opposite that in the last election this UCP government and the Premier promised not to impose any new taxes without first seeking permission of the people of Alberta through a referendum. Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess we can add this to the long list of broken promises from this government.

It's been suggested through Bill 32 that this kind of tax is necessary because, well, folks who drive EVs don't pay a fuel tax, and that fund is needed for road maintenance. But the members opposite are keen to ignore that the gas tax, that hadn't been charged for the last year, does not pay for road maintenance in Alberta. It goes into general revenue. The gas tax is also on a sliding scale in Budget 2024. So if the price of oil goes up, the tax will be suspended again. Will the EV tax be suspended at the same time?

When will the Premier schedule the referendum that she so-called promised to hold before imposing any new taxes in Alberta? This government just continues to show Albertans that they're incompetent and not to be trusted. It's equally frustrating for so many Albertans who are trying to just take positive steps towards reducing household emissions and their usage of fossil fuels. They're so keen to prevent the renewable energy sector from growing, this government, that they're willing to do so at the expense of Alberta's economy, at the expense of our job market, at the personal expense of everyday hard-working Albertans. Families are already feeling like they're drowning under the crushing rate of utility bills, that are reaching $500, $600, and even $1,000 in instances.

I know I've been asking myself: how did we get to this point in this province? How did we get to a situation where dual-income households don't know if they'll be able to keep the lights on? Bill 32 does nothing to address these concerns for Albertans.

***8:40***

The past two years have been a roller coaster of spiking power prices. Under this UCP government, Albertans have watched electricity prices quadruple. The Alberta Utilities Commission shows that February 2024's gas rates were some of the highest since May 2023, and with grid alerts appearing more frequently in recent years, Albertans are becoming increasingly concerned about the reliability of the province's electricity grid. Yet the Premier and her government continue to limit low-cost energy, which could bring real relief to families.

Bill 32's tax on vehicles is part of the UCP's ideological fight with the renewable energy sector. In February this government announced new restrictions on renewables development, ruling out wind and solar on Alberta's best farmland. It added new red tape, investor uncertainty, and impacted Alberta's stellar reputation as an investment destination while undermining the strength of the renewable sector and the creation of thousands of new jobs, potentially forever.

A moratorium is rooted in an ideological attack against forms of energy that the whole world is moving towards. Companies with active renewable energy projects or planning to invest in Alberta have made it clear that this ban came without warning or

consultation, and it cost Alberta big time: nearly 24,000 jobs and $33 billion in investment. Now, Bill 32 is another attempt to punish Albertans who are looking for more sustainable ways to travel and get around.

The reality is that the International Energy Agency estimates investment in solar will overtake investment in oil and gas as $1.8 trillion would be invested globally in clean energy and infrastructure this year alone. This investment is expected to roughly double by 2030 as nearly half of the world's electricity supply will come from renewable energy. Alberta has also experienced significant growth in the sector, with over $5 billion flowing into the province and the creation of 5,500 jobs since 2019.

The growth of wind and solar is not unique to Alberta. The cost of renewable power has fallen dramatically over the last decade. It is now the cheapest source of new power. Wind and solar can be integrated into larger electricity systems in ways that maintain grid stability and reliability for customers.

Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleagues and I, along with Albertans everywhere, do not have confidence in this UCP government, who is focused on doing the right thing, as we could see with Bill 32. They're not making smart economic decisions, and they're not putting forward policies that are centred on taking care of Albertans.

Alberta utilities regulator released a report saying that Alberta's booming renewables industry poses little threat to its agricultural environment, stating: assuming all renewable development locates on some of Alberta's best land, "the percentage of agricultural . . . land loss is estimated to be less than one per cent by 2041."

Albertans deserve affordable electricity, transparency about their grid, and a government that supports a stable, sustainable investment market.

Bill 32 also doesn't go far enough to protect our most vulnerable Albertans. In 2019, when the UCP government took power, they deindexed benefits and tax brackets saying that the province couldn't afford it. They claimed that they needed to find a way to, quote, exercise restraint. Unquote.But in the face of surging inflation and a looming election, the current Premier reindexed the benefits and brackets, giving 6 per cent boost to benefits in 2023. The amount of back and forth has been very difficult for so many Albertans to keep up with. Under five years of this tumultuous UCP governing these benefits have been deindexed, reindexed in time for election, and then deindexed again, breaking yet another UCP promise. But we can forget that years of this government stood idly by and let our fellow Albertans fall deeper into the abyss.

Bill 32 clarifies that indexation to income tax brackets as well as all provincial benefits will be the lower of CPI or 2 per cent. This means that Treasury Board can decide the change of level of indexation to any level greater than zero. So the UCP is setting default limits on annual increases to the benefit payments that many lower income and disabled Albertans rely on to cover the basic costs. Hundreds of thousands of Albertans rely on benefits like income support, AISH, and Alberta seniors' benefit to cover the day-to-day costs of living.

A report done by the U of C School of Public Policy found that the UCP government's policy of deindexation meant that Albertans paid $118.6 million more in taxes than they would have otherwise. Of those taxpayers who had to pay more in 2020, the average amount paid was $51.43. By 2022 this had grown to $345.7 million for an average increase of taxes paid to $147.87. In total between 2020 and 2022 the Alberta government accrued $646.9 million in additional tax revenues as a result of deindexation.

What Bill 32 actually means is that Albertans will pay higher taxes, receive lower benefits in the midst of an affordability crisis. We need a government that's focused on making life more affordable, not less affordable. Bill 32 is yet another broken promise from this UCP government. We need a government that's focused on making life more affordable, especially for vulnerable Albertans. Bill 32 severely misses the mark, and I cannot support it as it stands.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's such a pleasure for me to rise to speak to Bill 32. I am honoured to discuss an important step forward for Alberta, the introduction of the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (No. 2), or Bill 32. This act, among other things, is a testament to our province's commitment to inclusivity, opportunity, and financial innovation. One of the act's most groundbreaking components is the introduction of alternative finance mortgages, including halal mortgage products. Today I would like to share why this is not only a milestone for Alberta's financial landscape but also a crucial development for our communities.

Home ownership has always been a cornerstone of stability, wealth building, and belonging, yet for many Albertans traditional mortgage products may not align with personal values, particularly for those who observe faith-based financial principles that restrict interest-based loans. The Financial Statutes Amendment Act aims to change that, enabling Alberta's financial institutions to offer alternative finance mortgage products such as halal faith-based and -compliant mortgages.

Alternative finance mortgages allow Albertans from all walks of life, especially for our growing Muslim community, to access financing without compromising their deeply held beliefs. It is a solution that not only broadens financial options but also strengthens Alberta's commitment to supporting a diverse and inclusive society by offering products like murabaha, musharaka, and ijarah, opening doors for more Albertans to achieve their dreams of home ownership, creating a sense of security and investment in their communities.

Let's briefly explore the mortgage types and understand why they are so significant for Albertans. In murabaha financing transactions the financial institution purchases the property upon the buyer's request, then sells it back to the buyer at a cost-plus profit margin that is agreed upon in advance. This arrangement, often called cost-plus financing, enables buyers to enter home ownership with clear terms that provide traditional interest, making it possible and accessible and compatible with Islamic financial principles.

Musharaka partnership is a joint ownership structure where the financial institution and buyer co-own the property. Over time the buyer gradually purchases the institution's share until they hold full ownership. This model promotes partnership and shares responsibility, offering a fair, straightforward pathway to eventual full ownership.

***8:50***

Under the ijarah model the financial institution purchases the property and leases it to the buyer. A portion of each payment goes towards eventual ownership, and once the agreed-upon payments are complete, the buyer becomes the sole owner. This structure is familiar to many as it closely resembles lease-to-own models, yet it adheres to Islamic financial guidelines by focusing on asset-based transactions rather than interest.

Each of these products is designed to meet the needs of those seeking ethical, faith-compliant financing, but they are not restricted by religion. Any Albertan can apply if they meet the

criteria set by the lending institution. This inclusivity not only respects individual beliefs but also makes Alberta's housing market more accessible to those who may have previously felt sidelined by conventional mortgage structures.

With this legislation Alberta's government has laid down the groundwork, but we are not alone on this journey. We are working closely with Alberta's credit unions, ATB Financial, and other provincially regulated institutions to facilitate these mortgage products. While it's up to each institution to develop and offer these products, we anticipate the alternative finance mortgages will be available as early as sometime in 2025. This collaborative approach demonstrates our commitment to supporting financial institutions and delivering innovative products that respond directly to the diverse needs of Albertans.

An important aspect of this act is an amendment to the Land Titles Act which ensures that fees associated with alternative financing mortgages remain comparable to those traditional mortgages. This move underscores our commitment to fairness and affordability. While alternative finance mortgages may sometimes carry additional costs, we have made sure that Albertans using these products won't face added burdens when it comes to fees and land transfer costs. These measures reflect our dedication to an equitable housing market, ensuring that all Albertans have equal opportunities to achieve home ownership.

The risks associated with alternative finance mortgages are similar to those traditional mortgages, but this government remains committed to protecting consumers. Alberta's Superintendent of Financial Institutions and the Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation will oversee these new products, providing a regulated and safe environment for buyers. With these safeguards in place Albertans can feel confident that alternative finance mortgages will be a secure option backed by regulatory oversight and consumer protections.

This initiative would not have been possible without extensive consultation with Islamic finance experts, Alberta's Islamic community, and other stakeholders. By listening to their insights and addressing barriers, we have crafted a solution that is not only innovative but deeply respectful of the values and needs of Albertans. This ongoing dialogue with the community reflects our commitment to inclusivity and to ensuring Alberta's financial system serves everyone who call this province home.

The introduction of alternative finance mortgages through the Financial Statutes Amendment Act marks the transformative step toward a more inclusive Alberta. It sends a message to every Albertan that we are committed to building a province where everyone has an opportunity to participate in home ownership, build stability, and contribute to Alberta's economic future. By creating a pathway that respects different values and beliefs, we are strengthening Alberta's foundation as a place of opportunity, understanding, and shared prosperity.

I am proud to support this legislation, and I believe it will serve as a model for financial inclusivity across Canada. This act is about more than just financial products; it's about building a better, more inclusive Alberta where all families can thrive together. Let's embrace this opportunity to create a province that values diversity and gives everyone a fair chance to succeed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 32. As the minister mentioned, this bill is about more than just financial changes. For the most part, we do oppose all those changes. With respect to alternative finance mortgages, the minister talked at length about the three different concepts of Islamic financing. None of them are mentioned in this legislation.

What this legislation does is that it says that it enables provincially regulated financial institutions to offer alternative finance mortgages. That's pretty much the crux of the change that is contained in this legislation. At this point there are only two institutions that will be impacted by this change. One is ATB and another one is credit unions that will be enabled but not required to provide alternative finance mortgages. There is a lot more work that still needs to be done. It's a good step, good first step, but I think a lot of work still needs to be done.

Where is the sharia-compliant financing, and who will government consult with? There are organizations like halal mortgage corporation in Edmonton. Former Deputy Premier Thomas Lukaszuk has done a lot of work on this front, but government is not on talking terms with him. They won't consult him, but I think he has done some work and talked to scholars and religious people here and across the world to get a good understanding of what a sharia-compliant halal mortgage will be.

Again, the minister talked a lot about a lot of things, but none of them are reflected here. It's certainly a positive change, but it's yet to be seen how it will be operationalized. Insofar as this change is concerned in this bill, we are very much in support of this change. We look forward to working with the government, how they will operationalize this, how they will make this available to the Muslim community in particular. That's the community that's impacted by this for the most part. We are willing to work with the government on this.

The second thing, government has buried many other changes, financial changes, in this piece of legislation that are not so good. For instance, they will be standardizing indexing across government programs, benefits, and tax brackets. That's called deindexing of benefits. At this point even as we speak, the consumer price index is above 3 per cent, and government is tying it 2 per cent of CPI or whichever is lower, so benefits won't go above 2 per cent. In the last two or three years we have seen inflation rise up to 6, 7, even 8 per cent. During all that time government paused the indexation of the AISH benefit, the seniors' benefit, the income support benefit, everything. The government was trying to balance their books on the backs of the most vulnerable people in this province. They do understand very well how the cost of living impacts everyday Albertans, even those Albertans who are making six-figure incomes.

***9:00***

Earlier this week, Mr. Speaker, they changed their housing allowance from $1,930 to $2,200. That's a $270 jump. And they not only changed that; they also indexed it to CPI so that going forward their benefit won't erode its value with the CPI, but for all other Albertans, they have a different set of rules. They won't go above 2 per cent; doesn't matter where the inflation stands. That's the change that will impact Alberta's most vulnerable people, people who rely on fixed income, and we cannot in good conscience support this change.

Then the bill also introduces a new tax on electric vehicles. I think the government's explanation and rationale for that tax is no better than the U.S. defence spraying chemtrails over Alberta. That's the kind of argument they are providing for that tax. That's just the government's ideological position. They just want to signal that anything progressive, anything renewable: that's not acceptable under the UCP's watch. That kind of attitude, that kind of regressive discriminatory tax cannot be supported.

They also made some amendments to support parents who have lost their child for six months. That's a really good amendment. The government is following in the footsteps of the federal government and making that benefit available to grieving parents for six months. That's a good thing in this bill.

And then they are also aligning Alberta with the rest of the world on how split income is dealt with. I think we do not have any strong objections to that change, but I think a couple of changes in this bill are very problematic: one that deindexes Albertans' benefits at a time when they are facing a cost-of-living crisis, when they are facing new jacked up insurance costs, when they are facing jacked up tuition fees, when they are facing so many costs downloaded onto them at that time, and government is deindexing Albertans' benefits. That's unconscionable, and I urge all members of the House to think about your constituents who rely on these benefits and vote against this bill.

Thank you.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, it's quite rich, Mr. Speaker, I have to say. It's quite rich to sit here this evening and listen to the NDP go on and on about the affordability crisis that Albertans are dealing with when all the while they are in a position to ensure that this crisis continues because their leader in Ottawa continues to support Trudeau and his inflationary policies that are creating this crisis. And I know the NDP hates it; it really gets under their skin when we point it out, but that party is the same as the party in Ottawa. Their true boss is Jagmeet Singh in Ottawa. We know that, and we know as well that their new leader, Naheed Nenshi, is, of course, Trudeau's choice, their regional manager for the province of Alberta. And as we do this they ignore their involvement in the creation of this crisis because it is federal policies and federal . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. I might encourage members on one side of the Assembly – I know the minister listened intently to the remarks of hon. Calgary-Bhullar-McCall. But I also provide a caution to the hon. minister. If he speaks to the content of the bill, I'm sure decorum will increase.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** I certainly will, because as the Member for Edmonton-South wondered in her debate: how did we get here? It's clear how we got here, Mr. Speaker. The NDP continues to support Trudeau's inflationary policies that are creating havoc for Albertans and for all Canadians. Inflation is at the highest rate that it's been in four decades. It's up over 18 per cent in the past four years alone. The cost of food has increased by 24 per cent in the last four years alone. The carbon tax increased by 23 per cent on April 1. We've called on the NDP to join us several times and pressure the federal government to repeal and remove the carbon tax, but they won't do it. Their true allegiance is always with Trudeau and with Ottawa, and our true allegiance will always be with Alberta and with Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call on the hon. minister to close debate.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:07 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

***9:10***

Against the motion:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Arcand-Paul | Eremenko | Kasawski |
| Brar | Goehring | Renaud |
| Ceci | Haji | Sabir |
| Chapman | Hayter | Sigurdson, L. |
| Dach | Hoyle | Tejada |

Totals: For – 45 Against – 15

[Motion carried; Bill 32 read a second time]

## Bill 33
## Protection of Privacy Act

[Adjourned debate November 20: Mr. Kasawski]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park has four minutes remaining should he choose to use it.

Are there others wishing to join in the debate?

Seeing none, I am prepared to call on the hon. member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Some Hon. Members:** No.

**The Speaker:** My apologies; the hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall has already spoken at second reading. Are there others? [interjections] Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie has the call.

**Member Eremenko:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand, as I'm sure it is for all the members here in this Chamber for me to stand and speak to Bill 33, clearly, the Protection of Privacy Act. Now, this is not a straightforward bill, though it is on an issue that is particularly pervasive throughout all of our lives. So I think it is incredibly important to do our very best to take this, you know, occasionally dry piece of legislation that's been introduced and unpack that in a way that is accessible and understandable for the average Albertan because it really does truly impact all of our lives in multiple ways every day.

I will say right off the top, though, that my comments are largely informed by the letter that was written by the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner to the Minister of Technology and Innovation with a number of concerns. A couple of areas where they thought that, you know, some of the changes in the privacy and protection act were positive, but . . .

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

Hon. members, I appreciate that there may be some desire to have some private conversations. If the Speaker can hear them, it's probably too loud. Feel free to take those conversations into the south members' lounge, confederation lounge, or other places around the building. For the time being the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie has the call.

**Member Eremenko:** What Bill 33 is, Mr. Speaker, is a division of FOIP legislation that is separated out between the Access to Information Act and the Protection of Privacy Act. It's been 20 years since the FOIP legislation has been updated, so it is certainly long overdue, but Bill 33 misses the mark.

I'm happy to take the next, you know, 10 minutes or so to talk about the ways in which that does occur. I look forward to debating Bill 34, the Access to Information Act, in the week ahead because, in fact, Bill 34 is far more problematic than 33. I really look forward to both standing and hearing from colleagues on both sides of the aisle to talk about just how important some of those changes are and, frankly, to hear from the members opposite about why they could rationalize such significant changes to the FOIP legislation.

But let's focus on Bill 33. There are three areas, Mr. Speaker, that I'd like to focus on primarily, as far as this bill goes. One is around paramountcy; two is around public bodies and which private information is actually impacted; third is around automated decision-making; and if I can get to it, I'd also like to speak briefly to section 13, which talks about the disclosure in the best interests of a minor. It feels particularly topical today given our conversations around, frankly, outing children before they are ready to do so, potentially at great risk to their own well-being and future health.

But let's start with paramountcy. Paramountcy, essentially, is a piece of the legislation that identifies that this legislation would override any other piece of legislation, any other statute. Paramountcy was prominent in the FOIP legislation. It remains prominent in the Access to Information Act. But, Mr. Speaker, there is no paramountcy in the Protection of Privacy Act. As the commissioner has noted, the absence was not identified as a concern from the minister, but according to the commissioner this is problematic, writing in her letter,

> it is my view that having a single statute governing dealings with personal information by public bodies is more practical. Any time another statute could equally govern dealings with information, it is necessary to review all possible statutes before deciding whether a given dealing with information is authorized other than by PPA,

Bill 33.

> To analyze how the various statutory provisions relate to one another is an unduly complex process.

As I said off the top, this is a piece of legislation that, though not exactly riveting reading, is incredibly impactful when it comes to the use, to the disclosure, to the ability to both view, access, and edit our personal information that is held, Mr. Speaker, by over 1,200 public bodies in this province. So it is, wherever possible, incredibly important to make this process less complex, not more, so that the average Albertan can better understand how it impacts their lives and how it impacts the data that belongs to them.

Though this legislation hasn't been updated in 20 years, we can certainly all appreciate here in 2024 just how much of our personal information is out there in the world. All the more important to have a singular guiding piece of legislation that supersedes all others. I think about the Health Information Act, for example, Mr. Speaker. It is incredibly important that where other pieces of legislation or regulations impact the use and the collection and the disclosure of our private information, there is, in fact, you know, ultimately one piece of legislation to rule them all, and the removal of paramountcy from Bill 33 is making that incredibly more difficult, to identify what that singular piece of overarching legislation that we can all look to, that we can refer to with consistency and with consensus around the actual rules to protect that information is.

As I said, this is not a domain that needs to be made more complex. It needs to be simplified where possible, because this is certainly not a simple space in which to be operating. The Protection of Privacy Act is fundamental, and paramountcy affirms that, but unfortunately, as I said, it's in the Access to Information Act, but it is not in the Protection of Privacy Act, Mr. Speaker.

Just earlier this week the minister said that these bills bring Alberta in line with other jurisdictions, but in fact paramountcy exists in the majority of information legislation in other provinces. In fact, Bill 33 on this particular point brings us farther away from existing legislation in other jurisdictions. It does not bring us closer together. It does not align with what other jurisdictions are doing. That is especially going to become pore poignant when we discuss Bill 34.

***9:20***

Now, I wanted to move on to my second point around public bodies and which private information is in fact impacted. As I said, we have about 1,200 public bodies across Alberta that are going to be subject to some of this legislation, public bodies that include provincial and municipal governments, schools, police forces, and, of course, health care. In the latest update that I got from Alberta Health Services, Mr. Speaker, connect care is on the ninth version of implementation. It has taken many, many years to sort through this incredibly complex undertaking when it comes to the sensitivity of health care information that we have.

Unfortunately, once more in the letter from the commissioner, the commissioner writes that when it comes to investigations that their office has completed, the only investigations that they have done are in regard to the Health Information Act. That's not to say that that's the only legislation that impacts personal information, but it's the only legislation that they have been able to investigate for lack of resources, Mr. Speaker. A huge red flag, again, when it comes to the protection and the sensitivity of information that's being held by public bodies.

Again, as I said right off the top, I think what's incredibly important is that we try to make this information accessible and understandable for the average Albertan. I've got a couple of examples that I want to talk about. One is around My Recovery Plan and recovery capital, that is now going to be a new data collection system being driven by Recovery Alberta and Mental Health and Addiction. In this context of My Recovery Plan this is data that is being collected by a private out-of-province provider and therefore not subject to the same kind of scrutiny, transparency, and assurances that public bodies have. Now, the private data that gets collected – nonnegotiable, by the way. Any participant in any recovery community and treatment organization in this province: their clients have to participate in the disclosure of their personal information to My Recovery Plan.

That data can then get shared in all kinds of different places. It starts private. It goes to public. It can come back to private. Maybe it's going to be shuttled over to the Centre of Recovery Excellence for measurement and evaluation. It could go back to a nonprofit or for-profit organization who's going to be supporting that person next. And, again, where participation, Mr. Speaker, is nonnegotiable. What the minister will call a recovery capital score, that's created through My Recovery Plan, may very likely be used to weaponize that person when government chooses that the recovery capital score is too low and they have grounds to scoop

them up through involuntary treatment and ostensibly incarcerate them for three months or more. This is the kind of delicacy with which we need to be handling people's data. And there is no transparency in that process at all.

The collection, use, consent, matching, disclosure of a person's information is passed through half a dozen or more organizations and public bodies in this one example. The issue is not just about an intentional breach of that information; it's about the rights that a person has to disclose, view, edit, and appeal in this messy area of private to public and private again, at potentially dire results, particularly when it comes to people who are dealing with either mental illness or mental illness and addiction, Mr. Speaker.

Next point I want to talk about is around automated decision-making. Now, section 5(2)(d) references the use of an automated system in relation to the duty to give notice for inputting personal information into an automated system to generate content or make decisions, recommendations, or predictions. The commissioner writes in their letter, "I am surprised that [Bill 33] does not contain any protections for Albertans for the use of automated decision-making systems."

Let's bring this down to ground level here with another example of how this is used. Something that's become incredibly much more common throughout the developed world as a result of resource constraints in law enforcement is using machine learning to predict the likelihood of domestic violence. We have now an algorithm, a calculation that takes data coming in one way, churns it through the machine to decide that client X is severely, moderately, or low threat of experiencing further domestic violence. There is more and more evidence that has come out of Spain and Portugal. The U.K. has a big system. There are states that run this kind of machine learning around domestic violence assessment tools by law enforcement in the United States that prove that when this system gets it wrong, Mr. Speaker, it can get it very, very wrong, potentially with fatal consequences.

We all know that when we're trying to save resources, when every ministry, every department is counting their pennies, doing more with potentially less staff, it means that they are going to seek out AI and machine learning opportunities to try and create some efficiencies within the system, and the data is showing that that is potentially very, very risky. A person deserves the right to be able to consent to have their data inputted into the system, and then they also have the right to consent to how subjected they are to the predictions of that system after the fact. There is nothing in this Bill 33 that allows for that kind of an application, and that is a major – major – red flag.

In the last minute that I've got here, I do want to briefly address section 13, the disclosure in the best interests of a minor. This is where they talk about "a law enforcement agency, an organization providing services to a minor, another public body or any prescribed person or body if [disclosing] the information . . . is in the best interests of that minor." There is no clarity in this legislation about who makes those decisions, nor is there definition about what "best interests" mean. I think we can all have some very top-of-mind examples of the risks of disclosing a minor's personal information without their consent in what might be their best interests, but goodness we know that there is often not consensus around what those best interests are.

I would especially hope that Bill 33 would make those kinds of considerations with that kind of clarity and definition for something that is so pervasive and so common in our everyday lives, something, though, that we don't often think about until we have to, until we want to view, edit, challenge the information that is shared across potentially hundreds of public bodies within this government.

I would certainly encourage the people on this side and those on the other to oppose Bill 33. It has a lot more work to do. Thank you for the opportunity.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday has the call.

**Member Arcand-Paul:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in this House to oppose this legislation not because we don't need it in the province but because the way it is presently drafted misses the mark in many different ways for the reasons that follow, the most egregious of which is that Albertans do not have a clear and succinct right to know immediately when their data may have been breached by a government body. In what world do we live where a person's government does not provide instant notification, but the smart phones in our pockets give us instant notification that our data has been compromised? Just today my phone notified me that my password may have been breached in a data leak. But I suppose that is a world that the government wants to subject Albertans to, and that is truly too bad.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve to know what is going on with the information that they willingly share with this government through public bodies. At the first instance of said data being breached, the reasonable standard is something in itself that requires further speculation, and it is applied to the lack of security requirements outlined in section 10(1) of this bill. It is unclear what exactly the expectation is from public bodies to manage security other than "reasonable security arrangements." This could not be seen as providing any level of assurance to Albertans. In fact, we should all be concerned what said security arrangements might look like. Are we to expect some private third party managing the security of our personal data retained by the government? Who's to say that this third party has had previous breaches in their retention of data, and who's to say that the data won't be breached again in the future?

Under this current draft of this bill I suppose this government does not want Albertans to know, and that is quite concerning, Mr. Speaker. We ought to do better, and we ought to make the necessary revisions to this bill before subjecting Albertans to a regime where public bodies or, worse, unknown third parties may mishandle their personal information. But I suppose that transparency to Albertans is not the goal of this government. We must always be very clear and ensure that Albertans are aware of these changes in legislation when it comes to their personal data, especially in areas related to data matching.

***9:30***

My colleague from Calgary-Currie just referenced the Alberta Privacy Commissioner's report, and in that report they did warn that whenever personal information is collected without notice, it is necessary to compensate the individual with transparency. In instances of breaches there must be space for notifying Albertans that this has occurred with data matching. Right now in section 20 that is absent. With the changes in our world and the rapid evolution of a paperless society we must also have different expectations on how that information is handled. Mr. Speaker, this is another reason why this legislation misses the mark and must go back to the drawing board.

The Privacy Commissioner also highlighted that the government's old way of doing business, which was primarily a paper-based public sector, has changed, and they have previously reported that we needed guardrails for the exercise of this authority. This leads me to my next worry. Surely, other Albertans, with respect to the use of automated systems or synthetic data, will be

concerned. Synthetic data, as it is defined in this bill, refers to algorithmic data that is collected by the systems we put in place when it comes to our personal data. Further, the concerns around artificial intelligence collected through automated systems to generate content or make decisions, recommendations, or predictions in section 5(2)(d) would relate to similar algorithmic data.

Despite guardrails being requested by the commissioner with regard to such systems, I do not see any changes in the current iteration of the bill, another reason I cannot in good conscience support the bill in the way it is presently drafted. I know that this government does not often find itself in present reality, but the rapid expansion of algorithms and artificial intelligence in Albertans' everyday lives is changing at a rapid pace, especially when it is being accessed by public bodies. We must do better in this Chamber to ensure that the rights of Albertans are respected and honoured with respect to the protection of privacy and their personal information.

This bill needs some work, a call I will continue making throughout this bill's debate. I'm particularly concerned with section 22 because it is so broad to allow nonpersonal data, or synthetic data, to be used by the Alberta government for any purpose. Mr. Speaker, a quick Google search pulled up a definition of synthetic data from a pretty well-known source, Amazon. How they have defined synthetic data is the following.

> [It] is non-human-created data that mimics real-world data. It is created by computing algorithms and simulations based on generative artificial intelligence technologies. A synthetic data set has the same mathematical properties as the actual data it is based on, but it does not contain any of the same information. Organizations use synthetic data for research, testing, new development, and machine learning research. Recent innovations in AI have made synthetic data generation efficient and fast but have also increased its importance in data regulatory concerns.

Mr. Speaker, we are giving carte blanche to the government, through public bodies, to use this data for any purpose. We see the malarkey that algorithmic data has when tech giants like Google, Meta, or TikTok use our data, and I'm concerned about this. Surely, there are some folks out there who are also concerned and don't want any of these tech giants to collect their personal data, let alone their government.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development describes AI as playing "a pivotal role in supporting the public sector in its perpetual fight to simplify processes or increase their efficiency." Yes. Government has the ability to collect synthetic data, and certainly our public bodies will be able to use this data in delivering the programs that Albertans come to rely on, but what we should come to expect for these programs is that the use of said data be used solely for the purposes for which it is collected. With the world moving in this direction and with the rapid expanse of artificial intelligence, we must have adequate safeguards in place to prevent future abuse. Section 22, unfortunately, does not do that, and it is my duty to bring this up in this Chamber.

In the article Artificial Intelligence Accountability of Public Administration in Canada by Paul Daly, university research chair in administrative law and governance at the University of Ottawa, assessments of the privacy regimes in western Canada were identified with respect to the collection of information, and in each instance of the legislative regime it was very specific to a particular public program. This is being buried by section 22, and we need to be very, very clear when it comes to the use of synthetic data collected by public bodies in this province.

I do not want the government's hands on my algorithmic data in such a far-reaching way, let alone the algorithmic data of Albertans, without specific safeguards. I could support this bill if such safeguards were put in place, but the way that it's presently drafted, I'm concerned that we're not doing that.

In that same paper I just referenced, Daly suggests the following.

> The design of algorithmic systems used in public administration would need to ensure: personal information used in these systems is retained for the prescribed periods; the systems are created to comply with storage and access requirements; the systems are designed in a manner that is understandable and can be easily explained to meet disclosure obligations; and the systems are designed to enable review of data points and correct any inaccuracies.

This list is not exhaustive, but it is a list that, unfortunately, is not what is reflected anywhere in this bill, in particular section 22, part 3 of this bill. Mr. Speaker, this is concerning.

In addition to my concerns I just stated, I'm worried about the selling of information. While section 11 stipulates that a public body is prohibited under this bill to sell personal information "for any purpose, including for marketing or advertising purposes," when contrasted with section 10, although a loss may be identified, how can the government expect to provide assurance to Albertans that this data will not be sold when it is no longer in the custody of a public body?

In other words, there is no assurance what happens with the wrongdoer following such a breach and leak of the data. No penalty can ever return the peace of mind that Albertans come to expect when it comes to the personal information in the care and control of this government's public bodies. While these penalties are being heralded, I still think about everyday Albertans whose data may be lost or there becomes a data breach.

Most recently, last year we saw a breach of data through a cyberattack through Inclusion Alberta, and I would hope that there were some lessons there for this government to take from that cyberattack in which we can have that conversation about why we need to put these safeguards in place. It is important to protect the personal information of individuals through public bodies that this government enables, and this legislation, although I commend the minister for putting this forward, sadly doesn't go far enough. I really don't see how the protection of such data is going to be protected whenever there are potential breaches and that data is lost and sold to markets that are outside of our control.

We know that there's the dark web. We know that there are avenues for people to collect and purchase this type of information. Sadly, it's still a pervasive issue that this bill does not deal with, and I'm certain that there are no plans to make these amendments to include those meaningful changes to ensure that Albertans' personal information is not breached by public bodies through these security arrangements that may or may not be reasonable.

I understand that this reasonableness assessment is something that we talk about and, in particular, it's referenced throughout this piece of legislation. But, sadly, reasonableness is a standard that – I'm sorry – is too broad.

What I am mostly worried about as well is that in the current bill Albertans lack certainty as to the security arrangements that will be expected when that loss happens because this bill is silent on what security needs need to be met by these public bodies. I'm heartened by the concepts in which we must protect personal information. There are many different regimes that apply in the province, and certainly this one is intended to extend to public bodies.

What we are not seeing are the strongest privacy protections that this minister wanted to put in place. Mr. Speaker, while the minister stated that he wanted to create the strongest privacy protections in the country – I'm sorry, Alberta – this falls very short. In second reading he even mentioned that this bill is intended to catch up our

public body's privacy legislation, which is in need of modernization.

Yes. The Internet has developed in such a way and these smart phones and the data that is collected in them is moving at an exponential rate. Artificial intelligence has no bounds. We are in a position where it is learning faster than we are able to legislate. Although this bill has been drafted this year, artificial intelligence will catch up to it in a matter of time, in a quick amount of time. We know that our need to modernize our legislation is certainly a requirement of us as legislators, but it's also a requirement that Albertans come to expect for us when they access public bodies.

***9:40***

I worry about that breach that happened that I just mentioned with Inclusion Alberta, and what happened was that the information of individuals was disclosed in an improper way, and this legislation sadly does not reflect this need to put these guardrails in place.

The Privacy Commissioner highlighted these in their report, and I would urge us to go back to the report and follow up with those good recommendations that were made because there are numerous ones that would apply to the personal privacy of individuals in our province. I would urge us to reconsider passing this bill. I would ask for some amendments to be made to provide this certainty. While it tries to modernize the regime for personal information by public bodies, it does not go far enough as we see some of these gaps that I've just highlighted in my review of the bill.

As someone who's grown up with the Internet, I feel like I know a little bit more about how this works and how this affects us. My TikTok algorithms are through the roof. My FYP is just the worst, and I wouldn't want us to not have the conversation in the province when a public body's algorithmic data and the synthetic data that it collects creates narratives about Albertans. We need to be hypervigilant about what that looks like because we don't have control of artificial intelligence. Once it takes grasp of that information, it runs wild and rampant just like a wildfire. We need to be very certain about what our current regime does to protect that type of information.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans expect us to do a better job to protect them, and this bill must do better for those reasons that I just outlined. I must sadly oppose this legislation and urge the members in this Chamber to reconsider major revisions to meet the call of Albertans who expect our public bodies to do better in protecting their personal information, which includes synthetic or algorithmic data or nonpersonal data.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to now move to adjourn debate on Bill 33.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Bill 35
## All-season Resorts Act

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Tourism and Sport, the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great night when we get to finish by talking about tourism, and I'm pleased to rise today to move second reading of Bill 35, the All-season Resorts Act.

I'm actually going to start with a bit of a story if you don't mind, Mr. Speaker. You know, when I was younger, about 15, my dad surprised me with tickets to a basketball game. Now, for those of you who don't know me, I am a diehard Duke basketball fan. Like, I bleed blue. I have since the early '90s. People remember gifts they get sometimes, but they have core memories that they just never forget, and I will never forget the box those tickets came in at Christmastime. I won't forget the look on my dad's face when I looked at him and realized what I saw in my hands, these tickets to go to this game in New York City against the St. John's Red Storm in the epicentre of sports at Madison Square Garden.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I remember the delays in the airport because of weather from Ottawa to New York City. Then I remember circling LaGuardia airport because of clouds and fog; couldn't land. When we landed, I remember walking down the main street, walking downtown in New York City, and the smell of the hot dogs and the pizza and seeing all the lights and the sounds. It was just something that, you know, I'd never experienced before. I also remember going and seeing a comedy show, where I saw a very young Dave Chappelle do stand-up. I remember laughing at a lot of the jokes, and my dad was a little more cautious about what I was laughing at given my age of 15.

The next day I remember going into Madison Square Garden and seeing the players warming up and all my favourite players and the bass just thumping – hit me in the chest – and I was so excited. The game went back and forth, way too close for comfort. There's one player in particular, I'll never forget his name: Bootsy Thornton. And he dropped . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Bootsy?

**Mr. Schow:** Bootsy Thornton. I want to . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Go, Bootsy.

**Mr. Schow:** He's not my guy; he played for St. John's. But he dropped 40 points including seven three-pointers on Duke, and . . .

**Mr. Sinclair:** Classic Bootsy.

**Mr. Schow:** That is classic Bootsy, at least that day it was. Every time he'd score a three-pointer, the announcer would say his name. It was like a kick in the chest. Then with 1.1 seconds left, Mr. Speaker, Ron Artest hit a three-pointer to tie it and send it to overtime. Now, I will get to my point, trust me. Duke pulled it out in the overtime frame 92-88, and, yes, I do remember the score.

The point of this story is this: in tourism we create memories, core memories that last a lifetime. Now, if you think about some of the best days of your lives, I think one of mine was when I got married. I don't remember the gifts I got necessarily, but I remember the day. We remember experiences, Mr. Speaker, and my job as the Minister of Tourism and Sport is to help curate those memories and sell this province to the rest of the country, and sell it to the rest of the world, and make sure that Albertans as well know that we are here to help them explore their own backyard.

That is the purpose, Mr. Speaker, of the All-season Resorts Act, because I have been to many places around the world, around Canada, and the U.S., and the message is clear; it's a resounding message that we have so much to offer and the world wants more Alberta. They want more Alberta. They want more of what we have to offer.

Mr. Speaker, that's why I'm so grateful to go back to the beginning of 2023 when the Premier created the Ministry of Tourism and Sport, giving us the opportunity to focus on some of the priorities of economic development in the tourism sector. I credit the Premier for that vision because, Mr. Speaker, without that we wouldn't have been able to put forward our long-term tourism strategy that was released earlier this year in February.

Part of that strategy, Mr. Speaker, was to set a goal of $25 billion of visitor spend every year by 2035. Now, some may say that's an ambitious goal, but I feel it's definitely achievable given our strategy. Our plan is working, Mr. Speaker. In 2023 alone Alberta

saw $12.7 billion of visitor spend in our province. But what's really incredible about that number is $3 billion of it is from international visitors coming here from places in the U.S. and around the world. The plan is working because that is a 19 per cent increase year over year. For us to reach this goal, we have to continue to attract visitors from around Canada, the U.S., and the rest of the world, but we need more product. We need more things to show, we need more things to showcase, places for people to visit.

What's also incredible about tourism is it means jobs. It's job creation, Mr. Speaker, it's economic diversification, it's regenerative. It's making sure that people get to explore the natural resources above the ground, which is something that's important because I understand that we have an incredible energy sector in this province, an incredible agriculture sector, but tourism is a budding industry that I think has major potential, and if we explore opportunities to increase visitation, we will reap the benefits of that as a province. The All-season Resorts Act is key and crucial and central to us reaching our goal of $25 billion by 2035.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the issues we have is that we do lack sufficient opportunities to explore parts of our province. We've talked about Banff, and Jasper, and Lake Louise, which I believe are crowning jewels of the province, but in order to have crowning jewels, you have to have a crown. You have to have other things to showcase.

The Leader of the Opposition, Naheed Nenshi, suggested that this resort act would allow us to try to develop in the national parks. He's off his gourd, Mr. Speaker. The national parks are not within the jurisdiction of the province. I would think that someone who's been around politics as long as that person has – that nonmember has, I should say – that he would know that we cannot develop in the national parks. That is not our jurisdiction. We will be looking at opportunities on Crown land in the province outside of the national parks.

Mr. Speaker, there is precedence for this. British Columbia took a very active approach in resort development over two decades ago. As a result of that vision, they have seen over 13 all-season resorts in their province alone. We're talking everything: places that have summer, fall, spring and winter activities, whether it's skiing, mountain coasters, restaurants, nightclubs, spas. You name it, Mr. Speaker, they have it.They understand the importance of tourism and visitation, and as a result, they have seen significant economic benefits.

***9:50***

These all-season resorts are the main reason why B.C.'s tourism sector generates $7 billion more than Alberta does each year and creates far more jobs. Worse yet, Mr. Speaker, a statistic that is very concerning to me is that Albertans spend $1.5 billion more in Alberta than British Columbians spend here in our province. That is a problem for us, but we are going to flip that statistic, and we are going to signal to our visitors that Alberta is open for business and that we have great things to show to the rest of the world.

The All-season Resorts Act represents a smart, forward-thinking, made-in-Alberta plan to increase our four season offerings. Now, it is informed by the British Columbia model, but it is the Alberta model for resort development, understanding that Alberta, in my humble opinion, Mr. Speaker, does it best, and we will do it best.

Currently the process for all-season resort development in Alberta is complex. It is confusing. It is subjective. It's spread across multiple ministries, Mr. Speaker, and it just hasn't been given priority, so that's why we are housing it in one ministry. Also, as a result of the complexity of resort development in the province, we have seen projects go unapproved for sometimes as long as 10 years. That's a problem. There is a perception about Alberta that we are not the best place to do investment for tourism within the financial sector. The tourism investors in our province are a bit too risky. Now, in what world is that the Alberta way? It is not. So we are going to change that.

Now, if passed, the All-season Resorts Act will establish a clear and straightforward resort development approval process for applicants to follow, ensuring that projects follow all environmental review and Indigenous engagement requirements. That is a crucial point to make, Mr. Speaker. Nothing is going to change from the approval process. It will provide a one-window approach to attract private capital investment into the province, into the tourism sector by creating a single regulator for all-season resort development in Alberta's provincial Crown lands. If passed, this regulator will be a new all-season resorts branch within the Ministry of Tourism and Sport. This is creating a one-window approach that will increase investor confidence and attract private capital investment to Alberta's tourism sector, signalling that Alberta is open for business.

Additionally, the All-season Resorts Act will introduce 99-year leases to strengthen investor confidence and provide lending institutions certainty for their investments in Alberta's tourism sector. We'll also designate some public lands as all-season resort areas, and that is land that is already set aside for public multi-use purpose. Even more importantly, the responsible, sustainable development of all-season resorts, similar to those of places like Whistler, Big White found in B.C., will create opportunities for Alberta, creating jobs, bolstering local economies and businesses, and generating long-term economic growth for the regions in which they reside. These resorts will also give Albertans a way to explore more of their own backyard, Mr. Speaker, something we all want. All-season resorts aren't just about attracting tourists; they're also about enhancing opportunities and the quality of life for Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, this is very important. I want to be clear that the All-season Resorts Act does not replace existing standards for development on Crown land. That bears repeating. No existing environmental or Indigenous consultation standards will be replaced. Any new development proposed under the All-season Resorts Act will be required to maintain the same rigorous environmental reviews and consultations with Indigenous people prior to final approval being obtained. The act simply consolidates the existing standards and requirements under the new regulator to create a one-window approach. The All-season Resorts Act ensures this commitment by Alberta's world-class environmental standards by directly appointing to the pre-existing standards and requirements the schedules rather than transposing them word for word in the act.

Our land is vital to our future, Mr. Speaker. It's a beautiful landscape, and it makes us the envy of the rest of the world. By focusing development on well-managed areas, we can preserve Alberta's natural beauty for generations of residents and visitors alike.

The government involvement will be focused where it should be, Mr. Speaker, that is on ensuring that those who share our vision for sustainable tourism development can create unparalleled experiences right here in Alberta, and I urge all members to support Bill 35, the All-season Resorts Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the hon. the Minister of Tourism and Sport has moved second reading of Bill 35, the All-season Resorts Act. Is there anyone else wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise tonight to speak to Bill 35, the All-season Resorts Act. You know, I'm a little bit shocked at how the minister opened up his remarks, talking about the importance of his childhood memories travelling to New York. I can tell you that I was born and raised here in Alberta, and some of my best memories of travel are from right here in this province. It's learning to ski at Marmot Basin and being in the lineup . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You know, learning to ski at Marmot Basin, and being a little girl, six years old, in the lineup, waiting with my ski instructors and being pushed over by a group of adults that was coming through, and I was really upset. It was Brooke Shields and her entourage. I was six years old in Jasper, learning that a celebrity that I looked up to was there skiing as well.

**Mr. Schow:** An American celebrity? Oh my goodness.

**Ms Goehring:** The minister is making fun of meeting an American celebrity. My memories are in Alberta, not in New York and travelling. It's trying to bring people here to the province, talking about what matters in the province.

You know, I remember going to the Whitecourt French festival and having Bonhomme there and eating maple syrup fresh off of the ice and going to ice fishing carnivals across the province and camping all over this beautiful, beautiful province, going to Onoway to the museum there where my great-grandmother has her beadwork in the museum. There are so many things that this province has to offer, Mr. Speaker, and it's disappointing that our own minister starts talking about the importance of tourism and references the United States.

Bill 35 is an All-season Resorts Act. I think on this side of the House we're genuine in what we want to see in Alberta tourism. We want more and more people to come and enjoy our province. We know that about 95 per cent of tourism comes from Canadians. It's the majority of Canadians that come to Alberta to experience what we have to offer.

When I talk about what it takes to grow the tourism industry, I think having a one-stop place for the all-season resort to go is a great start. But there are so many barriers that this government is simply ignoring when it comes to growing the tourism industry. Who's going to work at these resorts, Mr. Speaker? What are they doing to invest in postsecondary education to encourage Albertans to get into tourism as a career? I'm not seeing any of that come out. So we're talking about having a resort. Great. Where are they going to live when they come to work at this resort? We don't have enough staff in tourism as it is. We have an affordability crisis. We have a housing crisis that this government simply isn't acknowledging.

***10:00***

When we look at some of the places where the highest rents are, they happen to also be where our beautiful landscapes are. What is this government doing to make people want to come and work in these beautiful spaces that Alberta has? They're not looking at minimum wage; they're not looking at housing; they're not looking at health care; they're absolutely not looking at the things that make people want to come and work and stay in the province. When an investor is looking at the province, absolutely, we have beautiful mountains. We have beautiful valleys and fishing and camping, so many beautiful places, but how are we going to attract people to work in those beautiful places, Mr. Speaker?

I think that this government is just missing so much when it comes to this goal that they have about expanding tourism in the province. We agree. We want to see it grow, we want to see it expand, but we also want to see a plan for how they're going to do that because it's completely empty when it comes to supporting the people that actually are going to do the work at these resorts.

Now, we heard the minister talk about what this piece of legislation is going to do, and I can tell you that I've heard some significant concerns; number one being from municipalities. When this piece of legislation goes forward, it gives the developer the capacity to put in an application; they get approved by the government. What if the municipality doesn't want it? What if the municipality wasn't consulted? There's nothing in this legislation that makes that criteria for an approval.

There is also no ability for that municipality to appeal a decision for a resort to go into their community. There is, however, Mr. Speaker, the ability for a developer to appeal a decision from the ministry. So they understand that there should be an ability to appeal; they're just not giving it to the people where the resort is going to be built. The community itself has no capacity under this legislation to actually appeal a decision when it comes to having a resort in their community. There's also a lot of concern coming from the municipalities that this government isn't consulting with them, so what makes the municipality trust that this government has their best interest? I'd say based on their record: not a lot.

The other piece that is quite concerning, Mr. Speaker, is that there's going to be an impact on the capacity for environmental groups, community groups, ecologists to have some sort of say in what's going on.

**Mr. Schow:** Consultation.

**Ms Goehring:** The minister is yelling: consultation. That's funny because we know that this is something that they don't do, consultation. You know, their other thing is: "Oh, yeah. We'll consult on it. Wait for the regulations; it will be in there. Just trust us." It's just really concerning that this is what they're asking Albertans to do: just trust us; we're going to do the right thing.

When it comes to looking at ways that this government is going to move forward with this, I'm really curious to know about what the impact on Indigenous communities is going to be because Indigenous communities have not been consulted when it comes to this and the land-use agreements. Currently there are land-use agreements that allow Indigenous communities to hunt and trap and pick berries. What happens if one of those spaces is designated as a resort area and they're no longer eligible to go and do that? There's no appeal process, so the Indigenous community can't come out and say: we are very concerned about the impact of this legislation.

While I think having a stand-alone piece for industry to go to: that makes sense. Seeing this government state that they want to invest in tourism and bring more tourism into the province: I think that's wonderful. But there are still so many concerns and questions that I'm hearing, that I know my colleagues are hearing from the general community wanting to know: what about us? What about the people that live here? What about the people that play here? What about the people that use this space for our food, for our clothing, for our medicines? None of that is addressed in here.

There are a lot of questions that I think still need to be answered, and I look forward to the ongoing debate regarding this piece of legislation. With that, Mr. Speaker, I will cede my time and allow my colleagues to share in the debate.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has the call.

**Mr. Haji:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on Bill 35, All-season Resorts Act. Well, tourism is more than just a visit or a visitor. As my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs just mentioned, it's not a visit to New York or any other destination. It's more than that. It's a vital contributor to any given jurisdiction, economic diversification. It is job creation and it is community enrichment. It is the story of that particular jurisdiction.

On this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we are proud to champion the growth and the prosperity of Alberta's tourism industry, a cornerstone of our province's economy and identity. Tourism is a sector that showcases the very best of what our province has to offer, the unparalleled beauty of the natural landscape of this province, the vibrancy of the cultural heritage of the province, and the warmth and the resilience of the people of this province.

Every year, Mr. Speaker, millions travel to come to Alberta to experience the magnificence of our snow-covered mountains. For me when I first came, it was my first exposure to watch and see the beauty of this land and it was my first exposure to see the snow-covered mountains of this province, the limitlessness of our prairies and the serenity of the tree-filled forests across this province.

Visitors come to explore the iconic destinations like Banff and Jasper, but also to discover the hidden treasure of the rural communities, the Indigenous communities, the small towns, and the urban centres of this province. It's not just about the numbers that the minister just spoke about. It's about fostering the deep connection that visitors will get with the province and its people. That is what creates an opportunity for those visitors to be wanting and to be willing to come back and visit our province.

The importance of this sector cannot be overstated, Mr. Speaker. It generates billions of dollars in revenue for the province. It creates tens of thousands of jobs. It supports countless local businesses from hotels to restaurants to outdoor adventures and the cultural institutions. These are businesses and entrepreneurs that benefit from tourism.

But this requires an investment, and an investment can happen for various opportunities when they exist on the ground. Mr. Speaker, the minister spoke about investor confidence, but there are some factors that create problems when it comes to investor confidence. Good examples of those include, as my colleague talked about, creating the workforce that is required in this sector, attracting those skilled workers who can work within that sector and retaining those, but that is not the case. The province has – you go and look into in terms of retaining the skilled workers that are required for many sectors, and we're not having the highest retention when you compare with other provinces.

***10:10***

When it comes in terms of attracting, you need to create the environment where what people look into – one good example of that is that we're having inflation rates that are higher than the other provinces. Visitors pay attention to that. It comes with cost. They compare with that. Those are some of the things, Mr. Speaker, that the government is not addressing. The minister did not highlight what this government is going to do about that for the sector to thrive.

Most of the visitors that come to the province are Canadians, around 96 per cent. This needs to change. This needs to change because we need to attract and become international destinations when it requires tourism. That is how you invest in the sector. A good example is British Columbia's proactive and long-standing support of tourism, which has meant that more Albertans go to B.C. for tourism than British Columbians come here to Alberta for tourism. That needs to change and to be flipped, but it's not what the minister has proposed; it's building the infrastructures that are required for that to happen, which is not what's happening.

A good example that my colleague talked about is that people, when they come here, the workers that come here in this sector, require housing. They do require some sort of stability where they can see. So you have a government that's, on one hand, creating an instability in the sense of creating – what is it called? When labourers do not know how their pensions will work, whether it is going to be Alberta pension plan, as they talked about, or whether it's going to be Canada pension plan, as they talked about without sharing what that information would be, investment confidence is kind of impacted by some of those unstable policies that the government is doing across the board on many sectors.

One of the challenges when it comes to international destinations – we talked about in terms of increasing, that we need international destination for tourism – is, unlike B.C., only 6 per cent of international flights arrive in Alberta and only 15 per cent of the U.S. flights. That is something that needs to change for us to create a destination for tourism and build the sector. With that, you're diversifying the economy. The bill is very short on that, Mr. Speaker, to address some of those challenges that the sector is struggling with.

Along with the limited international flights, as a destination inflation and labour costs continue to pose significant challenges. The cities of Edmonton and Calgary, according to the latest numbers, have the highest inflation compared to the rest of other comparable major cities in the country. So it's essential that we protect and promote everything in our ability to make the sector stronger and the province a desirable destination for tourism.

Our priority needs to address some of the root causes that are actually preventing that to happen, which are: how do you promote an increase in terms of making it an international destination for tourism, and how do you address the issues of the labour chaos that exists, that this government has created in terms of impacting on confidence? These are some of the issues. But this bill doesn't address that. What it does is that it gives the minister excessive power without the necessary checks and balances, and that doesn't enable the sector to be what it desires to be.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will cede the rest of my time to my colleague.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll briefly just address a few concerns that I have with the bill as well. But, first, I'd like to start with a story. Not really a story. Many people have talked about what's important to them in terms of tourism in Alberta and where they've gone and the things they remember about Alberta. For maybe the last five, six, seven years for a couple of times a summer I go backpacking with friends four, five days in a row, six days in a row. The only limitation is the amount of food we can carry. You know, the packs get quite heavy. We've been to the most pristine parts of this province in the northern Rockies, in the middle Rockies, in the southern Rockies, and almost places not touched by humans in terms of development or anything like that. I do my bit to stay away from the crowded areas, where tourists go for the most part, you know, Banff, Lake Louise, Jasper corridor. I can tell you that Alberta is incredible, and it should have the recognition that we have one of the best places in the world for tourists to come, even people who live here.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the minister gave an apt metaphor when he said that he wanted to create a one-window approach to all-season resort development in this province. If I can just take that metaphor a little farther, the window is open for people who want to develop all-season resorts, but it's closed for anybody who has concerns about what those resorts might do to Alberta and the landscape. My colleague on the far end here talked about the uses of those lands by Indigenous people and all those other things.

I just want to say that I've read the bill, of course, and thought about it, heard some of the debate from the other side and our side, and I can tell you that I understand why the tourism industry wants to see growth in their sector, and I understand why the government wants to see growth in that sector. It's important. My colleague here mentioned GDP, the portion that that sector provides to the GDP of this province. Diversifying the GDP with more sectors that are driving revenues for this province and for the people and companies is a good thing. Mr. Speaker, certainly, diversification will help us. We know that in 2015, 2016 there was significant recession in this province that showed that we are too dependent on one sector, the oil and gas sector, for income. It was really problematic. Of course, during COVID we saw that there was a lack of demand for oil and gas and revenues dropped again, and the highest deficit of the entire province's history was on that government's watch, where they were $23 billion in the hole because of COVID.

Mr. Speaker, the diversification of our economy is not a bad thing. We need to do it. But there needs to be balance in that diversification. There needs to be fairness so that people who have concerns about how the province is moving in that direction can express those concerns. Without proper consideration those who may object to decisions made by the minister and his designates will be shut out of giving any input so that the balance has been tipped in favour of potentially unchecked development.

Municipalities – it was talked about before – community groups, ecologists, previous users and leaseholders of land: they get no compensation for their use of the Crown land. Environmentalists don't have the ability to make judicial appeals. None of them have the ability to make judicial appeals, but the all-season resorts do, Mr. Speaker. Those are some of the concerns I have.

***10:20***

I just wanted to say that I get it that three out of the five current tourism zones, notably Banff and Lake Louise, have significant crowding issues. Having more zones in this province where tourists go is not a bad thing, but we can't let it be unchecked from consideration of the potential problems. Places like Banff and Lake Louise do a really good job of trying to tweak and mitigate the impact of tourists to those areas and spreading visitors out to other locations, like the northern and southern Rockies and the badlands and other zones in Alberta, makes sense, but, again, not in an unfettered way.

Mr. Speaker, I want to adjourn my comments at this point in time, and I would give things over to you at this point.

**The Speaker:** Why, thank you.

Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to join the debate on Bill 35, All-season Resorts Act. Similar to my colleague who just spoke, I too have done quite a bit of backcountry camping, sort of; no resorts are in those places. As a single mom of three boys often those kinds of activities were the ones I could go to. I couldn't go to resorts because I didn't have the funds to be able to do that, but of course we need a diversity of recreational activities in this province. Some people certainly might not want to do something as rigorous as backcountry camping, but I know that I do absolutely enjoy doing that now with my adult sons, and I'm really grateful.

I mean, Alberta is such a magnificent province with so many amazing spaces to explore that I feel very fortunate to live in this province. Of course, we in the NDP support growing tourism in a sustainable way. We're being presented with legislation to create a regulator to approve and oversee the application for creation of all-seasons resorts on Crown land in Alberta.

On page 2, in the preamble it says, "Whereas Alberta's world-class environmental standards ensure that the province's land is conserved and responsibly managed for the benefit of present and future generations." Despite this proclamation, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society has big concerns about development and activities, on how they're designated and making sure they're designated in appropriate areas.

We know that we have 90 species on the at-risk list as of January 2024. Examples of some of these endangered species that absolutely live on Crown land are the sage grouse, whooping crane, burrowing owl, swift fox. So what is the plan to make sure that these species are protected and not further endangered by the development of these resorts? Certainly, this is something the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society is very concerned about. What's the UCP planning to do to ensure these species are protected?

Also, Alberta Wilderness Association conservation specialist Phil Meintzer is concerned about prioritizing the economy over the environment. I would say that we're concerned about that, too, in the New Democrats. Reclassifying public lands to all-season resorts means the natural wealth that we all hold publicly is going to create money for private individuals and corporations. Kennedy Halvorson of the Alberta Wilderness Association also is concerned. Oftentimes economic opportunities will trump environmental protections, and of course we must have an important balance for both of those areas. She recommends that the provincial government designate more sensitive areas as parks and protected areas to help preserve threatened wildlife and plants.

The minister in his opening remarks did talk about, "Oh, we're going to do all the environmental concerns, we're going to make sure everything's okay, and we're going to do the Indigenous consultation," but having read the legislation, I didn't see anything about Indigenous consultation. I certainly want to pressure the government to make sure that that is done, and done respectfully.

Even the government's own website talks about how the management and development of provincial Crown land and natural resources is subject to legal and constitutional duty to consult with First Nations and Métis settlements, and it outlines an extensive process on the government's own website that has several stages of consultation. Some of the areas in terms of exploring the concerns are making sure that the government is listening to modifications for project design, modifications for project location, project timing, mitigation of negative impacts on projects, concerns that the Indigenous people are bringing forward.

It's really incumbent on the government to make sure that they do that because it is not in the legislation, but it is an important aspect of making sure that we are, you know, respecting the First Nations who came much before us. We're settlers on this land, and it's very important that we are working closely with First Nations

and Métis settlements, and that they have significant input into this. I will accept the minister's word here, but I just would like it on the record that – you know, it's not showing in the legislation, so it's very important that the UCP fulfill on that.

We want to grow Alberta's tourism industry. We want to see more tourists in Alberta, we support this growth, but as we've discussed previously, there needs to be a balance between economic growth and environmental protections. We understand, too, that our visitor expenditures have gone down 33 per cent below prepandemic levels for international travellers, so of course we do want to invite those people back, and we want to make sure that they have choices in Alberta, but we want to make sure that we are also being respectful of the environment, of Indigenous people's concerns. The whole package needs to come together for this legislation to work properly for Albertans.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I will adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the Assembly be adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:28 p.m.]

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