



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, October 29, 2025

Day 4

The Honourable Ric McIver, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

Second Session

McIver, Hon. Ric, ECA, Calgary-Hays (UC), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

Al-Guneid, Nagwan, Calgary-Glenmore (NDP)  
Amery, Hon. Mickey K., ECA, KC, Calgary-Cross (UC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Arcand-Paul, Brooks, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)  
Batten, Diana M.B., Calgary-Acadia (NDP)  
Boitchenko, Hon. Andrew, ECA, Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)  
Boparai, Parmeet Singh, Calgary-Falconridge (NDP)  
Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)  
Brar, Gurinder, Calgary-North East (NDP)  
Brar, Gurtej Singh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Calahoo Stonehouse, Jodi, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Chapman, Amanda, Calgary-Beddington (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Assistant Whip  
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
de Jonge, Chantelle, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, ECA, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UC)  
Dyck, Nolan B., Grande Prairie (UC)  
Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP)  
Ellingson, Court, Calgary-Foothills (NDP)  
Ellis, Hon. Mike, ECA, Calgary-West (UC),  
Deputy Premier  
Elmeligi, Sarah, Banff-Kananaskis (NDP)  
Eremenko, Janet, Calgary-Currie (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UC)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, ECA, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, ECA, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Guthrie, Hon. Peter F., ECA, Airdrie-Cochrane (Ind)  
Haji, Sharif, Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Hayter, Julia K.U., Calgary-Edgemont (NDP)  
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, ECA, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Hon. Nate S., ECA, Drumheller-Stettler (UC)  
Hoyle, Rhiannon, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., ECA, Taber-Warner (UC),  
Government Whip  
Ip, Nathan, Edmonton-South West (NDP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
Official Opposition Assistant Whip  
Jean, Hon. Brian Michael, ECA, KC, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche  
(UC)  
Johnson, Jennifer, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)  
Jones, Hon. Matt, ECA, Calgary-South East (UC)  
Kasawski, Kyle, Sherwood Park (NDP)  
Kayande, Samir, Calgary-Elbow (NDP)

LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)  
Loewen, Hon. Todd, ECA, Central Peace-Notley (UC)  
Long, Hon. Martin M., ECA, West Yellowhead (UC)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UC)  
Lunty, Brandon G., Leduc-Beaumont (UC)  
McDougall, Hon. Myles, ECA, Calgary-Fish Creek (UC)  
Metz, Luanne, Calgary-Varsity (NDP)  
Miyashiro, Rob, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)  
Nenshi, Naheed K., Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, ECA, Calgary-Bow (UC)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, ECA, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UC)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Petrovic, Chelsae, Livingstone-Macleod (UC)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, ECA, Calgary-Bhullar-McCall (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, ECA, Calgary-North West (UC)  
Sawyer, Tara, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, ECA, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Hon. Joseph R., ECA, Cardston-Siksika (UC),  
Government House Leader  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, ECA, Calgary-Shaw (UC)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, ECA, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Hon. R.J., ECA, Highwood (UC)  
Sinclair, Scott, Lesser Slave Lake (Ind)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)  
Smith, Hon. Danielle, ECA, Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC),  
Premier  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP)  
Tejada, Lizette, Calgary-Klein (NDP)  
Turton, Hon. Searle, ECA, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UC)  
Wiebe, Ron, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UC)  
Williams, Hon. Dan D.A., ECA, Peace River (UC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)  
Wright, Justin, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UC)  
Wright, Peggy K., Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)

## Party standings:

United Conservative: 47

New Democrat: 38

Independent: 2

## Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Shannon Dean, KC, Clerk  
Trafton Koenig, Law Clerk  
Vani Govindarajan, Parliamentary Counsel  
Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and  
Executive Director of Parliamentary  
Services

Nancy Robert, Clerk of *Journals* and  
Committees  
Aaron Roth, Committee Clerk  
Amanda LeBlanc, Managing Editor of  
*Alberta Hansard*

Terry Langley, Sergeant-at-Arms  
Paul Link, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms  
Gareth Scott, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms  
Lang Bawn, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

### **Executive Council**

|                      |                                                                                                       |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Danielle Smith       | Premier, President of Executive Council,<br>Minister of Intergovernmental and International Relations |
| Mike Ellis           | Deputy Premier, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services                                      |
| Mickey Amery         | Minister of Justice                                                                                   |
| Andrew Boitchenko    | Minister of Tourism and Sport                                                                         |
| Devin Dreesen        | Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors                                                     |
| Tanya Fir            | Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women                                                         |
| Nate Glubish         | Minister of Technology and Innovation                                                                 |
| Nate Horner          | President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance                                                   |
| Grant Hunter         | Associate Minister of Water                                                                           |
| Brian Jean           | Minister of Energy and Minerals                                                                       |
| Matt Jones           | Minister of Hospital and Surgical Health Services                                                     |
| Adriana LaGrange     | Minister of Primary and Preventative Health Services                                                  |
| Todd Loewen          | Minister of Forestry and Parks                                                                        |
| Martin Long          | Minister of Infrastructure                                                                            |
| Myles McDougall      | Minister of Advanced Education                                                                        |
| Dale Nally           | Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction                                                    |
| Nathan Neudorf       | Minister of Affordability and Utilities                                                               |
| Demetrios Nicolaides | Minister of Education and Childcare                                                                   |
| Jason Nixon          | Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services                                                       |
| Rajan Sawhney        | Minister of Indigenous Relations                                                                      |
| Joseph Schow         | Minister of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration                                                      |
| Rebecca Schulz       | Minister of Environment and Protected Areas                                                           |
| R.J. Sigurdson       | Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation                                                                |
| Searle Turton        | Minister of Children and Family Services                                                              |
| Dan Williams         | Minister of Municipal Affairs                                                                         |
| Rick Wilson          | Minister of Mental Health and Addiction                                                               |
| Muhammad Yaseen      | Associate Minister of Multiculturalism                                                                |

### **Parliamentary Secretaries**

|                           |                                                                        |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk | Parliamentary Secretary for Settlement Services and Ukrainian Evacuees |
| Chantelle de Jonge        | Parliamentary Secretary for Affordability and Utilities                |
| Nolan Dyck                | Parliamentary Secretary for Indigenous and Rural Policing              |
| Shane Getson              | Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridor Development              |
| Chelsae Petrovic          | Parliamentary Secretary for Health Workforce Engagement                |
| Jason Stephan             | Parliamentary Secretary for Constitutional Affairs                     |
| Ron Wiebe                 | Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health (North)                       |
| Justin Wright             | Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health (South)                       |
| Tany Yao                  | Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Northern Development    |

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Yao  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Rowswell  
Boitchenko  
Gurinder Brar  
Kasawski  
Kayande  
Stephan  
Wiebe  
Wright, J.

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. Getson  
Deputy Chair: Vacant  
Boparai  
Cyr  
de Jonge  
Elmeligi  
Hoyle  
Stephan  
van Dijken  
Wright, J.

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Lovely  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring  
Batten  
Haji  
Johnson  
Lunty  
McDougall  
Petrovic  
Singh  
Tejada

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Getson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Chapman  
Cyr  
Dyck  
Eremenko  
Lovely  
Miyashiro  
Petrovic  
Shepherd

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. McIver  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson  
Eggen  
Gray  
Hunter  
Metz  
Petrovic  
Sabir  
Singh  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Ms Pitt  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Cyr  
Bouchard  
Ceci  
Deol  
Dyck  
Hayter  
Johnson  
Sigurdson, L.  
Wright, J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Wiebe  
Arcand-Paul  
Bouchard  
Ceci  
Cyr  
Dach  
Gray  
Sinclair  
Stephan

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Mr. Sabir  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Rowswell  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
de Jonge  
Ellingson  
Johnson  
Lunty  
McDougall  
Renaud  
Schmidt

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Rowswell  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sweet  
Al-Guneid  
Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Boitchenko  
Calahoo Stonehouse  
Dyck  
Eggen  
Hunter  
Yao

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 29, 2025

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, let us pray.

### Prayers

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

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** I am pleased to introduce to you a friend of this House, the hon. Tyler Shandro, former member of this Assembly and former minister of health, labour and immigration, and Justice and Solicitor General during very challenging times. Today hon. Mr. Shandro joins us on behalf of STEM Innovation Academy from Calgary and STEM Collegiate from Edmonton. I invite you to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Also seated in my gallery are students from STEM Collegiate, Michelle Chen and Jainika Joshi, who are joined by STEM's founder and chief strategy officer, Lisa Davis, and principal, Mr. Aaron Chute. In collaboration with the University of Alberta's mechatronics and MacEwan University's science students, today STEM provided the Legislature with an impressive robot display in the lower rotunda, showcasing the exciting work that is taking place from grade 7 through to postsecondary. I hope all MLAs took an opportunity to see the work first-hand and will join me in celebrating the students' innovation and success in these important fields of study. To the students: please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

School groups. Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly 42 guests from Al-Mustafa Academy South, located in the humble constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar. I ask my guests that they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the former mayor of Andrew, Alberta, and now the deputy mayor, Merwin Haight. He's also the director and facilities operator for the Andrew Rural Academy, which is a rural STEM school. Could you please rise, Merwin, and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly?

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

**Mrs. Petrovic:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you some very special guests of mine, the notorious east side wives from Livingstone-Macleod, Tracy Stewart and Catherine Chaykowski. I ask you guys to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. Lundy:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you four guests from Beaumont. Mrs. Harpreet Saini is a passionate advocate for the performing arts in the Edmonton region. She is accompanied today by her husband, Mr. Randeep Saini, their daughter Mannat, and their son Angad. I ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to rise today to introduce students, teachers, and parents from STEM Innovation Academy in Calgary and STEM Collegiate in Edmonton. These two public charter schools help students engage in the exciting world of STEM. I look forward to seeing all the incredible things that these students will achieve in their future. I invite them to please rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Now the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce you to two fabulous people. They drove all the way from Ontario. They are the proud and supportive parents of one of my staff. They've done a fabulous job with him. Yvonne and Manny Fernandes, please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-East.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Vijay Punjabi, the financial adviser of the resort project, and Natalia Girenko. If you could please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

## Members' Statements

### Access to Diagnostic Health Services

**Mrs. Petrovic:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta is entering a new era of health care, one that puts patients first and delivers faster, more effective care for families across our province. We understand that wait times to access CT scans and MRIs in the province are far too long and that these delays can mean the difference between identifying early life-saving treatments or developing late-stage illness. That is why our government is planning to introduce legislative reforms that allow Albertans to privately purchase any diagnostic or screening service they choose. This includes MRIs, CT scans, full-body scans, and blood work.

Mr. Speaker, research tells us that early detection saves lives. For example, if caught early, survival rates for breast cancer can reach 93 per cent; stomach cancer, 70 per cent; and lung cancer, 60 per cent. That's why this expansion is essential to all Albertans. It's about more than providing faster and timely care. It's about improving health outcomes for Albertans so they can access the health services they need when they need them.

By giving Albertans more choice, the wait times that are currently too high in the province could become shorter. By introducing more options for tests, private clinics can help ease pressure on the public system, reducing wait times for everyone. For families it means peace of mind. For seniors it means staying independent longer. And for our health system it means fewer emergency visits, shorter wait times, and better use of resources. We are doing this while protecting our government's commitment to the public health guarantee, ensuring that every physician-

recommended test is covered, and reimbursing private clinic test costs if a patient's test reveals critical health conditions.

Mr. Speaker, this is a patient-first approach. This change will enable individuals to have more control over their personal health care journey, which will improve health outcomes and build a stronger, more resilient health care system for all Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

### Hindu Heritage Month

**Member Kayande:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. October is Hindu Heritage Month, a time to celebrate the contributions of Hindus in Canada. Hinduism is amongst the world's oldest religions. Hindu literature such as the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* are amongst the world's most important historical texts. Hindu art and music enrich the lives of everyone around us.

Hindu texts can offer people help in making hard moral choices. Arjuna was an archer in a civil war in the great epic poem the *Mahabharata*, a horrible grinding civil war, as they all are, brother against brother. When it came time to fight and Arjuna surveyed the field from his chariot, he quailed. He couldn't fight. How was it moral to kill his cousins?

Arjuna's chariot driver was Lord Krishna, a god. Krishna's presence on the battlefield was in and of itself a moral choice. He refused to kill, but he would drive the car. Then, in that moment, he chose to become the greatest of all professions, a teacher. Their 700-couplet conversation became the Bhagavad Gita, foundational to Hindu morality and ethics.

How should we live our lives and act in the world as moral people? My answer, gained from years of reflection on this, is: am I using my power to uplift those with less? Am I comforting the afflicted, or am I further afflicting the afflicted and comforting the already comfortable?

Hinduism gives me the guidance on being a moral person today. That, for me, is the point of religious observance, for me to become a leader that Albertans can be proud of.

### 1:40 Lacombe Police Service 125th Anniversary

**Mrs. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, a historic milestone was recently achieved and recognized in my constituency of Lacombe-Ponoka. This year the Lacombe Police Service is celebrating its 125th anniversary, a remarkable achievement that reflects over a century of unwavering dedication to public safety. Founded in 1900, the Lacombe Police Service holds the distinction of being Alberta's oldest municipal police force. For 125 years it has stood as a pillar of strength, professionalism, and community trust. Through generations of change they have remained steadfast in their mission to serve and to protect.

Chief Blumhagen retired after eight years as chief, leaving a legacy of strong leadership. As Chief Dobirstein steps into this role, he returns to the city he grew up in, bringing over three decades of experience in law enforcement. Congratulations to both leaders.

Today Lacombe is not only known for its rich history and vibrant community spirit but also recognized as one of the safest communities in Alberta. That is no coincidence. It's the result of proactive policing and a deep-rooted partnership between officers and the people they serve. While communities like Lacombe demonstrate what effective, community-based policing can achieve, we must confront growing concerns across Canada about federal catch-and-release policies supported by Ottawa. Although

we're cautiously optimistic about recent proposed federal changes, Alberta could not afford to wait.

Mr. Speaker, that is why we took action with electronic monitoring. This program is helping keep our communities safe by providing 24/7 supervision of high-risk and repeat offenders. It's a critical step toward combating rising crime and ensuring accountability.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating the Lacombe Police Service on 125 years of excellence. May their legacy continue to inspire and uphold the values of safety, service, and community for generations to come.

### Government Policies and Cost of Living

**Mr. Schmidt:** Albertans are paying more and more every time they go to the grocery store, and the government's own numbers prove it. Just the last year canola oil has jumped 16 per cent. Rice is up 20 per cent, ground beef up 18 per cent, and coffee up 32 per cent. Baby formula, something that no family with infants can go without, is nearly \$49 a tin, up 10 per cent from last year. Meanwhile average wages in Alberta have only grown by 3 per cent. That means families are falling behind every time they go to the checkout.

Many can't afford to make the trip to the checkout anymore. Today we learned that food bank use in Alberta is up 22 per cent over last year. Let's not kid ourselves about what's driving this. Sobeys pulled in \$2 billion in profits last year. Loblaws: \$7 billion. It's gotten so bad that I half expect Galen Weston to start charging us to breathe the air in his grocery stores.

The UCP government has told Albertans that the carbon tax was driving up the price of groceries, but the carbon tax has been gone for months, and prices are still going up. The real problem is that this UCP government isn't paying attention to the issues that matter most. Instead of tackling soaring food prices, they're too busy punching down on teachers and the severely disabled. They're targeting vulnerable youth and pandering to separatists.

Albertans deserve leadership that's willing to take bold, creative action to bring the cost of food down, whether that's breaking up corporate monopolies, reining in price gouging, or strengthening food security right here at home. It's time for a government that fights for ordinary families and not billionaire CEOs. My colleagues in the NDP and I will keep standing up for everyday Albertans because no one should have to choose between groceries and rent.

**The Speaker:** A point of order was called at 1:44 p.m.

The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

### Charlie Kirk

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to talk about the importance of free speech, civil discourse, and the danger we face when we leave respect for each other behind.

On September 10, Utah Valley University, Charlie Kirk was shot and killed before thousands of spectators. It was a moment of horror, a tragedy that rippled across North America and touched the hearts here in Alberta. Many in our community felt that remarkably great loss. For his message of courage and faith reached far beyond politics. That day the world lost a courageous voice for free thought, but far more painfully parents lost a son, a wife lost her husband, and two young children lost a father. Only faith can bring comfort in such darkness.

Before the age of 25 Charlie founded Turning Point USA, driven by conviction, courage, and a deep belief that truth matters and that

every person deserves to be heard. When someone disagreed with him, he didn't turn them away; he handed them a microphone. He understood that when people stop talking, they stop seeing each other as human beings created in the image of God. His death reminds us of what happens when hatred replaces understanding and when we forget that every life is sacred.

Even when debates in this Chamber grow heated, we must remember that our purpose is not to win arguments but to build a better province. We must defend free expression. We must never lose sight of the humanity of those across the aisle. As scripture teaches in John 8:32, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Let us be strong in our conviction and gentle in spirit, guided by truth, anchored in faith, united in love of neighbour. As Charlie Kirk taught us, democracy prevails.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Education and Childcare Minister

**Member Tejada:** What teacher would want to come work for you? That question was posed to the minister of education yesterday. I don't recall him giving an answer, so let me elaborate. The UCP has done such a bad job with education that teachers do not want to work under this government. In fact, around half of Alberta's new teachers quit in their first five years because their working conditions are untenable.

Let's talk about today. Alberta students went back to school this morning, and nothing has changed. Alberta still has the lowest per-student funding and the largest class sizes in the country and teachers return to unsafe working conditions, now with their constitutional rights stripped by this government. The feeling of despair amongst teachers is palpable. From the thousands of e-mails we are copied on, I know that the minister is aware of this, too. If the government's offer was adequate, 89.5 per cent of teachers would not have rejected it, and the UCP wouldn't have breached the Charter to end the strike, an unprecedented and egregious move that has led to national condemnation. Albertans are being lied to.

The truth: the minister failed. He failed to do his job and ensure Alberta's education system had adequate funding. He failed to account for population growth, expand spaces, and address classroom complexity. He failed to hire enough teachers year after year. He failed to listen to teachers' concerns and put forward a real offer to end the strike. He failed the teachers of this province. He failed children and their parents. Today the minister of education should do the honourable thing and resign. He is responsible for the eroded state of public education and the greatest violation of democratic rights our province has ever seen. I call on Albertans to join us. Write to the minister and tell him what he already knows. He must resign.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The first question today belongs to the Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Collective Bargaining with Teachers

**Mr. Nenshi:** Mr. Speaker, this was a rough morning for parents, for teachers, and for students across Alberta, scrambling to get back to school, back to work, pack lunches, create some lesson plans. People returned with deeply, deeply mixed emotions. It didn't have to be like this. We could have avoided all of this. The government could have avoided all of this. Why did the government ignore this problem for so long? Why did the government refuse to use any of the tools they had to prevent the schools from ever being closed?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, I know this may indeed be a day of mixed emotions. However, I know from many of the students and families that I've spoken to that they're extremely pleased and excited for their children to be able to return to school. Our government takes the firm position that a student's place is in the classroom. That is where our students need to be. They need to be there to improve their academic performance, their social well-being, and their psychological well-being, and we will make sure that they stay in class.

**Mr. Nenshi:** You know what would have made parents and students even happier, Mr. Speaker? If this government hadn't engineered a strike to get kids out of school in the first place.

There were so many other choices. Yesterday the minister actually said that he had, quote, very limited options left. End quote. Perhaps he recalls that. I'd like to focus on that word "left." The reason there were no options left is because this government didn't use any of the options when they could have used them. Why didn't this government call a dispute inquiry board as soon as the teachers rejected the second deal, the same as the first deal?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, like I said yesterday, we looked at all of the options carefully and didn't come to the decision that we made lightly. We just witnessed the longest education strike in Canadian history, as I said yesterday, and we knew the kids had to be back in classrooms, not only back in classrooms but back in classrooms to stay. If we would have gone down the path of a dispute inquiry board, we may have delayed this for a month and had kids back out of classrooms again. If we would have used interest arbitration, we may have seen that lead to strikes at two levels if this unhappiness continued.

**Mr. Nenshi:** On this side of the House we believe that you should negotiate in good faith, that the best deal is always a negotiated deal for employers, for workers, and for their unions. This government was either unwilling, malice, or unable, incompetence, to come to this deal, and they can't blame the teachers. Why did the government engineer this strike rather than using every single tool in its tool box to keep kids in school while addressing teachers' concerns?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, we certainly didn't engineer a strike. Like I said yesterday, looking back at this, the government saying yes twice, sitting with the mediator in September, taking what was the recommendation put forward by the ATA and agreeing to it at another \$300 million cost, offering enhanced mediation the week before the strike ended if the teachers voluntarily went back to class so we could continue working on this: I will agree with the member. We would have preferred to negotiate a deal, too, like we've seen with 87 out of 155 individual collective agreements.

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

**Mr. Nenshi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A deal was in the offing. Even the minister now says that 30 days would not have been enough. It would have been enough if they had been at the table.

### Teacher Recruitment and Retention

**Mr. Nenshi:** Even if this government hires 3,000 new teachers, that doesn't address retirements. It doesn't address those who are quitting because of the appalling working conditions. Yesterday in the House the minister may recall that he admitted that not every school would get a new teacher or education assistant. He didn't

say the other half, which means some schools under that math will lose teachers or education assistants. Will the government tell us today which schools will be losing . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it might be NDP practice to put teachers in schools where they're not needed or unnecessary. Our government will be gathering data from our school divisions and looking at the classroom-specific level of information so that we can deploy these resources and deploy these additional professionals to the classrooms that need it the most. That will ensure that we address complexity and reduce class sizes in the most concerning and challenging areas.

**Mr. Nenshi:** Well, I certainly hope the minister always recalls that he just said that teachers are unnecessary, unneeded, and there are too many teachers. How naive is he that he believes that teachers will, as he said yesterday, immediately come and be hired to the schools? Schools don't miraculously graduate teachers. There are no substitute teachers. No one is coming out of retirement to work for this government. Where will these teachers miraculously come from?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll be happy to send the Leader of the Opposition a copy of the *Hansard* from today because that's not what I said at all, and I would encourage the member to apologize for making inaccurate assumptions of another member's statement in this Assembly. I'd be very happy to accept that apology. I have to say, this kind of accusatory language and misrepresentation of the facts has gone on far enough . . .

**Mr. Nenshi:** I mean, you said it.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** . . . and he wants to continue to shout while I ask him to try and explain himself. They can do that, but we're going to be focused on our kids, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Nenshi:** How rich for this government to demand apologies when it is they who need to apologize.

Even if we could miraculously create teachers out of thin air, even if this government hadn't cut postsecondary education to the bone, the fact remains that this government has treated these workers with enormous and extraordinary disrespect. This government has continually attacked teachers, and for a government that talks about freedom while curtailing it every day, perhaps they have forgotten that people have choices. Mr. Speaker, what trained professional teacher would ever – ever – sign up to work for this government?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** There you see it again, Mr. Speaker, using this kind of inflammatory language that does nothing to help solve the issues that we have in our education system. Suggesting that the government is attacking teachers is a complete mischaracterization and, I would argue, is totally irresponsible for a member of this Assembly to say. The Leader of the Opposition must do better and create a discourse that will help work towards improving conditions for students, not creating divisions between Albertans.

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

**Mr. Nenshi:** Mr. Speaker, I will never be lectured by this government or by that minister that we have to do better.

### Alberta in Canada

**Mr. Nenshi:** Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, we learned that in response to this government's pandering to separatists who want to destroy

our nation, over 10 per cent of adult Albertans signed what I believe to be the largest petition in Canadian history, saying that Alberta should forever be a part of Canada, yet this government continues to play with separatists. Will this government today commit to renouncing separation once and for all?

**The Speaker:** The hon. government minister.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I think it's important to reaffirm what I have said in the past and what the Premier has said herself, that Alberta believes in being sovereign within a united Canada. Canada does not survive, Canada does not be a strong nation without a strong Alberta. We are an incredible place to live, to work. That's why people are coming here by the droves, in record numbers, why we have fantastic job creation. But for this province to continue to be that bastion of hope and opportunity, we need to have our rights respected.

**Mr. Nenshi:** You know, Mr. Speaker, I've never had a dog, but I know a dog whistle when I hear one, and every time the government says, "a sovereign Alberta within a united Canada," we know what they mean. They want some Albertans to only hear the first two words; they want some Albertans only to hear the last two words. But Albertans are so much smarter than this government. Albertans want this government to say once and for all that they are proud Canadians, that they believe in this country. So a simple question for the government: is every member of this government a proud Canadian?

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

**Mr. Schow:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank the member opposite for the question. You know, I would recommend getting a dog. Maybe you might get a husky or a German shepherd or maybe a Labrador. They're wonderful companions.

In terms of the answer to the question I can tell you that I am very proud to be a Canadian. I'm also proud to be an Albertan. I'm proud of all that this province has accomplished since 1905. I will fight tooth and nail, like the Premier and every member on the government benches, to continue to defend Alberta as a sovereign province within a united Canada.

2:00

**Mr. Nenshi:** I'm so happy to hear the minister say, "I am a proud Canadian" with a period after that sentence. I'm also happy for the dog advice. Thank you for that. We will give the government practical options right away to vote and to prove that they are proud Canadians, motions they can vote on.

Thirty years ago this week there was a rally on the streets of Montreal. I was there. We came very close to losing our nation and the economy of Quebec has never ever recovered, but that is what this government wants. How will the government prevent the fire they started from burning down Alberta and burning down Canada?

**Mr. Schow:** Mr. Speaker, it's already been referenced once, but I'm not quite sure why the member opposite continues to use inflammatory language like "burning down our province." That is completely ridiculous and absolutely shameful. That kind of language has no business in this Chamber. We are the government of Alberta. We are all duly elected representatives, 87 of us, to bring what matters most to our constituents to this floor. By using that kind of language to inflame and to incite hatred towards a government or any member of this Assembly is blatantly irresponsible, and I encourage the member to do better.

### Investigation of Health Services Procurement

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans finally got to see Justice Wyant's report into UCP corrupt care. Contrary to what the Premier and the government have been saying, the report does not clear them of political interference or taking kickbacks because Justice Wyant was never allowed to investigate those pieces. This is why the opposition and countless Albertans have been calling for a full, real, unrestricted public inquiry into the corrupt care scandal. To the Premier: will you call a real public inquiry now?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Amery:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to take this opportunity to thank the hon. Raymond Wyant for his independent investigation and report. Let the record be clear. Justice Wyant found no evidence that the Premier, any minister, any political staff member, a member of the government caucus, or any member of the public service acted improperly. This follows a review of more than 2 million records and interviews with 26 individuals. Justice Wyant's report found no wrongdoing from any member on this side of the House.

**Ms Gray:** To be very clear, in response to the minister, Justice Wyant wrote: "I am not in a position to make a final and absolute determination. I can only make conclusions based on the documents I was able to review and the people I interviewed." Not interviewed: the Premier. Not interviewed: any minister. Not interviewed: any current political staff. Why? Because they ensured Justice Wyant was fenced in and fenced off. A real public inquiry would give a judge free rein. Will the Premier call one?

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, Justice Wyant had free rein to interview any member of this government caucus, any member of the public service, any senior official, any senior individual in the Premier's office. Justice Wyant had unfettered access to 2.25 million documents and records that he reviewed. You know what he found? That not a single member of the government caucus acted improperly and that every interaction was appropriate and that it was aligned with transparency and accountability in mind.

**Ms Gray:** The minister is wrong. Justice Wyant was fettered. He was fettered by the limitations of the scope of the terms of reference. He was allowed only to investigate certain things and not allowed to investigate the UCP politicians making offers and deals behind the table. A soap opera of taxpayer dollars going to companies that repeatedly underdelivered on masks, on Tylenol, on uncharted surgeries. The fact that the only thing that these companies seemed to deliver on was taking UCP politicians out on the town is a scandal. Why hasn't this government called a public inquiry?

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, no amount of shouting, no number of monologues is going to change the fact that Justice Wyant found no evidence of wrongdoing by any member of the government caucus; no evidence of wrongdoing by any member of the public service, any member of the Premier's office; no record of wrongdoing whatsoever. [interjection] These are the facts the NDP doesn't want to talk about, and it's probably why Justice Wyant's report doesn't cater to that member's wild conspiracies.

**The Speaker:** Okay, hon. members. We are now at the point of the proceedings where there is no preamble after question 4 on supplementaries, but I know you will all remember that.

The first one to remember that is Edmonton-Decore.

### COVID-19 Vaccination Policies

**Mr. Haji:** Alberta recorded over 6,000 COVID-19 hospitalizations last year costing Albertans \$36,000 each. The most financially responsible plan should be free vaccinations, yet this government is charging \$100 for what should be free vaccines despite evidence showing vaccines could have prevented 3,400 hospitalizations and saved \$100 million. Will the minister explain how charging Albertans for vaccines is fiscally responsible when the cost of one single hospitalization is 340 times more than a single dose of a vaccine?

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 2:06.  
Now the hon. health minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have assessed what NACI had said in the documents on the cost-effectiveness of having COVID vaccines as a universal program. In fact, NACI for Canada, the U.S., and the U.K. and also an analysis by Quebec all reached the same conclusions. Vaccination for COVID at this point is cost-effective only for those at higher risk. That's what we are doing. We're providing COVID vaccines for those at higher risk. I'd like to tell the member opposite . . .

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

**Mr. Haji:** Given that we are referencing data here – according to CIHI data shows ICU admission costs up to \$51,000 each – given that vaccine uptake is falling and measles cases have surged close to 2,000, which costs an estimated \$62 million, can the minister clarify how making life more unaffordable and adding financial barriers to preventative health care like vaccines is helping reduce health care costs when the evidence shows completely the opposite?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. The member opposite has not studied the facts. Two years ago 17 per cent of Albertans actually got COVID vaccine. Last year 13 per cent actually got the COVID vaccine. We are ensuring that everyone who is in a high-risk category who wants that COVID vaccine can in fact get it. Compared to last year, after the first week of the rollout of the vaccine, we are seeing very similar numbers. In '25-26 it was 131,000 who got their COVID vaccine; last year, 164,000. And that doesn't include the private ones that are available now.

**Mr. Haji:** Given that Albertans are experiencing confusion on the vaccine rollout – Ontario, a Conservative-run province, has a vaccine strategy with pharmacies, mobile clinics, targeted outreach leading to higher uptake and lower wastage – given that Alberta removed pharmacy access and centralized distribution, creating delays and confusion while adding this financial barrier during a cost-of-living crisis, if the minister believes Alberta's approach is working, can she explain why we are seeing lower coverage, longer wait times, and rising outbreaks?

**Member LaGrange:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure where the member opposite is getting their information, but it's inaccurate. In fact, in talking to the pharmacists that are providing COVID vaccines in our continuing care facilities, they are very pleased with the way of the rollout.

**Mr. Haji:** They are not.

**Member LaGrange:** Well, I've actually been in contact with CareRx, that represents the pharmacists that are in fact providing those vaccines. Mr. Speaker, 811 is having higher than normal calls, but they've added additional staff, and 87 per cent of seniors are eligible to get the COVID vaccine for free.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we recognize one at a time. I know everybody is enthusiastic. I thank you for that.

Now it's the first question yet in the House by the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

## 2:10 Access to Diagnostic Health Services

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans continue to face long wait times for diagnostic imaging services such as MRIs and CT scans, delays that can impact early detection and timely treatment for diseases. These delays can mean missing the critical window for early intervention, which we know can save lives. Given the importance of early intervention can the Minister of Primary and Preventative Health Services share what steps our government is taking to reduce wait times and improve access to preventative screening for Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of health.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our government is taking decisive action to reduce wait times by expanding access to diagnostic services. Albertans will soon have the option to privately purchase elective screening options such as MRIs, CT scans, full-body scans, and blood work. These reforms will support a patient-centred approach, reduce wait times, and encourage investment in diagnostic infrastructure, making our health care system even stronger. These measures will relieve pressures off the public system and help shorten wait times for Albertans.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that early detection is one of the most effective ways to save lives and improve health outcomes and given that breast cancer survival rates reach 93 per cent when caught early; stomach cancer, 70 per cent; and lung cancer, 60 per cent and given that long wait times for diagnostic screening are delaying access to these life-saving tests, can the Minister of Primary and Preventative Health Services explain how Alberta's new approach by expanding access will help everyday Albertans detect serious health issues earlier?

**Member LaGrange:** I'm happy to, Mr. Speaker. Early detection is one of the most effective ways to improve health outcomes, and Albertans deserve that. Alberta's plan to expand approach to preventative screening will in fact help make that easier. By increasing access to elective diagnostic services, Albertans can detect critical health conditions sooner, leading to fewer health complications and better health outcomes for Albertans. This change is about providing timely access to health care services and giving Albertans the tools they need to take control of their health journey. I know because I had eye cancer, and it was caught early. It makes a difference.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that some Albertans are concerned about the potential for privatization in health care and given that public diagnostic services are a cornerstone of equitable access and given that expanding choice in health care has the

potential to reduce pressure on the public system, how will the minister ensure this initiative strengthens our public health care system and guarantees that access remains based on need, not ability to pay?

**Member LaGrange:** Thanks for the question. Mr. Speaker, through Alberta's public health guarantee we will in fact ensure that every physician-recommended test will be prioritized, and if a private test reveals a serious condition, the private test cost will be reimbursed. By empowering Albertans with a choice to privately purchase elective diagnostic tools, we are in fact easing pressure off our hospitals, shortening public wait times, and improving health outcomes. Our government will always work to enhance access to care in our public health system. Albertans deserve the best, and we are going to make sure that they actually get it.

## Affordable Housing

**Member Irwin:** The wait-list for affordable housing in Edmonton alone is now at 10,000 families, eligible families who can't get a safe roof over their heads. That's right: 10,000 families left waiting while an estimated 5,000 people are unhoused in our city. The wait-list for housing increased 37 per cent over the past two years. Some families I've spoken to have been waiting five years or longer. Let's recall that it was this government that launched Alberta Is Calling yet did nothing to build housing for the thousands and thousands of folks that they invited to this province. So why does the minister have no plan to address affordable housing?

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that member, when their party was in government, built no new houses anywhere inside the province. This side of the House has seen affordable housing stock increase inside that member's home community by 30 per cent, has seen record starts on both market and affordable housing, has seven of the most affordable jurisdictions anywhere in the world when it comes to affordable housing right here in this province, including the city of Edmonton. Rents are going down, and we continue to do our great plan because we rejected the NDP's failure, which was to bomb our cities with rent control.

**Member Irwin:** Given that if Albertans are unable to find housing that's suitable for their needs, often they struggle with unpredictable rent increases and given that this minister refuses any sort of caps on rent despite Alberta being the largest province with no protection for renters, and this minister will say, as he just did, that rents have stabilized, but that's after renters have faced three consecutive years of skyrocketing rents. So to the minister, who refuses to consider rent caps, refuses to maintain and build affordable housing, refuses to increase rent subsidies: why does he refuse to do anything to support Alberta renters?

**Ms Gray:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order has been noted at 2:15.  
The minister.

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, again, we have rejected the NDP's call to bring in rent control because it would devastate our economy. Look no further than Ontario or Vancouver, who have types of rent control that see rent continuing to go up and housing supply continuing to go down. Not here in Alberta, where we have record builds happening. She's right. We had to overcome the challenges left by the infrastructure deficit of the NDP when they were in government. We've done that. As Albertans, we're proud of it. We've got to watch with the new Leader of the Opposition, who

left the city of Calgary with such an infrastructure deficit that their pipes started leaking with holes as big as dump trucks. We won't be lectured by the NDP when it comes to . . .

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Given that so many of our constituents are struggling to pay bills, and it's not just the cost of rent. It's groceries. It's insurance. It's child care. It's a whole lot for so many, and you'll be hard pressed to find anyone for whom life hasn't become more expensive under the UCP. No caps on rent. No caps on utilities. No caps on classroom sizes. It seems the only thing that this government is willing to cap is debate time. So to the minister of affordability: why has his government refused to take any tangible steps to help Albertans? Make it make sense.

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

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're very proud to be part of a government that brought in a tax break for Albertans that every single working Albertan is going to save approximately \$750 a year every year that that tax break is in place. We continue to work with them. We're very happy that their utility costs are down 63 per cent from the peak that was caused by the failed policies of the NDP government. We are here working for Albertans every single day, working to make sure that affordability is found through every single ministry. We're here serving Albertans.

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

#### Government Policies

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, there is good reason to suspect that there's a direct pipeline from the far fringes of the UCP's MLAs and members to this government's cabinet table. A convention, you might say. After all, it only took the lobbying of a handful of antivax conspiracists to convince the health minister to make COVID and flu vaccines much harder to get despite the fact it will almost certainly cost lives. Now, the *National Post* is reporting that some of the same UCP influencers are about to lobby against the fluoridation of our water supply. So to the minister of health: should we be expecting legislation soon to protect Albertans' rights to rot their teeth?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of health.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure the member opposite realizes that, in fact, that is a municipal decision. It has been a municipal decision for quite some time, and we are continuing to work with municipalities. We would like input into that decision-making, but it is a municipal decision at this point in time.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Now, given it only took a handful of UCP influencers drunk on Fox News fallacies about voting machines to convince the Minister of Municipal Affairs to ban vote tabulators and tie up voting stations in red tape and given that came at the cost of tax dollars, millions of them, and, well, literally some Albertans' right to vote in the recent municipal election and given the *National Post* now reports that some of those same influencers are about to lobby the UCP regarding electromagnetic allergies, to that minister: should we be expecting legislation soon banning cellphone towers and local power lines?

**The Speaker:** Well, hon. member, the questions were connected but not by government policy. Nonetheless, the minister wants to answer.

Please go ahead.

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, the advice we took and the experts that we had said that, when it comes to paper ballots, when it comes to hand-counted, it's the gold standard for us to have confidence in our elections going forward. It's exactly what the federal government has done for its entire history. It's what Alberta does. It's what over 300 municipalities do every single cycle of election. The conspiracy theories are thick on the other side of the aisle. The truth is the best evidence. [interjections]

2:20

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we're not required to like the answer, but we are required to hear it.

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, they're not required to listen to the truth, but let the people hear it. It is the absolute best case scenario for us to have hand-counted paper ballots so that we can have confidence in the election.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Well, given that it certainly appears it only took a handful of UCP influencers and perhaps the Premier's personal grudge to bring about laws and regulation that cratered the renewables industry in Alberta and given that came at the cost of billions of dollars of investment and thousands of jobs, now given the *National Post* is reporting that some of those same regressive, Republican wannabes are about to lobby ministers about weather modification or geoengineering programs, to the minister of environment: should we expect legislation on chemtrails this spring, or will there be an Alberta Next town hall first?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of the environment.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite would know that there are programs in place for hail suppression that have been in place for a number of years. I do want to take the opportunity to talk about the great experience I had over the last number of months travelling the province, hearing from Albertans on the Alberta Next Panel about their concerns with the federal government, how Confederation is working, and making sure that we can respect and represent their voices here in this Legislature.

**The Speaker:** The next question is from the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

#### Coal Development Policies

**Mr. Rowsell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Valory Resources mine 14 near Grande Cache and Blackstone project near Nordegg produce clean, low-volatility metallurgical coal that is essential for manufacturing steel. Unlike many surface operations elsewhere, Valory's mines are fully underground, meaning a limited environmental footprint. These mines will secure Alberta's position as a world leader in metallurgical coal. To the Minister of Energy and Minerals: will the province continue to advocate for projects like mine 14 and Blackstone?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of energy.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for the question and his hard work on this file. The government of Alberta does not advocate for specific projects. What we do is strengthen sectors. In this particular case, we know that steel is absolutely vital for Canada, absolutely vital for the world. In fact, the EU has named it a critical mineral, so has the United States. Investments in innovation, modernization, and implementation of world-class water and environmental protection will strengthen our domestic

supply chains. We will only allow resources to be developed if the environment is protected as a first priority.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Valory Resources steel-making coal operations have the potential to deliver directly and indirectly 8,000 to 10,000 jobs and given that global demand for ethical, sustainable metallurgical coal is on the rise, these projects can position Alberta as a key supplier in both domestic and international markets. Can the same minister explain how Alberta's government is supporting Valory Resources and other metallurgical coal producers to expand production and attract investment?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy and Minerals.

**Mr. Jean:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. As a province we are working to strengthen industries of national importance and doing so at the highest standards in the entire world. We're designing a modernized framework that will give clarity to regulation while prioritizing the protection of our water and our environment. The Valory project is an underground project, so it does not have selenium issues. It's great news for the people of Alberta.

**Mr. Schmidt:** What, do they keep the selenium underground?

**The Speaker:** We're going to let the hon. member ask the question, if that's okay. Thank you.

The hon. member.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that Valory Resources is continuing to prove that Alberta steel-making coal can be produced cleanly, safely, and sustainably and given that Alberta, not just British Columbia, has the ability to play a leading role in meeting Canada's and the world's steel-making coal demand, to the minister: what steps are being taken to promote Alberta's clean, ethical steel-making coal to both Canadian manufacturers and international markets?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the first thing we're not going to do is we're not going to follow the example of the NDP in Alberta or the NDP in British Columbia. They exploited the Elk River, the Elk valley, and it is a disaster. What we're going to do is update the regulations, which haven't been updated since the '60s. We're prioritizing the protection of our water and our environment as priority number 1. We have banned mountaintop removal and new open-pit mines in the Rockies. When the NDP was in power, they did everything to the opposite: invited billionaires to come in and dig, baby, dig. It's not going to happen under this government. We're going to prioritize people, water, and our environment.

### Investigation of Health Services Procurement (continued)

**Mr. Sabir:** Mr. Speaker, Judge Wyant's report into the corruption and political interference in government procurement practices says on page 3,

Unlike a public inquiry, this investigation did not have the power to subpoena or hear testimony under oath. As a result, people had the opportunity to decline to be interviewed. Some did. Further, because testimony was not under oath, people could decline to answer questions. Some did.

Will the government tell Albertans which ministers and staff declined to be interviewed or answer questions from Judge Wyant?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Amery:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I wanted to highlight the good work of Judge Wyant. It was the first and only third-party, independent, judicially led investigation into the allegations made on the AHS matters. Judge Wyant concluded that not a single government minister, caucus member, political staffer, or member of the public service acted improperly whatsoever. The fact of the matter is that not a single member of the government, senior political staff, or member of the public service declined an interview.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that the Judge Wyant report clearly stated that a complete inquiry into the UCP corruption and health care procurement practices was not possible within the narrow terms of reference crafted by this UCP government and given that no UCP minister or current staff were interviewed by Judge Wyant, is it now government policy to hide information from a judge rather than tell Albertans what's really going on?

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, that question is absolutely outrageous. The fact of the matter is that I just finished telling the hon. member that not a single government minister, political staffer, or member of the public service declined an interview with Judge Wyant. But here's what Judge Wyatt did find. He found that AHS failed to follow its own procurement policies, that AHS leadership, under the watchful eye of the most senior of AHS leadership, failed to exercise due diligence to ensure that its own policies were followed.

**Mr. Sabir:** Given that the UCP crafted the terms of reference for this inquiry to sweep things under the rug, given that the Judge Wyant inquiry is clearly not conclusive and given that the report is raising more questions about this corruption in government procurement practices than it answers, what would it take for the minister to do the right thing and call for a full, independent, judicial-led public inquiry into this corruption? What are they hiding?

**Mr. Amery:** Mr. Speaker, once again a ridiculous notion. Judge Wyant looked over 2.25 million records provided by government and AHS and every single party involved. He interviewed 26 different individuals who had information on this matter. There is nobody from government who refused or declined or did not co-operate with that investigation. Judge Wyant provided a comprehensive finding with 18 recommendations, and this government took immediate action. The Premier directed her deputy minister to begin implementing those recommendations immediately.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

### Pipeline Development

**Mr. Lundy:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans know that our oil and gas industry is the powerhouse of our great province. It feeds our families, pays our bills, and funds our schools and hospitals. However, the NDP just doesn't agree, showing us time and time again that they don't care about Alberta's energy sector. But for those who do care about building Alberta's prosperity, could the Minister of Energy and Minerals please explain how increasing pipeline capacity would benefit everyday Albertans and our economy?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy and Minerals.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hard-working member for the question. There's no question at all in most Canadians' minds how important our oil and gas sector is. The Trans Mountain expansion proved the demand for our responsibly produced oil with record exports. Now, if Northern Gateway, Keystone XL, and the Energy East pipeline, which all of those members protested, had been constructed, we would now be generating \$10 billion to \$15 billion more in provincial tax revenue every single year. Now, I know they don't understand that because they're the No-Development Party, but let's be honest. That's what pays for schools, bridges, hospitals, all the things that they take for granted.

**The Speaker:** Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. Lundy:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer. Given Energy-ban Eby's troubling record of standing in the way of Alberta's oil and gas reaching new markets and given the importance of Alberta's resources getting fair value on the world stage, to the same minister: how is our government ensuring that pipeline projects will succeed despite outside roadblocks so that Alberta workers, families, and communities can continue to grow and prosper?

2:30

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, it's true. The naughty nine are out there. They're federal laws and they're bad. They're not helping Albertans. They're not helping Canadians. But our Premier, with this government, is standing up. We understand how important pipelines are, and the vast majority of Canadians actually support us in that. We're acting as proponent to build a new pipeline to Canada's northwest coast and to submit an application for its inclusion on the national projects list. This pipeline will be built through a partnership with First Nations and industry. Truly the way to go ahead and do this is the way Alberta is doing it, and we're going to get it done.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Lundy:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that Albertans expect major energy projects to meet the highest safety and environmental standards and given this government's clear and unwavering commitment to responsible development and long-term sustainability, to the same minister: how is our government ensuring that oil and gas projects include the latest safety technologies, environmental protections so that Albertans can be confident that our energy is being transported efficiently and responsibly?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, the first thing is that we have a world-class energy regulator. They are the best in the world. It's clear. Other jurisdictions come to us and say: "How do you do it so well? Can you teach us?" We do that. We have some of the highest standards in the world governing safety and production and transportation, and we teach other people how to do it properly. This is not your grandpa's oil patch. Pipeline incidents have dropped by 46 per cent from 2014 to 2023 as the pipeline network actually expanded.

Mr. Speaker, good news today, though. I heard that actually a member of the NDP, the Member for Edmonton-City Centre, now supports fluoride pipelines. It's a start.

#### Collection of Class Size and Complexity Data

**Ms Chapman:** Yesterday the minister of education informed this House that he had sent a directive to school boards to collect

information on student-teacher ratios, number of students with complex needs, number of teachers and educational assistants so he can get a clear understanding of the conditions in every classroom, which begs the question: how is it that the minister of education doesn't already have an understanding of classrooms in Alberta?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** We do have an understanding of classrooms, Mr. Speaker. We know that our classroom sizes are increasing. We know that there are more complex dynamics in our classrooms. We've seen a 34 per cent increase, as an example, in the number of refugee students. We've also seen a significant increase in the number of students who speak English as an additional language. We do understand the dynamics, but of course we want to get the absolute clearest picture that we can for each individual classroom so that we can deploy resources to assist those classrooms that need assistance the most.

**Ms Chapman:** Given that in 2023 the NDP put forward a private member's bill, Bill 202, that asked the government to return to collecting and publicly reporting data on class size and complexity and given that this government responded to the bill by saying that it "introduces burdensome reporting mechanisms that threaten to divert precious resources away from the core of our educational mission," will the minister pinpoint for Albertans the exact moment he realized voting down Bill 202 was a huge mistake?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans are interested in moving forward, not rehashing the past to try and score political points. That's why our government will be extrapolating this data so that we can get a better understanding of the dynamics affecting each of our individual classrooms. That information will be essential, as I mentioned a moment ago, so that we can deploy necessary resources so that our students have the most optimal conditions possible to improve their learning.

**Ms Chapman:** Given that Albertans have made it clear to this government that the lowest education funding per student in the country is a disgrace and given that all Albertans deserve transparency from this government when it comes to class size and composition, will the minister commit to making public the information he has requested from school boards? Just a yes or no will do, Minister.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, once we've had the opportunity to collect the data, of course, and analyze the information, I'm looking forward to providing a lot of transparency to Albertans because I think Albertans want to get a better understanding of how their tax dollars are being allocated in the classroom and where those resources are going. We are moving forward, and we want to ensure that we create the maximum amount of transparency possible.

#### Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage

**Mr. Kasawski:** This government needs to land the carbon capture plane. Over \$15 billion of potential investment is waiting in the wings, but a final investment decision is pending. Dow is now at a two-year delay. Heidelberg is back to value engineering. Varme can't go ahead without regulatory stability. The government announced the Alberta carbon capture incentive program two years ago. It's still not finalized. Meanwhile they fired the entire energy transition team. So a simple question: where is the Alberta carbon capture incentive program?

**Mr. Jean:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's here in Alberta, and we are leading the world. There's no question, we have the best geology in

the world for this. We have other jurisdictions that talk about how to do it, but the truth is that we are doing it. We're doing it at scale. We have two carbon capture pipelines that have been very successful. Quest, for instance, for the first time ever didn't need government support last year. It's a great project, it's a great innovation, and it's a great first step for Albertans to take GHG emissions and sequester them and bring that average down. It's a great thing for our projects, it's a great thing for oil, and it's a great thing for our industry. The hot air over there: I'm not sure about it.

**Mr. Kasawski:** Great.

Given that international businesses like Dow are evaluating locations around the world for their investments, given that their final investment decisions weigh regulatory stability along with construction costs, feedstock costs, and the market access for their products and given that corporate investment decisions are made based on that swing vote of regulatory stability, the very thing we can control, why are the UCP creating chaos instead of ensuring regulatory stability to bring great jobs to Canada and the Alberta Industrial Heartland?

**The Speaker:** Well, that was at least the shortest preamble I've heard in a while.

**Mr. Jean:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we're bringing jobs to Alberta. In fact, one moment they're complaining about all the jobs that are being created in Alberta and all the people that are fleeing other jurisdictions to come to Alberta, and the next minute they're complaining about it. The truth is that we are global leaders in carbon capture sequestration, CCUS, but unlike the NDP, who will open the pocketbook to big business, we will not do that. We will take care of Albertans' money. We will make sure that every dollar is invested properly, and some of these projects may not go ahead. The truth is that there's no better jurisdiction in the world to do it than Alberta, and we're going to be lockstep with industry to do so.

**Mr. Kasawski:** Given that this government is also creating labour instability in Alberta, given that what we hear is the UCP moan about the federal government when they haven't delivered on a single policy to incentivize carbon capture, utilization, and storage, given that this government had two years to get the Alberta carbon capture incentive program running but still haven't got it off the ground, given that the regulatory instability is destroying private industry and job creation in Alberta, why can't this government land these planes and unlock the largest investments ever in Alberta's Industrial Heartland?

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what the member is talking about. We've invested or committed approximately \$2 billion of taxpayers' money. Now, he may not look at that as a significant sum, but we certainly do. We're managing every dollar efficiently. A lot of customers are looking at the opportunity to come to Alberta and create jobs and wealth because we're so far advanced over other jurisdictions. He may not have noticed, but there's something going on in the world that's a little bit in turmoil; it's called Trump. It's taking a little bit more time to get back to stability, but fortunately we have this Premier, who's making sure that every step of the way is a better step than yesterday.

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

#### School Construction in Airdrie

**Ms Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Airdrie is often the fastest growing community in all of Canada, and given that our government has

approved six new schools since 2019. Airdrie is playing catch-up after the former NDP government approved no – none; zero – new schools in Airdrie in four years. We have six schools receiving funding in Airdrie. Given that these six schools won't be built overnight and we're facing challenges here today, can the Minister of Education and Childcare please update us on the school construction accelerator program and what this means for schools in Airdrie?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The city of Airdrie is one of the fastest growing if not the fastest growing city in all of Canada, which demonstrates that Alberta is an incredible place to live. Of course, that does create a significant pressure for our schools and school divisions. There are a number of projects that are under way. We're looking at a new K to 8 school in southwest Airdrie, a new high school as well. In addition, the renovation of the St. Martin De Porres high school is under way and almost completed. All of these projects will welcome thousands of more student spaces.

2:40

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many of these schools won't be ready for a couple of years and given that existing schools in Rocky View schools and Calgary Catholic schools in Airdrie are stretched to their limits, will the minister provide an update on the accelerated modular classroom investments to address overcrowding while we wait for our new schools to be built?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the member and I have had the opportunity to chat on several occasions regarding modulars. She has done an incredible job of advocating for her constituents and the needs of her constituents. We were able to deploy additional modulars to benefit Airdrie residents. Of course, they're not permanent solutions, but they are very effective short-term solutions to create additional spaces where needed.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister, given that our kids are finally back in the classroom where they belong and given that we are addressing the space issues by building schools, adding modular classrooms, however, there are still supports needed for students with complex needs, what is the minister's plan to ensure future stability of our schools, particularly in my community?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** We will be, Mr. Speaker, addressing the issue of classroom complexity. We will be tackling it head-on. The Premier has asked me to convene a task force on classroom complexity, and we'll be inviting the Alberta Teachers' Association to be a part of that with us so that we can develop solutions that will help improve conditions in our classrooms. Of course, that's the most important thing that we have to always keep in mind, the best interests of our students, and their best interests are served by being in school and having the support that they need. We will make sure that that gets done.

**The Speaker:** So ends question period.

#### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to table the requisite five copies of an e-mail letter from a constituent who strongly opposes the government's reported plan to use again the notwithstanding clause to override the Charter rights of trans, two-spirit, and gender-diverse Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I table five copies of the article that I referenced in my question set earlier, that is entitled For Some Low-income Families in Edmonton, the Wait for Affordable Housing Lasts Years. It talks about the 10,000 folks who are on the wait-list for affordable housing in Edmonton.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite copies of some postcards I received in my office from teachers across the province. Certainly, these give information that every member should read.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Al-Guneid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite copies of the 23 e-mails I referenced in my debate from a constituent with an autistic kid suffering through the underfunded public education.

**The Speaker:** Okay. We have Calgary-North East.

**Member Gurinder Brar:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. Today I present the requisite copies of a letter from a kindergarten teacher of eight years who spends their days managing mental health crises, emotions, and trauma more than they teach. With the funding and support provided, they are unable to support themselves or students in crisis.

**Mr. Haji:** Mr. Speaker, I have the requisite copies of an article from Parkland Institute. It's about the UCP's immunization policy limiting supply, restricting eligibility, and imposing cost barriers to Albertans. I ask all members to read this article.

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-North West.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yeah. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I have requisite copies of a letter sent by the Alberta Medical Association to the education minister calling for smaller class sizes and to have more attention for students with special needs and to invest in Alberta's education system properly.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Beddington.

**Ms Chapman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of a letter from a teacher talking about her very heavy workload. That teacher has been sent back into her classroom with no additional support today.

**The Speaker:** St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies of a blog post called Crip View. It's written by Dr. Heidi Janz, and it's entitled From Where I Sit: ADAP – A Deadly, Ableist Plan for Disabled Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have copies of a letter from a school administrator and teacher describing the work conditions and heavy workloads in their schools.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Calgary-Elbow.

**Member Kayande:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I present the requisite copies of a letter from a middle school principal who's been in education for 35 years describing seeing the rise of violence and aggression in schools and pleading with the government for funding to address these issues.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other tablings? I see none.

Okay. That takes us to points of order. We've got, I think, three points of order today. The first point of order was called at 1:44 p.m. The hon. Government House Leader.

#### **Point of Order Parliamentary Language**

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on point of order 23(h), (i), and (j). At the time noted, during a member's statement the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar said, with my unofficial records: "instead of tackling soaring food prices, they're . . . busy punching down on teachers and the severely disabled." Not only is this a horrific visual depiction, but it's also language that we have many times in this Chamber deemed to be inappropriate and unparliamentary, whether it's talking about a specific member or talking about the government caucus as a whole. I think this language is a point of order, but I'd certainly leave it in your hands.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll start just by referencing Speaker Kowalski's comments on December 1 regarding points of order during members' statements and members being allowed to have the widest swath possible but that members also have responsibility during that time to use language that is in order. Secondly, I do acknowledge, with the Government House Leader, that punching down is something that has come up for discussion in this Chamber in the past, specifically on November 6, November 27, and on November 5. At no time in those three instances was the terminology of "punching down," specifically using the idiom and talking about the government as a collective, ruled out of order.

In the case of November 5 the Speaker issued comments and said, "if members are implying that other members are punching individuals," then that would of course be a challenge. On November 6 as part of the ruling – apologies, Mr. Speaker. It's been a long week. I appreciate it. On November 6 it was not ruled out of order. On November 27 the deputy chair made comments that are helpful to the argument that I am making now.

I believe that in this occasion, what I heard is that the member was speaking about the government as opposed to individual members and used the words "punching down." The Speaker in [previous rulings] essentially encouraged and implored upon people to be careful in how they use that terminology. The terminology can be interpreted to be . . . violent.

It is an idiom that can talk about attacking or criticizing, used in a member's statement here and, I genuinely believe, reflecting how Albertans are feeling at this very moment. It has not been ruled a point of order in the past. I do not believe it is a point of order today.

I look forward to your ruling.

**The Speaker:** Well, thank you. While we don't want to hurt anybody's feelings, Albertans' feelings aren't really what we rule on here in points of order, as important as Albertans' feelings are. I agree with you on some of what Speaker Cooper said on November 27. I would say that it wasn't perfectly helpful to your argument because Speaker Cooper, in fact, discouraged the use of the term "punching down." He strongly discouraged it even when referring to government as opposed to an individual.

I would recommend that you counsel your members, Opposition House Leader and Government House Leader, for that matter, against using this term. I'm not going to call it a point of order today, but it's one of those things that if you folks in the House insist upon going back there, it will probably end up as a point of order. Today it isn't. We'll consider the matter dealt with and concluded and with great hopes that we will learn from this little talk.

2:50

The next point of order was at 2:06 p.m. Oh, the other thing that I'll say briefly while I'm finishing up is that while we discourage points of order during Members' Statements, we also encourage the members' statements to not be disrespectful. That'll be a reminder for the statement today that precipitated a call of a point of order.

The Deputy Government House Leader.

#### **Point of Order Insulting Language**

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order, particularly 23(j), use of abusive or insulting language. At this point in time the Minister of Justice had just finished a question, and the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud from a sedentary position across the aisle said, as best as I have it: "You're a lawyer. You should know better. Shame on you." Or words to that effect.

Now, "shame on you" is a normal parliamentary expression that can be used. However, as your predecessor Speaker Cooper has noted many times, just because something is or is not a point of order on a certain day does not mean it will or won't be, or vice versa, in the future. Context is appropriate and important here. To borrow from the Opposition House Leader's language, this was not referred to as government, as a collective; this was levied particularly at the Minister of Justice.

This particular Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has not a single time but many times – the last time we rose in this House on a point of order, that member was also attacking the Minister of Justice based on his physical appearance and today is attacking that member based on his chosen vocation. Personalized attacks, trying to impute false motives, or language of a nature likely to cause disorder in the House is unparliamentary. In this particular case the government does feel strongly that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has fallen into a habit of continuing to make personal attacks not even against government as a whole, not against random government members but particularly the Minister of Justice. For an orderly House we ask the member opposite to apologize and withdraw those statements.

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Deputy Government House Leader is choosing to break our standing orders by insulting the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud and accusing her of attacking another member, something that he ought not do.

As the minister has just argued and as he has admitted, "shame on you" language has absolutely been used within this House. In fact, that deputy House leader on May 13, 2025, gave an excellent

argument about why language like "shame" would not be a point of order.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I need to give you some context. The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud did use the word "shame," to begin, and then the Minister of Justice told her to calm down. He started yelling at her across the line: calm down, calm down. Now, you may be aware that telling a woman to calm down is dismissive, invalidating, condescending, and likely to escalate and create disorder. So while the government would like to portray that there may be one bad actor, we know that this is not the case, that we are all responsible for the decorum, and that the situation was escalated by the Minister of Justice telling a strong woman, who has excellent facts backing up her opinions, that she needed to calm down while she was engaging in what I would say is typical behaviour in our parliament when there is something that is so heated.

Given that "shame on you" language was not ruled a point of order on May 13 when the Deputy Government House Leader was defending his own member who had just done that and given the fact that the Minister of Justice contributed to escalating this by telling our member to calm down, I suggest to you that this is not a point of order. I think that all members should reflect on how they are behaving in this House. I look forward to your ruling.

**The Speaker:** Well, the thing I agree with most is the last sentence, that all members of this House should reflect on how we address one another. I couldn't agree any more with the last sentence you used, Opposition House Leader.

I don't know whether I'm unhappy or grateful that I didn't hear directly any of these things going back and forth. But it does indicate a bad habit that we should all reflect upon and avoid using personal comments against one another. I will say, as the Deputy Government House Leader said, that context is important. I think the phrase "shame on you" or "shame," as the Deputy Government House Leader said, is a pretty common parliamentary thing to do. Probably it's largely acceptable because it's better than a lot of other things that people could choose to say, right? [interjections] And you're all laughing. Okay. I think that's an indication you recognize that.

Listen, this is not a point of order, but it is indicative of bad habits creeping in here, particularly when people make personal comments at one another. Now, as members it's our House, and how business is conducted here is up to us. If you want to reach for the bottom, by golly, I'm sure we'll all get there. On the other hand, this might be a good opportunity for us to think about recalibrating and not reaching for the bottom. To be clear, there are lots of ways that you can make even a negative point without being unparliamentary and without personal insults. Let's try that. Even better: let's just not insult one another. This is a House of debate. I think we can have the debate without getting extra personal.

In this particular case it's not a point of order, but as has been raised here a couple of times, context matters. Let's not wait till we cross the line, where we have to add another word that we can't say, particularly one that's – I think we all just agreed by giggling that it's better than some of the other words that people could choose to use in here. So let's remember: context also is important. We'll consider that matter dealt with.

At 2:15 there was a point of order called by the hon. Opposition House Leader.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, as I begin, I need to call another point of order at 2:56.

**The Speaker:** A point of order during points of order, to be clear?

**Ms Gray:** A point of order while you were speaking, yes.

**The Speaker:** Okay. Well, let's deal with 2:15 first.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My point of order was around the minister of housing. Apologies; again, I'm tired.

**Mr. Williams:** Assisted Living and Social Services.

**Ms Gray:** Assisted Living and Social Services. Thank you very much, colleagues.

In response to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood – in our first point of order today at 1:44 the Government House Leader talked about the horrific visual language around “punching down.” I rose on this point of order because the language used was “bombing our cities,” and in this case it was “bomb[ing] our cities with rent control.” Given your earlier ruling, Mr. Speaker, and given the parallels here I think I will withdraw. I appreciate your time.

**The Speaker:** Okay. Well, thank you. I guess because I can editorially: the phrase “bombing our cities” probably isn't the best phrase that we could possibly use here. I'll leave it at that today because there's no point of order. Thank you.

Now, I'm just going to consult with the table staff. Are points of order even allowed during points of order discussion? Okay. Opposition House Leader, according to our standing orders there's no allowance for making points of order during the discussion of points of order.

Is there some very, very brief comment that you would like to make?

**Ms Gray:** A very brief comment only to say that while you were ruling on the back and forth between the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud and the Justice minister, the Justice minister then chose to wink at my member, also another condescending action. If that had been us, the government would never let it go. This back and forth needs to stop. It is not an us thing. That is why I rose on a point of order, because it's been completely unhelpful for decorum in this place.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Ms Fir:** Liar. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** What was that? I didn't hear it.

**Mr. Schow:** You're going to have to apologize for that one.

**Ms Fir:** I'll withdraw and apologize.

**The Speaker:** I don't know what it was, but it was withdrawn, which is probably an indication it wasn't good.

Folks, listen, this is actually your House. I just administer the rules that you have approved for this House. Within that, you can, again – here's what I think. If you reach for a higher level of debate, you'll succeed, and if you reach for a lower level of debate, you'll also succeed. I think we need to do the former and reach for a bit of a higher level of debate, because it's easy to get to the bottom.

3:00

It takes a lot more thought and skill to actually debate aggressively without personal insults and all of that. Let's reach for a higher level of debate because this wasn't a really great example today of that. We're all adults. Let's be adults.

**Mr. Schow:** Am I able to respond to that point of order?

**The Speaker:** Pardon me? Sorry?

**Mr. Schow:** The Opposition House Leader, though it was not an official point of order, had an opportunity to bring to the attention of the legislative floor a concern that she had with regard to conduct of members on this side.

**The Speaker:** I will give you the same courtesy that I gave the other House leader. Make it brief and say it.

**Mr. Schow:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to make it brief. What I would say is, like you said, if we're going to start reaching for the bottom we're going to go there, but if we're going to take the slightest action as a personal attack or a personal threat, unless there is an egregious action I am very concerned that we're going to go tit for tat on this. It wasn't that long ago that a member from the opposition benches blew a kiss at me.

**The Speaker:** That's brief enough.

**Mr. Schow:** I'm not saying who. I'm just saying it's happened.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Government House Leader, that was brief. That was enough, and it was brief enough, and it's just indicative of what we're talking about here. Isn't it a shame we spent 20 minutes talking about not behaving like the adults that we all said we would behave like when we all got elected? Let's just reflect on that, please.

## Orders of the Day

### Government Motions

3. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly resolve into Committee of Supply, when called, to consider supply to be granted to His Majesty.

[Government Motion 3 carried]

### Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mrs. Sawyer moved, seconded by Mr. Dyck, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To Her Honour the Honourable Salma Lakhani, AOE, BSc, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, His Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

Mr. Nenshi moved that the motion be amended by adding the following after “at the opening of the present session”:

, and to inform Your Honour that the Legislative Assembly affirms that Alberta and the rest of Canada are stronger together, and denounces provincial separatism as extreme, divisive, and economically destructive.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment October 28: Mr. Williams]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to the throne speech.

Actually, before I talk about the amendment, which is where we left off, I just wanted to rewind a little bit. On throne speech day I and my colleagues were so excited to be back, obviously thrilled to welcome some new members to the Chamber, one from the UCP

benches and of course two from the New Democratic benches, particularly excited to finally, finally have an opportunity to welcome our new leader to the Chamber. That was very exciting.

Now, I was very happy to hear about the amendment that our leader, the leader of the New Democrats or the Official Opposition made, and that read that the member moved that the motion be amended by adding the following after “at the opening of the present Session”:

“, and to inform Your Honour that the Legislative Assembly affirms that Alberta and the rest of Canada are stronger together, and denounces this provincial separation as extreme, divisive, and economically destructive.”

Excuse me. I'm having a few troubles actually reading this.

Anyway, excited that we're talking about this with an amendment as the vehicle because that was actually one of the things that was incredibly disappointing in this throne speech. I'll get to that as I make my way through this throne speech. Obviously, it was wonderful to see all of my colleagues, wonderful to see the Lieutenant Governor, and to see all of the guests here in the Assembly, but it was disappointing to hear this throne speech.

Now, one of the first things that was covered in the throne speech was federal and U.S. relations. I'm sure colleagues will agree that it's been stressful, actually, watching our neighbours to the south and watching what is going on with, really, an authoritarian government really intent on squashing democracy in that country. We sort of see it all the time on the news. We see what's happening in their country, whether it's the gerrymandering that's going on or refusing to swear in new members of Congress that have been elected. I think there's one that's been left out for a month.

So we're seeing all of these attacks on democracy, and it causes me, as I watch our neighbours to the south, to look here in Alberta and to see that some of the things that are happening here in Alberta are also very alarming. I see a lot of authoritarian tendencies from this government. A lot of them, you know, some of them are coded in this speech, but they are here and they are easy to recognize. Without a doubt, this government is eroding democracy. They're eroding it by just the lack of transparency overall that we've seen over the last over six years now. We just continue to get less and less information, more and more spin, and less factual information. Even talking from a very sort of granular level, even at a committee like, say, Public Accounts, you know, we're just not getting the information that we used to. We're not getting the answers that we deserve actually, that is our right to get. That's what we're sent here to do, to hold the government to account using these vehicles, and that's not really working.

In the throne speech that was amended by our leader, I see, you know, a desire from this government to be a strong Alberta in a strong Canada, and I'm 100 per cent behind that, Mr. Speaker. I am 100 per cent on Team Alberta, but I'm also 100 per cent on Team Canada. You can't really have one without the other because we are together. Our strength as a nation is together. So it is incredibly disturbing. It has been incredibly disturbing to watch that also be eroded by the passage of legislation to make it easier to do the things that we've been worried about, to do the things that we saw Quebec do decades ago, and we continue to see that economic harm today.

Although, again, I was a kid when we left Quebec – I was a teenager – I do recall listening to lots of conversations around different tables of, you know, people that were older than me and talking politics. No, not all of it made a lot of sense sometimes, but I do recall hearing them talk about the dangers of what was happening, and this went on over a long period of time, them talking about the business that was being driven out. Although my parents say that's, you know, one of the reasons we left. We'll take them at

their word. How about that? But, you know, a lot of people did leave because of the language barriers that were put up as a result of changes in legislation at that time and the real push to be independent when I think – well we know – that the majority of Quebecers at the time wanted to remain in Canada.

Anyway, it is very disturbing to also then hear this government – well, actually the Premier, Mr. Speaker, has said, you know, that this was harmless legislation that was brought in; it was really just to give people a vehicle to do things that were important, and then blaming Lukaszuk and that forever Canadian petition that is going on. To blame him for the risk, the economic risk that we're all feeling or that we will continue to feel because of the threat of separation: that's a bit rich. Now, I have seen some pretty wild spin in this place. I have heard some pretty wild spin from this government. That's probably in the top five.

Going on through the throne speech that was amended by our leader, you know, I see that they're talking in this section about how this government has driven back the antienergy movement. This always sort of makes me chuckle a little bit when the members opposite like to point to the horrible New Democratic government that ruined the energy sector in Alberta for the four years out of the last 50-some that the New Democratic government was in power. That's sort of silly when you think about it. That was the government that got it done. We have Trans Mountain today because of the work of that Notley government. That was four years over 50.

Now, the other thing that is kind of funny is, you know, that that New Democratic government and those NDP over there on that side, they're just antienergy and antipipeline, and there couldn't be anything further from the truth. We understand. We understand the history of this province. We understand that that sector is the foundation that we built a lot of what we're so proud of on. We understand that. We all understand that.

I can remember when Rachel Notley was Premier. The government took really aggressive actions and spent quite a bit of money doing advertising. I believe it was outside of the Ottawa airport at the time when they were trying to get that pipeline done, that deal done with the federal government at the time. That was insightful because they understood the need to get the product to market, more capacity to get product to market. We were proud of it.

It's kind of silly that year after year it's just kind of old spin and rhetoric now, but they continue to bring these old beliefs, or I don't even know what they are. It's not misinformation because that would be unparliamentary, but not necessarily factual information. I would suggest that the Notley government and all of us on this side understand that the sector is vitally important to this province, and we'll do whatever we can to support it. That's the way we've always been.

3:10

Going on, moving on, I see that the throne speech that was amended by our leader continues to talk about the importance of good relationships between our country and our neighbours to the south. Absolutely. You know, I'm happy to see that this government has maybe reduced or quieted down the rhetoric and the attacks on the federal government and gave them some space to actually do some of the negotiating and some of the work that they need to do. I think all of us in this Chamber, regardless of where our political ideology lies, can realize and understand that the administration to the south of us isn't exactly – I don't know – predictable or making much sense most days. So I think it's really important that we as a country together address and face this threat. Like, I think, you know, going down to Mar-a-Lago, getting selfies

with the orange guy: was that worth it? Did it help us? I'm going to go with no.

Anyway, moving on in the throne speech, the next section goes into, in detail, the economy and the budget. Naturally, that is one of the most – well, that is the most important thing that we always hear about when we're door-knocking, when we're planning. You know, what is important going forward is obviously the economy.

Then I would say, like, I'm assuming that the people opposite, just like the people on this side, that we're all smart people. We understand somewhat the way the world works. How on earth could the members opposite possibly think that talks of separation would be in any way positive, in any way helpful to strengthen the Alberta economy? It does not.

Now, if you look at the throne speech a little of the way down when they're talking about the economy and the budget, they're saying, "The vast majority of Albertans do not want deep and disruptive cuts," because naturally that's where this government goes to when they talk about the economy and the budget: cuts. So they don't want disruptive cuts. "Nor do they want declarations of economic emergency used as a pretext for a proliferation of government programs and spending." That's a mouthful, but, you know, I actually agree with these statements. I appreciate the sentiment, but that is not what is happening right now.

Let me give you an example, Mr. Speaker. I agree that the vast majority of Albertans do not want deep cuts. They do not want destabilization. They do not want uncertainty and panic, and that's what they're getting, specifically in one area. Now, as I'm sure you know, it's unfortunate that we didn't use the word in this entire throne speech. I don't know that I saw the word "woman" or the word "disabled" in the entire throne speech, but we've kind of gotten used to that by now. But what is happening is the sector that supports people with disabilities is doing the opposite of what we see in this throne speech.

There are over a million people, Mr. Speaker, with disabilities that live in Alberta. There are only 77,000 going on 80,000 people that are forced to rely on AISH. As you know, it's not easy to get AISH. You qualify for AISH when you meet a high standard of: what is your disability? Is it permanent? Is it severe, profound, and does it permanently impact your ability to financially support yourself for the rest of your life? These are not easy bars to meet. It is a very difficult process. It is very long. It's actually quite expensive, and what this government is doing is destabilizing a massive sector of our population. Now, 77,000 people on AISH: a lot of them have children. Certainly a lot of them have families and friends, and what this government has introduced is uncertainty.

In February we saw the minister stand up and say that we are changing AISH. Now, the reasons given were false, demonstrably false. If you look in the government's own annual report you'll see that. The talking about: there's massive fraud in this program. That's incorrect. That's a commonly used – I don't know – like, dog whistle, I guess, when talking about programs like this, that there's massive fraud in this program.

Now, I'm not saying that there aren't any criminals that defraud the government and take money they're not entitled to. There certainly are, and that's why this government and all other governments in this particular ministry have a fraud investigation unit. So if you suspect fraud in this program, I encourage anybody at home and in this Chamber to report it so that it can be investigated and arrive at a decision. But of the cases or the allegations or instances that are reported, I think the ones that are found to be fraudulent are like .001 per cent or something like that, so the reasoning given by the minister is incorrect.

Now, what they're doing is – well, they're already doing the work behind closed doors, but they really won't admit that, certainly not

in the throne speech that was amended by our leader. What they are doing behind closed doors is changing the eligibility of AISH. By July all 77,000 people are going to get moved to a new program they call ADAP. Well, people in the disability community are calling it a deadly, ableist plan. The government is choosing to call it Alberta disability assistance program, ADAP. They'll move everybody there, but then they're going to decide who gets to move back to a new AISH program. We don't really know how they're going to sort them. You know, I was suggesting maybe the Harry Potter sorting hat. We don't know. The words that we've heard this government throw out are "profound" or "palliative." That tells me, Mr. Speaker, that they're changing eligibility behind closed doors without any consultation out in public and with Albertans.

What that has done is destabilize a group of people that already lost access to a new federal benefit for \$200. They're going to be moved to a new program called ADAP that will be \$200 lower than AISH. When government says, "Trust us. We're doing this so people can work. It's going to be great. It's going to be fabulous. They're all going to move to this program. We'll move some back; the rest will stay. We'll change appeals. We'll do this; we'll do that. It'll be great. They'll work. It will be awesome," well, the reality is that AISH already had the ability to do the things that the government is suggesting that they'll do in a new program. So that's incorrect as well.

The other thing that it's doing, Mr. Speaker, is that it will immediately shine a light – and mark my words. I will go back and clip them. Mark my words. Once you switch all of these people, thousands and thousands of people that will now be looking for jobs that are not there, you are going to increase the problems we have with public safety, going to increase the instances of people showing up in the emergency department. The number of people without homes that are living rough or on the street or are couch surfing will increase dramatically. You'll have additional instances of domestic violence. You'll have all kinds of instability. That is what's going to happen. Mark my words. It's already happening because of the anxiety in this community.

Now, if I look at the economy and budget section of the throne speech, it talks about the need to go gently and wisely and thoughtfully as we address the economy. If you believe that making these massive changes to this segment of our population will not destabilize us in many ways, then you're sadly mistaken and don't understand the Alberta economy. It's not just the wealthy or the middle class; it's also people that are low income or in deep poverty that play a role in this economy. Failure to address the risks of doing what this government is suggesting is negligent.

Going on to the economy and budget section. I was really looking for anything, Mr. Speaker, about education. I think we can all agree, whether, you know, your ideology is – whatever side it's on in this House, I think we can all agree that one of the most important foundational building blocks in this province is public education. We heard eloquently from our leader yesterday the impact of public education on his life. I think probably all of us have similar stories, that we're only here because of public education. I myself am only here because of public education. I was expecting to see something, anything, when the very day that this speech was delivered, we had tens of thousands of people – teachers, their allies, families, students – outside protesting and sending a message loud and clear to this government: we are in crisis; we need to change things immediately. These teachers didn't want to be on strike. They didn't want to lose a month's worth of pay. They didn't want to be away from their students and lose all the gains that they'd already made in a short time.

You know, Mr. Speaker, my daughter is a pretty new teacher. [interjection] Yeah, she's not happy about it and was pretty vocal

about it. It was really letting me know how harmful this was not just for herself – like, obviously, it's hard on your budget personally if you're missing a month's worth of wages – but how hard it was going to be on her students. She knew that when she got forced back to school, like this government has done, she would still be facing the extraordinary classroom situation that really got her to vote to strike. She rejected the deal that was offered. Well, the same deal, really. They didn't actually make any positive changes. She, like many of her colleagues, like most of her colleagues, rejected that, not just once but twice.

3:20

What she said was, "I'm returning to a classroom of" – now, I might get the number a little bit wrong, but I think she said 37 students. She teaches junior high, so you can imagine, you know, hormone levels at that age. She teaches junior high math and science. A number of her students were students with disabilities that had individual plans that needed to be attended to. There's a different way to teach when you have a plan like that. There are a number of students that were struggling with English. There were a number of students that were gifted, and those are also very challenging students to teach. And she was by herself. She had not one hour of an educational assistant, yet this government continues to stand up and say, "No, it's good. We're all good. We're finally going back," but we're going back to the same disaster that we left. It's not any better.

I'm sorry, but Mr. Speaker, I've seen a lot of task forces in my days, and I don't recall any task force, especially not any task force in the last six years, making a positive difference for the people of Alberta, a measurable and observable and repeatable positive difference. That's just not been the case.

Sadly, I think that the government would have been better served, in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, to include something about education in the throne speech because maybe we would not have continued to point out the complete lack of awareness or willingness to address the reality of the situation here in Alberta, a reality that is very clear to all Albertans. All of us are very clear.

You know, it took me a while to sort of process what the leader said yesterday – was it the amendment to the throne speech? I don't recall – talking about the point that this is the time. When we look back, this will be the point that things changed because this is the point that things changed. I thought it was a few other times, but it turns out, it wasn't. This is the point that things are changing, and we are feeling it in many, many ways, whether it's money that is rolling in because people are sending us donations, because they are motivated now more than ever to fire this government. We are getting just completely overwhelmed with e-mails and messages. I'm quite sure that the members opposite are as well because we get copied on them. People are not buying the stuff that they're selling, Mr. Speaker. Their omission of any kind of reference to education and why it's important was pretty sad.

Now, if you go a little further in the throne speech, we next get to health care. Of course, another very, very important issue.

Can I get a time check, Mr. Speaker?

**The Speaker:** Two seconds.

**Ms Renaud:** Okay. Thanks. Bye.

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

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak to the Speech from the Throne, specifically the amendment that was put forward by the our leader, the Leader of the Official Opposition.

I don't know how to talk about this speech without talking about what was happening right here in this Legislature the day of the speech. On October 23, while the speech was being delivered, we saw thousands of Albertans gather at these very steps to express concern to this government about what was happening with classrooms and teachers and students in our province. We spoke to so many that showed up to say: we do not support the government's stance on education. I know myself and my colleagues went out and spoke to so many that were feeling desperate to be heard by government, to feel that this was an opportunity that they could impact change. It was a day in this Legislature with tradition, where we heard from the Lieutenant Governor talking about what this government wanted to bring forward for this province.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, there is nothing in this speech that addresses the concern that tens of thousands of Albertans have reached out to express concern about. That is very, very concerning to me. We know that this government has ignored teachers, parents, students and that all over the province Albertans are crying out that Alberta's classrooms are in crisis, and that's because of this government. Instead of identifying what was happening in Alberta regarding the biggest strike in Alberta's history, they chose to write a speech. It didn't address it. Then they went further and introduced a piece of legislation that forced teachers back to work.

Now, we knew that was on the table because everyone had heard rumblings. So when the teachers have been pleading to talk to government, to feel heard, to feel understood, we had a speech that didn't address anything about what was actually happening with our classrooms. Not only did they force teachers back to work, but they used the notwithstanding clause. This is one of the biggest abuses of democratic rights in Alberta. Period. We absolutely within the Alberta New Democrats, and the majority of Albertans I would say, oppose using these types of unconstitutional methods to force teachers and students back to underfunded schools and unsafe classroom conditions. To be clear, Mr. Speaker, there is nothing in that bill that actually addresses the problem.

There is some significant concern when the minister of education stands up in this House and indicates that he's waiting for a task force to inform him and the government about what classroom conditions are. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that if he was listening to Albertans, he would know. We are hearing on this side of the House – and we know that the members opposite are also hearing it because they CC us in their e-mails – that teachers and students and parents have been very clear about the concerns that are in the classroom. It is, unfortunately, not shocking that they're saying – wait for it – we're going to do a task force, and we may or may not release those conditions.

It's concerning that the very first opportunity that this government had to signal to Alberta that it was actually listening to Albertans in the Speech from the Throne did not indicate anything that supported positive, healthy, strong, safe classrooms. That is a complete and utter failure to students, parents, teachers by refusing to meet the needs of educators. When we aren't meeting the needs of educators, we are letting our future down. Our children in this province deserve better than what the UCP has given them.

When I go through the speech, Mr. Speaker, there are some highlights. There are things that they talk about: economy and budget, immigration and infrastructure, investment in infrastructure, health care, justice and public safety. Nothing about teachers. Nothing about affordability. Nothing about what Albertans are actually talking about.

I think that when we have this government talking about things as significant as separating, that should have been clearly outlined in this Speech from the Throne. Unfortunately, it is not clear that this government is opposed to separating and that they want to

remain in Canada. So the Leader of his Majesty's Official Opposition put forward an amendment that would make it very clear that that is something that we want. The amendment says: the Leader of the Official Opposition to move that the motion be amended by adding the following after at "the opening of the present session":

, and to inform Your Honour that the Legislative Assembly affirms that Alberta and the rest of Canada are stronger together, and denounces provincial separatism as extreme, divisive, and economically destructive.

3:30

Now, my role since 2015 in this Legislature has been an incredible privilege: to work with military in the province, serving members, retired members, and their families. If Alberta were to separate, I don't know that they've considered that impact on the Canadian Armed Forces. When I look at Stats Canada, it talks about Alberta being one of the most concentrated provinces with members of the CAF. According to stats in April of 2025, 11,825 CAF personnel lived in the province. Now, Mr. Speaker, there are major bases in Alberta. We have them in Edmonton, Cold Lake, Suffield, Wainwright, and then we have reserve and cadet units all throughout the province. Not only do we have members of the CAF but civilians that work on these bases and support these facilities that the members of the CAF use.

Right now, if you're following along with what's happening with the federal government, CFB Edmonton has been identified as being the base that is going to have training for future CAF members. They're anticipating 1,000 new members at CFB Edmonton. With those 1,000 members come families, a spouse, come all of the things that contribute significantly to our economy. Now, if we were to separate, all of that is gone, Mr. Speaker. The military that proudly served Canada would no longer be in Alberta.

Alberta has the biggest and busiest fighter wing in Cold Lake. That's where our air force defends Canada. If we were to separate, that would be gone. I hear members saying: oh, no; we'd keep it. It doesn't work like that. If you separate and are no longer part of Canada, you lose the Canadian Armed Forces. I just don't understand how this conversation is lost on them, Mr. Speaker.

This is a significant threat to Canada, to our economy, to Alberta. When people are considering investing in the province of Alberta right now, what is giving them confidence of what country we're going to be? There is nothing that this government has brought forward that is appealing to people to want to invest in Alberta when they're talking about separating. There are some significant concerns if the members across the aisle don't even understand that the Canadian Armed Forces would pull out of our province immediately if we left Canada. That's thousands and thousands of people that work here, live here, play here, and are proud to call themselves Canadian and are proud to be Albertan.

The other significant thing, Mr. Speaker, is that many, many of our Canadian Armed Forces veterans retire in the province of Alberta. At some point in their career they were posted and served and fell in love with our province. What happens to those individuals when their access to their peers and their comforts, the way of life of the military community – I'm very, very concerned that this separatism talk that is highlighted throughout the Speech from the Throne is not being taken seriously by all members of this Chamber. It's certainly being taken seriously by the members of the Official Opposition, but I don't know that they are understanding the true impact of what it means to flirt with separation.

Now, I would encourage all members in this Chamber to accept the amendment that we put forward because it will be a very clear signal to Albertans, to Canadians, to international investors that

there is not a threat to leaving Canada. We hear the language that they use that kind of pretends that they're not talking about it, but we know. It was delivered in the speech, and I would encourage all members to think about what that impact is when we don't clearly denounce the threat of separatism. It has significant negative impact on our economy, on travel, on trade, on health care, and not accepting this amendment and voting against it will continue that narrative and just prove that this government's intent is to flirt with separatism. That is damaging, Mr. Speaker, incredibly damaging to Alberta, to our reputation, and to being Canadian.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat, but I really encourage all members in this House to support the amendment that we've brought forward. Thank you.

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

**Member Eremenko:** Calgary-Currie. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my real honour to stand and speak to the amendment to the Speech from the Throne as submitted by the Leader of the Official Opposition. Lovely to have his attendance here on the floor with all of us.

The irony, Mr. Speaker, is deep on this today. Freedom is mentioned many, many times in the throne speech, but freedom doesn't equal the right to do whatever you want. I think, given the last five years, that's become abundantly clear and has become, I think, a very important topic of conversation. Where exactly does one's freedom stop and another's begin? We live in a society, and we live in a community, and we go to work, and, well, today we go to school, so these are really critical conversations to have. I know that on this side of the aisle we believe so fundamentally in the respect of those freedoms and those rights but that alongside them comes great responsibility.

It reminds me, Mr. Speaker, of the occasional e-mail I get in my office that takes a real page from an American kind of alt-right playbook, where in correspondence to me they write that they are in support of separatism, and will I join them in that fight because it's a way to push back against federal overreach? Well, those institutions and that oversight and those rules: they don't go away simply because we're no longer part of the Canadian federation. The Alberta government has to provide those, too. If you simply just want a system of anarchy, well, I don't think that's exactly what's on the table. These are rules that ultimately guide the way that we move through the world and that we respect one another. I know that on this side of the aisle, despite a great deal of changes to the kind of global order and to the rule of law, we believe that we owe each other the respect of honouring freedom for all.

It is everywhere in the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker. It's deeply ironic that while the most freedom-laden throne speech was delivered in these Chambers, teachers were anxiously awaiting a decision on their future. They were embodying their fundamental freedoms on the picket line and in the 30,000 people that showed up in a rally outside at the same time. They were exercising their constitutionally protected right to collective bargaining and to job action. They were demanding that government uphold its responsibility to provide safe working conditions. They were fighting for the universal right that I know everybody in this room believes in, and that is the right to equal opportunity through our public education system, to which every single child should be entitled. Despite being self-appointed as the freest jurisdiction ever, what 51,000 teachers now know in their bones is: strong and free but not for thee.

3:40

I wanted kids back in class, Mr. Speaker. I saw my own daughter struggle immensely these last few weeks, as I know so many in this

room did. We all wanted them back, but not like this. Not like this. While the school sat empty – the teachers have come back today – there are no more desks that magically appeared. No more school spaces, no more supports were found, no miracle solution to resolve the rampant flight from the teaching profession. If anything, they've done damage to this profession that only a change in government will solve.

Today I speak to the amendment in regard to taking a strong stand, the strongest stand we can possibly make, which is that under the Canadian flag we are stronger together. Whatever the problem might be out there, whether it's education, whether it's in our health care systems, whether it's meaningful action to advance truth and reconciliation, we do it, Mr. Speaker, together.

If this government was truly committed to education, if they truly planned to activate their promises, we would see it in this Speech from the Throne, but education was mentioned once.

At a time of the greatest labour unrest in recent memory one would think that if the Premier actually respects public servants and workers, unionized or otherwise, it would be evidenced in this throne speech, but it's not. Well, maybe it does speak to workers, Mr. Speaker, because the Speech from the Throne does not offer a lot of hope for working people. For example, under the economy and budget section we hear: don't worry, don't worry. Oil prices can be low; they can be high. They'll be low and they'll be high once more, but there's no need to panic. "This isn't Alberta's first oil price rollercoaster, after all." Well, apparently the Premier is more than happy to make sure it won't be our last.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

Further down in that same section the Premier claims to understand what Albertans want. We "want calm, steady and smart fiscal leadership" and a government who holds spending increases to below inflation and population growth. It cannot be more obvious that this approach will only set us farther behind. We have just stood in these Chambers for days talking about how far behind our system in education is. The minister has referenced the 90,000 children that have come into the education system, the hundreds of thousands of families that have moved to Alberta for opportunity and for prosperity.

I mean, this is a pillar in the economic plan laid out in this Speech from the Throne. A pillar of the plan is to keep spending below inflation and population growth. The promises from this government, particularly from the minister of education, ring terribly hollow because what I hear is that one of the pillars in the three-pillar economic plan is cuts. If we can't keep up with inflation, absolutely crushing inflation that we all feel whenever we have to go to the grocery store – if we don't keep up with inflation and if we don't keep up with population growth, those ostensibly are cuts, Mr. Speaker.

The two other pillars, I think it's worth noting – really, I thought this government could be a bit more ambitious or a bit more creative on the two other pillars in the economic plan, investing in the heritage trust fund and data centres. That's the best we could do.

I'd like to spend the rest of my time to talk about the last section on sovereignty and independence, specifically the role of facilitator played by this government to stoke separatist sentiment. I'll revisit the amendment one more time: "to inform Your Honour that the Legislative Assembly affirms that Alberta and the rest of Canada are stronger together, and denounces provincial separatism as extreme, divisive and economically destructive."

The Speech from the Throne claims the Alberta Next town halls have offered plenty of opportunity for Albertans to share their feedback on the place of Alberta in the federation. It says that the panel is now deliberating on what was heard. I certainly hope they're deliberating on whether or not they perhaps need a new chairperson in their Alberta Next panels because I was embarrassed

for my province, Mr. Speaker, when I saw how the Alberta Next town halls treated those with dissenting opinions, especially a kid, a student, who took the time to show up and ask critical questions about his future in this province. He was treated with utter disdain. "But who will think of the children?" the minister says. "They have to get back into class." That's how they're treating kids through the Alberta Next Panel. That's for all eyes to see. So again it rings hollow. It rings terribly, terribly hollow.

Parents know that their children deserve better than what was on display at that Alberta Next town hall. They know that they deserve better than what they're getting in the classrooms. They want to see a future for their children as adults when they have families of their own in this province right here, but we're making the case pretty tough – pretty tough – right now.

Over 10 per cent of Albertans have signed a petition to denounce separatism, Mr. Speaker, just like this amendment does. The Speech from the Throne says that this government does not fear the will or judgment of Albertans. Well, 456,000 signatures say: "Cut it out. Enough with the separatist talk. We are proud Canadians, and we want to stay in Canada." Will this government follow their will? It's a critical question. Will every single one of these members opposite vote in favour of the will of Albertans who have clearly and resoundingly spoken that separatism cannot be on the table? It doesn't serve. It doesn't serve.

Here we have an opportunity, an opportunity for everybody in these Chambers to vote on the amendment to the Speech from the Throne, to vote in favour of this amendment from the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona to denounce provincial separatism as extreme, divisive, and economically destructive.

The receipts are all there. We've seen it in other places. We've seen across in the U.K. when the vote for Brexit took place – you know what the biggest Google search item was the day after the vote in the U.K.? "What is Brexit?" These are things that we cannot put back once the ball is in motion. So here is an opportunity to show real leadership to the people of Alberta that we believe not in the kind of word salad that is a sovereign Alberta within a united Canada. No, no. We believe in Canada. We believe in our place in the federation, and we believe in the opportunity that that presents economically, socially, culturally. There is an awful lot to celebrate, and I'm very proud to be a part of that community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford on the amendment.

**Member Calahoo Stonehouse:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. [Remarks in Cree] I'm a Cree Mohawk woman standing here in Treaty 6, and I honour the ancestors whose footsteps we walk in. I honour those children who are yet to come, for they are always watching how we carry ourselves in this place.

3:50

As I respond to the Speech from the Throne, I think about the delivery of what I heard, and I thought about the families of Maskwacis, Saddle Lake, the elders in Louis Bull, Ermineskin, Samson, and Montana. I thought of the workers in Rocky Mountain House, the ranchers in Sundre, the parents in Rimbey, and every single Albertan who's doing their very best to get through each day while this government tells them everything is fine.

The Speech from the Throne outlines a vision for our province. It was one that was bold in rhetoric but deeply misaligned with the lives and the realities of Albertans. While this government speaks of prosperity and strength, the speech completely failed to address the urgent and growing concerns of Albertans.

As I have travelled and listened to many Albertans, I've heard from countless teachers, health care workers, parents, seniors, community leaders, Indigenous leaders, small towns, hamlets, and young people who are struggling under the weight of policies that prioritize ideology over people. The speech that the Lieutenant Governor delivered to this House simply does not reflect the compassion, the collaboration, and the community-driven leadership that Albertans deserve and need.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting that the Speech from the Throne made reference to treaty territory, but this government did not speak the truth about what is happening far too often in too many of our families on our own territories. Right now over 67 per cent of children in government care are First Nations and Métis children. That's more than there ever was at the height of the Indian residential schools. What this means is that more babies, more children, more teenagers, more young adults are not with their mom; they're not with their dad. They are not having breakfast with their family. They are not going to beds being tucked in by moms and dads. They are not going to funerals. They are not going to feasts. They are not visiting their mushums, their kokums, or the [Remarks in Cree]. They are in fact taken away from their lives, from their families. This is felt every single day in Maskwacis, Saddle Lake, Onion Lake, Driftpile, Sucker Creek, Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation, Enoch. Every single one of our communities feels this far more than you can imagine.

The pain of not having our children in our families is crippling. I have sat with mothers who bring out tiny pairs of shoes and baby blankets that are simply no longer needed and simply will not be wrapped around their babies. I have sat with mothers while workers sit outside of the room waiting for that baby to be delivered to take it to its new foster home that is not Indigenous and that is not their family. I have held fathers who wept, who told me they no longer believe this government even sees them as humans.

This Speech from the Throne claims economic reconciliation because First Nations can co-own a pipeline, but if children are still being taken, there is no reconciliation. If our families are still being broken, there is absolutely no prosperity. You cannot use our First Nations for photo ops and partnerships if the benefit of your agenda is still the disappearing of our children. This government claims to honour treaty. Then honour the treaty obligations to support families . . .

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** A point of order has been called.  
The Government House Leader.

### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Schow:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j), particularly language that will cause disruption. Unless I heard incorrectly, the member said: your agenda is still disappearing our children. That is insanely inflammatory, to suggest that our government's agenda is to disappear Indigenous children. I'm not sure if I misheard, and if I did, I will be the first to withdraw this point of order. But if I am correct, I would hope that that member would refrain from using such language because people do watch, they listen to what's being said in this Chamber, and then they disseminate the information amongst themselves. To suggest that our government is trying to disappear Indigenous children is absurd. I rise on that as a point of order and ask the member to be more mindful of the language that the member is using in this Chamber and the effects it will have.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to speak to the point of order.

**Member Calahoo Stonehouse:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize and withdraw, and I want to thank the member for raising the issue. I will be mindful of the words that I use.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Good. Thank you. You may continue.

### Debate Continued

**Member Calahoo Stonehouse:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If this government claims to honour treaty, then honour treaty obligations to support our families, support the kinship care, fund community-led child welfare, and address the root causes that lead to apprehension.

The speech spoke proudly of reform and improvement, but in Rocky Mountain House the hospital has had rotations of physicians and shortages after shortages. In Rimbey families have been waiting for hours, sometimes overnight, just to be seen. In Sundre short-staffing has become the norm. Nurses are exhausted, paramedics are tired, and across central Alberta people are being advised to drive to Edmonton or to Red Deer. That is not emergency care if you have to drive an hour. This is not modernization; this is absolutely the collapse. And for many of our small communities, for many of our small nations like Maskwacis, Saddle Lake, Kehewin, Frog Lake, where chronic illness and trauma already weigh heavy, the absence of primary care is not an inconvenience; it is life threatening.

Right now almost 1 million Albertans do not have a family doctor. Let us say that plainly. A quarter of the province can simply not access a doctor when they are sick. Every day we have heard of toxic drug poisoning in our province. In many of our communities, in our cities we are burying young people far too often. Families supporting loved ones without adequate detox and aftercare. In Red Deer and Edmonton emergency rooms are overwhelmed with overdoses. Firefighters and paramedics are always trying to revive people who've overdosed. The grief is constant. Yet we have yet to see safe supply to prevent deaths, housing-first supports, Indigenous-led healing programs grounded in ceremony, the continuity of care beyond short-term treatment beds. Rather, they propose forced confinement, a policy that echoes and echoes residential school incarceration. [Remarks in Cree] We know where that road leads. We have lived it. Healing cannot be forced. Healing requires relationships. It requires culture, land, safety, and, above all, dignity.

While the speech claimed economic growth and diversification, families in Rocky Mountain House are struggling with skyrocketing insurance bills. Seniors in Rimbey are choosing between heating or groceries. Single parents in Maskwacis are rationing their food to make it to the end of the month. Food banks in Red Deer, Edmonton, and Calgary are seeing record highs in demand. You absolutely cannot talk about prosperity while people are standing in line for food.

The Leader of the Official Opposition proposed something simple and unifying in his amendment to the Speech from the Throne. He proposed that Alberta affirms we are stronger as part of Canada and denounces separatism as extreme, divisive, and economically destructive. And First Nations and Métis continually remind this government, in this very House, the risks and dangers of separatist talk. We hear repeatedly, "a sovereign Alberta within a united Canada," but this rhetoric fuels something darker. I travel to communities across treaties 6, 7, and 8, and I hear from folks who

are exhausted by division, by fear, and by the manufactured anger that this government feeds in order to maintain power.

**4:00**

Albertans have repeatedly said that they do not want to fight our neighbours. Albertans want health care. They want their kids to feel safe. Albertans want to be able to afford to live. This government is lighting matches and pouring gasses while pretending to protect the house. The Speech from the Throne needed to do better.

It needed to speak about investments in schools. This government's claim to invest billions in school infrastructure and hire thousands of educators cannot be taken lightly or at face value when it comes alongside a deeply undemocratic decision to invoke the notwithstanding clause to end a strike and impose a contract on teachers. This action stripped educators of their constitutional right to strike. It undermines collective bargaining and sent a chilling message of how this government views workers' rights and educators. Instead of listening to teachers, who dedicate themselves to supporting students, families, and communities – they're managing increasingly complex classrooms and holding together the very fabric of our educational system, often with elastics, glue, paper clips, and we thank them for their work.

This was not a negotiation; it was a forced settlement imposed through constitutional override. This kind of governance erodes trust, suppresses dissent, and weakens the democratic foundations of not just our educational system but our entire governance. Teachers were not asking for the moon. They were asking for manageable class sizes, supports for students with complex needs, fair compensation. Rather than listening, the government responded with constitutional overreach. This has left many educators and many workers and labourers feeling demoralized and disrespected.

If we want to attract and retain the next generation of educators, then we have to do better. We have to recognize teachers as the backbones of our communities. [Remarks in Cree] What does it mean to lift each other up? It means we invest in one another. It means we protect our children. It means we care for our sick. It means we reject division, and it means that we remember that treaty was a promise of shared survival, not simply just extraction.

I support the amendment put forward by the Leader of the Opposition to affirm that Alberta is stronger within Canada and to reject separatism as destructive, and I call on every member in this House to choose unity over chaos, compassion over ideology, and truth over performance. [Remarks in Cree] We have to help each other. This is the law of the land far older than this Legislature.

Hay-hay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Ip:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to respond to the Speech from the Throne. Let me begin by saying that this speech is a disappointment.

**The Acting Speaker:** Just to be clear, to the amendment.

**Mr. Ip:** My apologies. To the amendment.

**The Acting Speaker:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Ip:** Thank you. I'll certainly speak to the amendment, but in my debate I will reference content from the Speech from the Throne.

I would like to begin, Mr. Speaker, by saying that the content and what's been referenced in the Speech from the Throne is a disappointment. It reflects an Alberta that I don't recognize. When my parents came to Canada, they came here because of its

welcoming, big-hearted vision for everyone, and that's not reflected in what we've heard. I also want to say that I do appreciate the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and Leader of the Opposition for bringing forward an amendment that affirms our commitment to a unified Canada and that condemns separatism.

I'll get to that a little bit later, but first I want to share what I hear every day from families, from teachers, from nurses, from business owners and everyday Albertans, but most of all from young Albertans who want to build their lives here. They talk to me about the prices of groceries and rent. They talk to me about waiting hours in emergency rooms and weeks for a family doctor if you're so lucky to even get in. They talk about overcrowded classrooms and supports that have vanished. They talk about youth unemployment, about finding that very first foothold in the labour market. These are the issues that demand attention in this moment, Mr. Speaker.

If members on the other side of the House took a moment to listen to Albertans, they will hear that Albertans, many of them, are treading water, demanding their government make life more affordable and invest in health care and education. They expect their government to stand strong for economic growth of this province and country rather than tear it down through fanning the flames of separatism. Mr. Speaker, the UCP government's Speech from the Throne delivers on none of these priorities. There is nothing in this speech about affordability. Instead, it signals massive cuts to come.

Albertans in south Edmonton will not forget that this UCP government promised to build a hospital during the last election only to quietly cancel it a year later. There are no strategies to make life more affordable for families facing high grocery prices, utility bills, insurance costs, or rent hikes. It lacks any commitments on affordable child care, postsecondary education, or Albertans who might be struggling with housing. In fact, I have heard from many constituents who will now have to pay out of pocket for their COVID-19 vaccine. One constituent shared with me that she paid hundreds of dollars out of pocket for her and her husband. Health care under the UCP government will continue to be eroded, and instead of a plan for more family doctors and reopened emergency rooms, the UCP government says they will never build a new hospital. And when they talk about solutions, they double down on private surgical facilities, outsourcing care, fragmenting delivery, and draining staff from our public system.

There is nothing in this throne speech about building a world-class education system, one where teachers have reasonable class sizes and where students can thrive. For the thousands of teachers, parents, and students who had hoped for signs of a commitment to a better education system, not only did they not find it in the throne speech; just a couple of days ago they found that this government was willing to erode our democratic traditions and ram through a bill that effectively removes teachers' bargaining rights and so casually uses the extraordinary power of the notwithstanding clause, willing to suspend Charter-protected rights not because it was necessary but because it was fast and convenient for their agenda.

This government only cares about freedom when it's freedom they agree with. While they claim to defend rights, they have too often punched down at the most vulnerable, targeting trans kids and failing to uphold dignity and inclusion for Albertans with disabilities. The pettiness and unnecessary cruelty, Mr. Speaker.

**4:10**

Today as teachers go back to school, they return without the supports that students need to succeed. A teacher texted me this morning, and I quote: "I'm going back for my students, not for this government. My students deserve the best." Mr. Speaker, that is the

moral centre of this debate. Teachers are showing up despite the conditions the government has created, because students deserve better.

I want to take a moment to honour teachers' voices by sharing some brief excerpts from countless letters that I've received that have been entrusted to me. Makayla, who is a teacher in my riding of Edmonton-South West, has a message to share with members on the other side of the House. She says:

We are not there by choice. You forced our hands. If you force us back to work, I will follow the law and do my job to the best of my ability because my students deserve that. But I do not know if I will be able to keep going after this year. Unlike your government, we put kids first because they are our future. When will you understand it has always been about the students?

Andrea, a teacher and a parent, described classrooms of 30, 40, even 45-plus students sharing spaces never designed for instructions, schools over capacity, heat in classrooms reaching into the high 20s during the spring and in the early summer, bookshelves removed to fit desks. She asked for the basics any great education system guarantees: caps on class sizes, trained support staff, and safe, healthy learning environments. These are not radical demands, Mr. Speaker. They are, in fact, the minimum if we expect students to learn and teachers to teach.

We also need to talk about the broader economy into which our kids are graduating. Alberta's unemployment rate stood at 7.8 per cent in September for youth aged 15 to 24. It spiked to 20.3 per cent in July, eased into 17 per cent in August, and sat at 14.7 per cent in September. All this to say that these are not just numbers. This reflects the fact that there were summer jobs that didn't materialize, that there were apprenticeship starts that were delayed, that there were co-op placements that didn't come through. Returning students across this province had one of the weakest summers for employment since 2009 outside of the pandemic, averaging 17.9 per cent unemployment over May through August. Those students are now in class with thinner savings and fewer hours. That has real consequences for tuition, textbooks, and rent and for whether they stay in Alberta after they graduate.

Mr. Speaker, investing in education at the postsecondary level and certainly at the K to 12 level has broader economic impacts. Investing and addressing youth unemployment is critical, and we didn't see that from this throne speech. There are so many missed opportunities. The Speech from the Throne is silent on youth employment and training. No action on fast, employer-aligned microcredentials that could bridge young people into paid work within weeks. In fact, it was this government that scuttled the STEP program.

The government likes to talk about and prefers to talk about division and constitutional brinkmanship. While the education strike continues, or at least the conversation about education continues, they try to distract the public with ideological legislation and even the costly destabilizing spectre of separatism.

Over the summer, Mr. Speaker, I've heard from countless Albertans and it's been demonstrated through the Forever Canadian petition that Albertans don't want chaos. They very much love this country, and what they want is a competent government.

I want to talk a little bit more about public investment in education. I've said this and referenced this research in this House before. Investment in public education is actually an incredible growth strategy. It's in fact one of the best growth strategies any government can embark in. Research from the Conference Board of Canada found that each dollar invested in public education generated approximately \$1.30 in total economic benefits. That's without considering the fact that it redirects folks away from requiring accessing public benefits.

This government will say that they are investing, and certainly they referenced that in the throne speech, but no government committed to growth would do what this government did to our renewable energy sector and impose a sweeping pause on approvals, which effectively drove away investors and stalled billions of dollars in projects just as Alberta was competing to lead the world in renewables and grid innovation. This government has demonstrated that they only care about investing in the economy when it fits into their ideological frame.

I want to take a moment to address the amendment, specifically that Alberta and Canada are stronger together and separatism is extreme, divisive, and economically destructive. First, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out the economics are unequivocal. Alberta sells and buys tens of billions of dollars in goods and services with the rest of Canada every year. In 2023 alone Alberta's interprovincial exports totalled about \$76 billion while Albertans purchased roughly \$73 billion from other provinces. This is lifeblood for our manufacturers, for our farmers, for tech firms, energy producers, and service providers. Disrupting that, even just the talk of it, with some sort of new border or effort to leave this country: what it effectively does is that it creates uncertainty that would be a self-inflicted wound.

From the economic side of things it just doesn't make sense for this government to embark on this kind of rhetoric. It drives away investment, it erodes confidence in our economy, and, frankly, it sends the wrong message to young people.

Albertans deserve a government that chooses unity over division. While we have seen time and again this UCP government fan the flames of separatism and division, what I will say is that on this side of the House we stand up for a strong Alberta within a strong Canada. We reject the politics that pit neighbour against neighbour and region against region, and we reject the scapegoating of trans kids, who are simply asking to learn in safety and dignity. We reject undermining the rights of workers and teachers through Bill 2.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, Member.

The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

4:20

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and offer a few thoughts on the throne speech. I just want, first of all, to make, I think, an important statement about the motion. The motion currently reads:

We, His Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

It just occurs to me, Mr. Speaker, reading those words, that, of course, the Lieutenant Governor is the King's representative here to the people of Alberta. I remember that we swore allegiance to the King and his heirs and successors when we took our seats. But I found out last night that that allegiance doesn't flow two ways. Prince Harry was seen at the Dodgers game last night cheering against the Canadian team, the Blue Jays, and cheering for an American team, the Los Angeles Dodgers. I would urge Her Honour to carry this message from the people of Alberta back to the King that we expect the Royal Family to support members of his realm and not cheer for American teams.

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** A point of order has been called.

## Point of Order Reflections on the Royal Family

**Mr. Schow:** Mr. Speaker, I have, since I was elected in 2019, been dying to call this point of order. I rise on 23(k), which states, “Speaks disrespectfully of His Majesty or of any other member of the Royal Family.” Though I may not agree with the choice of baseball team that the member of the Royal Family Prince Harry cheers for, I believe that this is a point of order under 23(k), speaks disrespectfully of the Royal Family.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Sabir:** It’s, I guess, a first-of-its-kind point of order under this, “Speaks disrespectfully of His Majesty or of any other member of the Royal Family.” In this particular instance I don’t think the member was disrespecting members of the Royal Family; rather, he was just suggesting that the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta convey this message that people in Canada, in Alberta were displeased to see somebody of the Royal Family cheering a team that is not Canadian. I think that was just a humble request made by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar and in no way, shape, or manner was disrespecting a member of the Royal Family. It was just showing displeasure that a member of the Royal Family was supporting a team that was not Canadian. I don’t think it’s a point of order.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other submissions to the point of order?

**Mr. Nally:** Just one more. He clearly called him a Dodgers fan, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Okay. I appreciate the brevity. I do not consider this to be a point of order. The member was speaking with regard to choices made by a member of the Royal Family, not disrespecting the Royal Family per se. I’m going to allow the member to continue with his remarks. I’m thankful to the member to give the opportunity for the Government House Leader to actually call the point of order.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to say “you’re welcome” to the hon. Government House Leader for allowing him to rise on that point of order. It’s funny that Prince Harry is the subject of this point of order and not some other members of the Royal Family, who’ve also been in the news lately for some of their activities.

## Debate Continued

**Mr. Schmidt:** I want to turn my focus now to the actual content of the throne speech. I want to focus my comments . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Just for clarification, we are speaking to amendment A1.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course. I meant that we were discussing the amendment to the motion that presents the throne speech, and of course that amends the motion to say, “and to inform Your Honour that the Legislative Assembly affirms that Alberta and the rest of Canada are stronger together, and denounces provincial separatism as extreme, divisive, and economically destructive.”

Of course, my friends here on this side of the House in response to the throne speech have talked at length about the importance of maintaining a unified Canada and the enthusiasm that the people of Alberta have shown for maintaining a unified Canada. I believe that

if the government members are true to their word in that they also believe in a unified Canada, they would vote to support the amendment that our Official Opposition Leader has brought forward to this motion. You know, the motion as amended also is, of course, a reference to the throne speech, which we heard last Thursday and, as my friends have identified, there are several gaps in the throne speech that the people of Alberta were very disappointed to discover when they heard the throne speech. My friend from Sherwood Park highlighted one significant gap, and that’s addressing the issue of affordability here in the province of Alberta.

In my member’s statement today, Mr. Speaker, I talked about the rising cost of groceries, and it’s really disconcerting to see how difficult the people of Edmonton-Gold Bar are finding it to put food on the table these days. You know, the cost of groceries has continued to rise even though inflation for other measures has dropped below the levels that we’ve seen in the ’22-23 fiscal years. People are really asking the question: why is this happening, and what is the government going to do about it? Unfortunately, they can’t get answers to this question from this government because when asked, “Why is food inflation happening?” the government has long maintained that it was the carbon tax that was driving up the cost of food. While the carbon tax was in place, there was really no way to convince people that that wasn’t the case. But now that the carbon tax has been gone for many months, we see that the cost of food is still escalating.

That tells me and tells many people here in Alberta that the government was making up excuses for the rising cost of food and trying to blame somebody who actually didn’t have anything to do with the rising cost of food and shifting blame away from those who are actually responsible for the rising cost of food. That is the oligarch’s control of the food system in our country. You know, in the last fiscal years Sobeys made \$2 billion in profits and Loblaw’s made over \$7 billion in profits. Loblaw’s and Sobeys are two of the largest corporations in the entire nation, Mr. Speaker.

It’s funny because I’ve been watching a lot of – well, not a lot; I’ve been watching some American discourse about the grocery system in the United States because, of course, there is a high-profile candidate for the mayor of New York City who’s running on a platform of public grocery stores. Many pundits are talking about the impossibility of establishing public grocery stores and how thin the profit margins are, and it made me wonder, well, is that true in Canada? Are profit margins really that thin for grocery stores here in our country? The fact of the matter is that no, they’re not. Loblaw’s has anywhere from a 15 to 20 per cent profit margin according to their latest financial reports. Sobeys is similar.

Unfortunately, Save-On-Foods, one of the other major retailers of groceries in this country, is a privately held corporation so we don’t have any insight into their financials. Are they operating on narrow profit margins? When you go into their grocery stores and see the prices that they’re charging for things like milk, bread, ground beef, and coffee, you certainly wouldn’t think that their profit margins are any smaller than those of Loblaw’s and Sobeys.

4:30

This government is refusing to do anything to tackle high grocery prices, and that’s one thing that’s missing from the throne speech that I think that the people of Alberta are really waiting for this government to address.

I have a personal story, Mr. Speaker, particularly related to the price of coffee. I met a senior who lives in one of my constituency neighbourhoods who told me that the price of coffee has gotten so expensive that she now doesn’t buy her own coffee, but she attends public meetings, social events at the senior centre and those kinds

of things and brings her Thermoses so that she can take the leftover coffee that was made for those events home with her to drink later on in the week. That's how bad the situation is for many people in this province when they go to the grocery store. They can't afford to buy the basics anymore, and this government has nothing to say about it.

It's a real shame, and it tells you whose welfare they're really concerned about. It's only the richest among us who are going to prosper under this government, and the rest of us are really going to struggle until we can actually elect a government that is concerned with uplifting the whole people rather than making sure that the richest get even richer.

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

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 1 International Agreements Act

[Debate adjourned October 28: Member Arcand-Paul speaking]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday has four minutes left to speak if he so wishes.

Are there any other speakers? The Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

**Ms Al-Guneid:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [some applause] Thank you. I rise today to speak to Bill 1, the International Agreements Act. Let's be clear. Bill 1 re-establishes existing provincial powers under the Constitution. It does not create or give any new authority to Alberta. So we're talking about redundancy here.

Not only that, but the bill is so disconnected from priorities in Alberta. I spent the summer talking to Albertans, Mr. Speaker, in Calgary-Glenmore and outside of my riding. I went to a lot of community events and many, many Stampede events in my riding and outside of my riding. I think I averaged 11, 12 events a day during Stampede, and no one – literally no one – asked me about international agreements and how we can change this provincial relationship.

Yes, people talked about tariffs and the concerns about the Trump tariffs on our economy, but what Albertans have been telling me and my colleagues here is that life has gotten tougher, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are struggling with the cost of living, with the cost of groceries, rent, and all these increasing expenses. They're bringing people to their knees, and wages in Alberta are not keeping up with inflation and all these skyrocketing expenses. And let's not forget the low employment rate, the fewer jobs we have in this province. Alberta's unemployment rate is 8.4 per cent, making it the second highest in Canada, behind the national average of 7.1 per cent. It is actually heartbreaking. It is very upsetting to me to see Albertans struggling like that: young men, students, single moms, families with little children.

Really, it's stunning to see that the first bill that the UCP government introduces talks about opting out of international agreements and treaties and not Albertans' priorities. Is the UCP government even talking to Albertans? Where are the UCP MLAs? Does this caucus even discuss what they're hearing from hard-working Albertans? I receive the e-mails they're receiving, Mr. Speaker.

What I see in Bill 1 is a bill that stokes more separatist rhetoric, that appeases the UCP base while scaring away investments and

potential projects that would create new jobs and make lives better in Alberta. Most importantly, this bill sends a confusing message to global investors because the bill is grounded in sentiments of protectionism, separation, and a little bit of conspiracy theories, Mr. Speaker.

Let's not forget what the minister of energy told us at his by-election in the Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche riding, where he welcomed World Economic Forum conspiracy theories and even posted about them. There's always a tweet. That was on February 22, 2022, and he said:

Reject the Great Reset. Why are so many Canadian politicians enamoured with weird anti-people World Economic Forum ideas? I've never gone to the World Economic Forum. Never been invited . . . I am not, and never have been, a globalist.

A reminder that the energy minister is referring to the globalist great reset conspiracy, which refers to the global elites who will come after us and control humans through microchips and whatnot.

I genuinely caution the UCP government, Mr. Speaker, because this whole great reset theory business is a slippery slope. I am certain the energy minister does not personally hold these views. I am sure. But as is so often the case with conspiracy theories, one can find anti-Semitic sentiments in the great reset conspiracy, with some believers going so far as to accuse Jews of orchestrating the plot. There are many anti-Semitic tropes associated with the great reset conspiracy, and government ministers must be very, very careful and more responsible with such posts, especially when they denounce globalism. Once you see the conspiracy theories that some UCP ministers share, Bill 1 kind of makes sense now.

Now I want to emphasize that Bill 1 will create additional red tape as it requires the Legislature to have separate debate and discussion to pass each international agreement that the federal government has signed. Who wants to do this, Mr. Speaker? Do you think the international trade agreements and global investments have the time for the UCP's shenanigans? International capital is skittish. Capital does not like the lack of certainty, and all that the government continues to do here is show investor uncertainty, delay business, and espouse conspiracy theories. That's the message of Bill 1.

We have trade agreements like CUSMA, an agreement with the U.S. and Mexico. CPTPP is the trans-Pacific partnership. It is a free trade agreement between 11 countries in the Indo-Pacific region, from Japan to Australia. Are we risking this now? CETA is the agreement with the European Union. What is the Premier going to do about these international trade agreements? Does she want to renegotiate these with the world and with the federal government and rehash the whole debate again here? Are we going to rehash the benefits of all these big agreements and the massive economic benefits for Alberta? What is this, Mr. Speaker? I knew the UCP government was bad at the economy, but my goodness. This is a new low after banning renewables in Alberta.

**4:40**

These international agreements generate economic growth, raise living standards, and strengthen economic ties with allies and other big economies globally, Mr. Speaker. How is this bill considering CUSMA and the other international agreements and, frankly, our role as Alberta in these agreements? I really am curious. What examples of international agreements does the UCP government believe Alberta will benefit from withdrawing from or even reconsidering? I hope it's not CUSMA or CPTPP or CETA. I would like the Premier to explain that for us.

I want to go back to Albertans' priorities that are not reflected in Bill 1. I repeat, Mr. Speaker. No one – literally no one – has asked me about international agreements and how we can reconsider or

change the provincial relationships with these agreements. It's probably just for the UCP's extreme base. No wonder current provincial polling shows the UCP and the Premier are falling behind. Albertans do not see themselves reflected in the government's alternative reality and feel that the province is headed in the wrong direction. Albertans are struggling. The cost of living, cost of groceries, increased rent, and all these expenses are crushing hard-working Albertans and middle-class families.

Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat, but I want to say that this bill will give the government an inflated sense of sovereignty while on paper and in reality it changes nothing. It only impacts our reputation as a province, how we are perceived by the rest of the world, and how we do business with the rest of the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker,

**The Acting Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Ellingson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise in this House and speak to Bill 1, the International Agreements Act. Yesterday when we opened debate on this act, I heard some really interesting things and, I think, some arguments from my colleagues on this side of the House that maybe we should pay attention to.

The MLA for Edmonton-Rutherford reminded us that we shouldn't be considering any bill in this House without consulting Indigenous people. She made clear that the government had not done that work in the crafting of Bill 1. I do think that that's something we should be listening to when the representation from Edmonton-Rutherford as well as the representation from Edmonton-West Henday are from Indigenous communities themselves and have deep connections with this land and this place, as do their family members, and, you know, call on the wisdom of their ancestors. We should be listening to them when they speak in this House.

Also, the MLA for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall made it clear that this bill already exists. I think we've heard this already. If we hearken back to the year 2000, we had the International Trade and Investment Agreements Implementation Act, which Bill 1 repeals. Bill 1 repeals the international trade and investment agreements act, replacing it with the International Agreements Act. Titles also seem pretty similar. The one that was struck said, "the Government of Alberta may declare its approval of an international trade and investment agreement," and it is replaced by:

An international agreement, or a part of an international agreement, that includes a matter that is not exclusively within federal jurisdiction is not binding on the Government of Alberta and is not part of the domestic law of Alberta unless that international agreement, or that part of the international agreement, is implemented by or under the Act of the Legislature of Alberta.

They essentially say the same thing. What it really sounds like is that the previous act didn't do a good enough job of raising our fist at Ottawa and saying: gosh, darn you, Ottawa; you're not doing what we need. So we needed to replace it with a bill that was maybe a little bit more clearly gosh-darn-Ottawa, essentially saying exactly the same thing. It sounds like a colossal waste of time to me.

Then we heard the MLA for Sherwood Park pointing out that Bill 1 doesn't really seem to have anything to do with what people in Alberta are finding important. We've heard that argument again from the MLA for Calgary-Glenmore this morning. I wanted to spend some time, you know, really closely reviewing the bill to make sure that that is indeed correct. I thought I'd just take a moment – yeah, I've just read the whole bill, and it doesn't actually have anything to do with what Albertans are concerned with.

This summer, Mr. Speaker, our party, our volunteers, we engaged with over 200,000 Albertans, and we heard overwhelmingly from these Albertans that they are thinking about affordability, jobs, the economy, health care, and education. It is regrettable that as we enter a new session in this House, Bill 1, which you think would be the highest priority for this government, doesn't talk about any of those things. We did, however, see the government respond to education in Bill 2. It's just unfortunate for them that the response was in direct contradiction to what Albertans wanted to see.

We also heard from the Member for Sherwood Park regarding the throne speech that, you know, we just need to do a better job of putting forward legislation that is focused on what people are talking about. He also took a moment at that time to reflect on the Speech from the Throne, which I thought was also valuable in reflecting on Bill 1 because we didn't really see Bill 1 or, like, the nature of Bill 1 kind of reflected in the Speech from the Throne.

I noticed that when I was reading the Speech from the Throne, what I did see is that there is a section on the economy. I wish that it was a little bit more comprehensive. I definitely am one who stands for the energy industry in Alberta. No question about it. It is also not lost on me as the shadow minister of Finance that it contributes a significant amount towards the budget of this government, and who would want to walk away from that?

However, I think it's interesting to note a couple of things about the Speech from the Throne. The energy sector is not the only sector in Alberta. I do think it's curious that in the Speech from the Throne, in six pages, we find the reference to the words "energy" or "oil and gas" 18 times. If we were to read this speech, the other foundational effort that we'll make in our economy is AI. AI got two sentences out of six pages. Then all other industries combined got another sentence. I think that's indicative of just how much this government thinks about all of those other sectors.

I think that as we stand and talk about the economy, as we stand and think about Bill 1 – and I'm going to get into a little bit of, you know, international trade agreements – there was very little air time given to agriculture, manufacturing, technology, tourism, forestry. They all got one word in that one sentence that said you know, as we continue doing this, we'll also think about that. If I were somebody in one of those other industrial sectors, I think I would be reaching out to the government to say: hey, why are we not thinking about all the opportunities that we offer Alberta?

**4:50**

But I do want to kind of get, I guess, back to Bill 1, and I have no idea how long I've been talking. You're going to poke me, right? We're talking about building a stronger, resilient economy and good-paying jobs for Albertans. Bill 1 does talk about international agreements, but it doesn't mention in any way how we would be leveraging any of those agreements to grow our economy.

We just heard from the MLA for Calgary-Glenmore about some of those agreements, and I think I'll also say at this time that, you know, we've talked a lot about sovereignty, Alberta being a part of Canada. It just so happens that Canada as a nation has, I think, the most or second-most number of multilateral and bilateral trade agreements with other countries on the entire planet. There are some advantages to being a part of Canada when we talk about international agreements.

We heard just a few moments ago that some of those multilateral agreements include the CPTPP, the comprehensive and progressive agreement for trans-Pacific partnership. This agreement includes some countries out there with, you know, maybe some economies that we have heard of. Japan, a country of over 100 million people which, I think, today is the fifth-largest economy on the planet, is included in the CPTPP, and there are incredible opportunities that we

should think about. As I said, in the throne speech not a whole lot of mention of agriculture, but I think we would find in conversations that agriculture and value-added agriculture is an incredible opportunity as we consider trade and investment from Japan. So we could have hoped that in Bill 1 maybe we would see mention of that.

There are other countries here: Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Vietnam, Mexico, Peru, Singapore, Chile, a little country of Brunei, and an island that I think most people here know as Borneo. I happen to know that island as Kalimantan. Incredible opportunities in these countries. These countries are growing. Their populations are growing. Their economies are growing, yet we don't see mention in Bill 1 how we're going to leverage this.

We also have an agreement with Europe, as we just recently heard. The European Union has, I think, a population of 800 million people. Again, incredible opportunities here and some interesting, you know, dialogue that has already happened over the last few years since we signed the agreement, CETA, the comprehensive economic and trade agreement, with Europe. There has been commentary, in fact, of how European countries are really taking advantage of CETA but that Canadian companies aren't necessarily realizing the opportunities there, and that we can do a better job of working with Canadian opportunities with respect to CETA.

CETA is an interesting agreement because it's not just an agreement that covers the trade in goods. While it does move to eliminate tariffs and reduce barriers for the trade of goods in almost all sectors between Canada and the European Union, it also has elements in there for talking about technology and in the trade in technology and digital services. It also talks about labour mobility, and if there are areas in our tech industries where we struggle to find the workers that we need to grow our tech industries, there are provisions within CETA where labour mobility can go back and forth between European countries and Canada, which of course would include Alberta because we are a part of Canada, to help us grow our tech sector if we're looking for that talent. Incredible opportunities in research partnerships with a lot of technological research and investment that's happening in Europe.

I think it's interesting. I've had a couple of conversations with people here in Alberta who represent funds and organizations in Europe that are specifically designed to look for investment opportunities in Canadian companies. That is also kind of underutilized, and we could be digging more into these, not just the trade agreement, but there are agencies and organizations in Europe that are specifically built to look for investment opportunities in Canada, research opportunities in Canada. Again, we don't see any of that in Bill 1, and I have to ask why. Why didn't we take the opportunity to dig into that a little bit more?

I'd like to remind people in the House, of course, that the European Union doesn't include all countries in Europe, so if we're looking at doing stuff with Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, we also happen to have a free trade agreement with EFTA, the European free trade area that includes those countries that are not in the European Union. So there are also incredible opportunities with those.

I think we can find a lot of similarities in our economy between Norway and Alberta, but also a lot of similarities between Switzerland and Alberta. Switzerland happens to be a hub of global transportation companies in Europe. It is a hub for global pharmaceutical companies in Europe. If we're looking to grow those in agriculture, science-driven companies in agriculture are located in Switzerland. There are incredible opportunities here for investment and research and growing our economy. Again, I sure wish that we could have seen some of that in Bill 1. And I just have to ask again: why? If we're really concerned about jobs and . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

I've got the Government House Leader.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, hearing the words "jobs and economy," naturally I have to stand up. I do want to make a couple of remarks and respond a bit to some of the things the members opposite have said. The first thing I would do is start from the end, where the member opposite said that none of this was enumerated or mentioned in the bill. Well, this is the mission daily of this government, regardless of ministry, to advance the interests of the province both here within Alberta, within Canada, and then, of course, around the world.

I want to give you a bit of an overview of the point of this bill. The reality here, Mr. Speaker, is that trade relationships around the world have been turned upside down in many respects as a result of policies and comments coming from the President of the United States. Everybody is on high alert, and one could say that trade relationships change by the tweet. The reality is that here in Alberta we have limited ability to do some things but a lot of ability to do others. We have zero ability to change what the President is saying, so we have taken measures to eliminate trade barriers within Canada. But this isn't just a result of what the President is saying. We've been doing this since we got elected in 2019, removed a number of barriers. So we've taken the lead on this.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

So I do push back on the Member for Calgary-Glenmore on Alberta being a protectionist society. We are quite the opposite. We have been a leader in breaking down interprovincial trade barriers. But there is a reality that we all have to face, that the United States is our largest trading partner. Ninety per cent of our goods go across the border to the south, into the U.S. Last year alone we exported over \$180 billion worth of goods, 90 per cent of which went into the United States. There is no amount of trade barriers broken down within Canada that can compensate for that relationship being cut off, which it has not been. But we also understand the larger picture, Madam Speaker, which is to ensure long-term sustainability for the province and, by association, for the country, because a strong Canada needs a strong Alberta. We must find new trade relationships around the world, and that is why we have continued to build those relationships with other nations and other companies.

5:00

So again, we don't enumerate our trade missions in this bill. What this bill does is makes it very clear that Alberta will not stand and will not look favourably upon trade relationships or agreements that the federal government makes that infringe on Alberta's best interests.

I'm not sure why the members opposite would have a problem with this. Like imagine, to use an abstract example, Madam Chair, that your neighbour decided to sell their house. You have no control over the person that they sell their house to. That's their prerogative. But what if, in the agreement of the house, they negotiated that they get access to your backyard pool, Madam Chair? I don't know if you have a pool or not. Not bringing you into the argument, but just for argument's sake. That would obviously infringe upon your well-being, putting your pool's access in the contract to sell your neighbor's house. That is not respecting your property rights. It's not respecting the property lines. That's all we're asking from the federal government is to understand that if you're going to be making trade agreements with other nations and they are going to be imposing unfavorable terms on Alberta, we don't want that. We don't want that one bit.

Now, there's also this talk about this bill being something to do with separatism, and I think that is just absolutely ridiculous. I'm going to read from the throne speech.

Your government believes in a strong, free, and sovereign Alberta within a united Canada. Sovereignty does not mean separation. Strength and self-determination do not have to mean national independence. And one can love this province with all their heart and love our nation just as much.

I just don't understand where the members opposite fail to listen to that comment.

And now they're talking about driving away investment. It could not be further from the truth. Our government has seen incredible investment. For example, Lufthansa Technik just recently announced an announcement that I was at, and I give full credit for this because I was at the announcement, but the work was done by my incredible department and my predecessor, the minister from – what's the minister? Well, the former minister of jobs, economy and trade, JET before it was JETI. All that to say that that minister did a tremendous amount of work to bring Lufthansa Technik here, an engine manufacturing and maintenance facility. Foreign investment. Foreign investment. Just going to repeat that again.

We talk about how CAE just established the centre of excellence for flight training in Calgary in partnership with WestJet. This is a huge announcement. It's going to train over 6,000 aviation workers every year. So again, the numbers speak for themselves. [interjections] Now, I don't know what the member opposite just said – it sounded like a heckle – but what I can assure the member is that my department does over 30 trade missions a year taking along businesses from Canada into new markets to help them sell their products, explore new markets, and support Alberta's economy.

Madam Chair, it wasn't that long ago that I visited a manufacturing facility right in your constituency, Propak, doing incredible things, manufacturing facilities that go all the way around the world. I'm also going and they're also going to ADIPEC next week, which is the Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition and Conference, to, again, continue to build these relationships to help us sell Alberta products in those areas. The greater the demand for those products that are manufactured here, the greater the opportunity to expand operations and create – say it with me now – jobs. Jobs. That's what this is about. It's about jobs, and it's about supporting Alberta's economy, but back to the point, it's about supporting Alberta's economy with new international trade agreements that don't hold us back.

Now, I'm not sure what the member from Calgary-Glenmore was talking about when she said that international capital is skittish and running away from Alberta. I can tell you that I've been all over this country. I've spoken to consuls general in the short time I've had in this role as the Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration minister. I've spoken with banks, investors, and I can tell you that they love Alberta. They love Alberta, love what we have to offer. They talk about moving manufacturing facilities here and headquarters here because they love our low tax jurisdiction.

Madam Chair, there is not, I repeat, there is not one piece of investment that the opposition didn't want to see driven out of Alberta. Heck, they told Albertans themselves to leave the province, to go find work elsewhere. That is a quote. You don't like Alberta because there's no jobs for you here? Go elsewhere. That's what the opposition said. Now, here, since 2019 we've been welcoming investment and welcoming job growth because we understand on this side of the House that governments don't create jobs. The private sector does, but we help create an environment that will attract investment, and we have done that.

But it's not just the international agreements that we need co-operation with the federal government on. For Alberta to be strong

and for Canada to be strong we have to have favourable environments for that investment, and I'm going to talk about nine of them. They're going to probably sound familiar to the members opposite. Repetition, Madam Chair, is the mother of learning, so I'm going to repeat it for them again the things that the Premier has said and thank her for her leadership on this. Now, she's also said this is the short list, and I know the list is much longer, but for Alberta to continue to be a strong partner, and I emphasize the word "partner," because that's what we are, and for Canada to be strong, we want to see Alberta guaranteed full access to oil and gas corridors in the north, east, and west.

Bill C-69, a.k.a. the no-more-pipelines bill, needs to be repealed. Repeal the tanker ban off the B.C. coast. Oil and gas emissions cap, which is really, Madam Chair, a production cap, as we all know: the so-called clean energy regulations must go. The net-zero car mandate must go. Return oversight of the industrial carbon tax to the provinces. Halting the federal censorship of energy companies, because, let's be honest, who doesn't want to talk about Alberta's ethical energy? It's a driver, one of the main drivers of our economy. And lastly, ending the declaration of plastics as toxic and returning oversight of the sector to the provinces.

I would add, Madam Chair, one more thing that's important and very important to me, because as we see this province continue to grow, we understand that the workforce we need may not be readily available, so we've introduced a number of measures to not only get youth into the workforce to get that ever important first job but also to help those who are in the workforce advance their skills and productivity. But we know that the people we need sometimes aren't here, so we have to bring new people in from around Canada, and from outside of the Canadian borders. We've asked the federal government to give more control to the provinces over economic immigration.

We talk about our population growth. It was 4.4 percent last year. Now, I don't want to get too deep in the numbers, but I can tell you that an acceptable rate is around 2 to 2.5 per cent. Four point four per cent is so unsustainable that you cannot keep up with things like schools, roads, hospitals, social services that we as a province pay for. If the federal government continues to flood Alberta, how are we supposed to keep up?

The answer is that it's unsustainable. And so the point that I'm adding to this list, Madam Speaker, is that we want more control over economic migration in the province of Alberta to support our growing economy and the investment and the job creation that we are seeing at a rapid rate because of the work and the foundation laid by my predecessors and the vision of the Premier. So full credit to those people because this is a real team effort. But I can tell you this. What the members opposite are saying in making these blanket statements about protectionism and separatism and Alberta on the wrong track: I'm finding it hard to understand, and I'm sure they'll spend the rest of this afternoon trying to educate me and inform me, but I'm having a hard time being convinced that it's a bad thing that Alberta's best interests should be considered when negotiating international trade agreements. It is so fundamental.

5:10

Madam Speaker, in closing I want to encourage members opposite to look at the broader picture, to better understand what's at stake here. That is that nobody should be arguing that the federal government should not be considering Alberta's best interests. If you do, then you are working against Alberta. If you're working against Alberta, you're in the wrong place. I don't speak for the members opposite, though I hope that they agree with me, but job creation is a good thing. Investment is a good thing. Creating wealth

and bringing in export dollars is a good thing. I don't understand what they're talking about.

I hope that through my words, as convincing as I know they can be, I have helped the members understand and walk with me along this path to prosperity for this province because I tell you, Madam Speaker, I love Alberta and I love Canada. I want to see them both succeed, but Canada does not succeed and will not succeed without a strong Alberta. Everybody on the front bench and in the government caucus led by the Premier understands this, and if the members on the opposite side fail to understand it, I'm happy to meet with any of them any time to talk about all the incredible things we're doing.

But I'll tell you, Madam Speaker, I am not convinced they're there. I'm not convinced they understand it. I'm not convinced they get how important this bill really is for us, which is the exact reason it's Bill 1.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I welcome the opportunity to help the Government House Leader understand a few things. I heard the Government House Leader say just a moment ago that that's the reason that this was Bill 1. We're in a new session of the Legislature. Typically the government will select Bill 1 as a shining example of new, popular ideas, a signature piece of legislation that sets a course and a tone for the remaining portion of the session.

It's something that is, as is the case with this piece of legislation, Madam Speaker, sponsored by the Premier, which makes it all the more curious from my perspective. It's priority number one, supposedly, of the government. It reflects the issues the government is most seized with. It's a major preoccupation of the most pressing issues affecting Albertans right now. We've prorogued the Legislature. We've started over with a clean slate, and this Bill 1 is what the government has come up with as their major, absolute top priority, as seen by the government, that they choose to adopt as the most gripping issue to address, the International Agreements Act.

Now, that's what Albertans have been screaming for the last 16, 18 months, Madam Speaker, a new International Agreements Act. That's the Bill 1. That's the top priority that this government has come up with. Believe me, when the government tells you what they are, believe it. This reflects exactly the type of nonattachment to the realities that Alberta families are facing right now that most people are telling me that they're concerned with when it comes to this government's reaction. It's reflected in their choice of Bill 1 as a top priority in this new session.

I find it difficult to believe that the Government House Leader and Premier see this as the actual priority that most Albertans are facing right now, that they consider the major priority. The motivation for making this Bill 1 is something that I think the Government House Leader should explain a little bit better. Indeed, he explains it in terms of economics, that this is a major priority that had to be done, but, Madam Speaker, the reality is that there was already in existence an International Trade and Investment Agreements Implementation Act that's actually being repealed by this act. In fact, that act was a duplicate of what actually this new act is with some minor changes.

It begs the question, Madam Speaker: what was the urgency and the need to make this piece of legislation Bill 1 when, in fact, we had similar legislation already on the books? It begs the question: who is the influencer? What motivation did the Premier have to come up with this piece of legislation as a shining example of what was most necessary to Albertans right now in their time of need, an

act that would be replacing a similar act that's already in position in the province?

If the Government House Leader needs some explanation, that's why we question the motivation behind this piece of legislation. We wonder indeed who the Premier is serving when she brings forward this piece of legislation to replace something that already exists. We're talking about rules around international agreements that the federal government might enter into. The Government House Leader seems so intent on making sure that the government of Canada's wishes and making international agreements are not somehow going to be contravening the actions or the ambitions of Alberta, that they think they need to bring forward a new piece of legislation to stop that doggone federal government from interfering in Alberta's rights.

Well, the Constitution already protects those rights. There are rules and regulations around jurisdiction in this country, Madam Speaker. It's called the Constitution, and the courts are the arbiters of who is ultra vires or not as far as the jurisdictional guidelines are concerned. This legislation contemplates trying to alter that and ensure that the government of Alberta becomes the arbiter of whether or not the federal government is interfering. Well, we have a court system that I think even this provincial government continues to respect, and the Supreme Court ultimately is the final arbiter of those jurisdictional disputes.

Now, they take time. They do take time, Madam Speaker, and that's one of the things that may frustrate provincial governments across the country. But that is the mechanism by which we have to address jurisdictional disputes in this country, and that is something that we should be maintaining and supporting and not trying to usurp that level of our governance, the Supreme Court, not try to usurp that authority by introducing legislation which attempts to insert the provincial governments, in this case the Alberta provincial government, into the role of arbiter of jurisdictional disputes. That, I argue, is one of the efforts here, to weaken, once again, a federal institution, the Supreme Court, in terms of being an arbiter of the jurisdictional disputes that might arise as a result of international trade agreements entered into by the federal government.

Madam Speaker, I'll continue by asking once again what indeed the government's thoughts were when they chose Bill 1 to be an international agreement piece of legislation. It was most curious to me. With Bill 1, the most important priority of the government, did they choose to, for example, affirm their commitment to constitutional rights of Canadian workers to collectively bargain at a time when indeed that right seems to be threatened by this very government by use of the notwithstanding clause? No. They didn't do that.

That right is something that this government wasn't interested in affirming as even a matter of legislation in Bill 1 or any other bill. They chose to attack that constitutional right instead. No. They did the opposite, Madam Speaker. They shredded the rights of workers by slamming through back-to-work legislation and imposing a contract that was rejected by union memberships twice. Once again, believe a government when it tells you by their actions who they are.

Madam Speaker, under Bill 1 did the government choose to speak about the lack of family doctors in Alberta and address that situation? We heard it said today by members from this side of the House that of course 1 million Albertans are without a family doctor. No. That wasn't addressed at all. Instead international trade agreements were determined to be the number one priority of Albertans, and that would become Bill 1 under this government's modus operandi.

5:20

Did they choose, Madam Speaker, to talk about the record-high food bank usage that we have right across this province, where we have recorded, even today, a news report, that I heard on *CBC Radio*, talking about the record number of people who visited food banks across Alberta, which, of course, reflects the dire needs of large segments of our population in terms of their ability to make ends meet at the end of the month? Record numbers of people going to food banks: was that something that the government chose to address as a top priority of Albertans, which, of course, is seen by Albertans as a top priority because their kids are going to school hungry? No. That wasn't the top priority that this government chose to adopt as their number one bill this particular session.

What about, as I mentioned, the high number of Alberta children going to school hungry and relying on charitable organizations to feed them? Did they decide to address that by suggesting that, "No; this is a government responsibility; we don't rely on charities to feed our kids in this province, and we should be enacting legislation that's going to make sure that those school children who are going to school hungry are going to be fed by a fund that is founded by this government?" No. That wasn't something that they found as the top priority, Madam Speaker. Hungry children seem to rank second place at least to international trade agreement legislation, that already exists and is on the books.

Madam Speaker, again, did they choose to reverse the clawback to restore the \$200 federal money that was, finally, after 10 years of negotiation, provided to AISH recipients who were receiving 1,900 bucks a month? The government of Alberta decides that, "No; that's too much; we're taking back the \$200 a month that those people get." That's what they did. Did they choose to listen to Albertans who are begging for them to come to terms with that failed decision and reverse that \$200 and let those Albertans spend the money in an economy they want to improve, to buy some groceries, to perhaps afford a prescription, to maybe choose to have a better loaf of bread? That's the kind of decisions people are making. By taking that \$200 out of the mouths of those families, the government is making a statement.

It's also making a statement by saying that this is not a priority. Priority happens to be replacing an existing piece of international trade legislation that already exists on the books rather than looking after the dire needs of people in Alberta, particularly kids and people with disabilities on AISH, who we would rather take \$200 away from than choose to support them properly. That's the priority of this government.

Further, in terms of affordability, Madam Speaker, did the government choose as Bill 1 to take a look at rental assistance in some way, any way, for struggling Albertans, struggling families? Did they look at subsidizing in any way? Did they look at rental caps? Did they look at rental increase limitations by landlords? Did they do anything to make it easier for people to be able to afford their rent and avoid falling right out of the rental market and onto the streets? That's what's happening to a lot of folks. Those folks who are on the streets are there because they've been squeezed right out of the rent market system. Did the government address that and make that as their Bill 1? No. That didn't happen at all. It begs the question: what are the real priorities of this government when the Premier chooses to go ahead and make an International Agreement Act, to simply replace something that's already on the books, their number one priority?

Albertans are listening, Madam Speaker. The number one priority in their books happens to be their ability to make ends meet on a monthly basis, their ability to shelter themselves, to feed themselves, and to even afford maybe to insure their car. You know, to insure a Ford F-150 truck, it costs an 18-year-old probably more

than his truck payment to be able to afford that insurance. It's possibly going to force that individual to maybe try driving without insurance because it costs so much.

What about something else that could have been an easy, low-hanging fruit for this government to choose as Bill 1? Make some allies. Make some allies with people in Alberta who are really hurting. Increase the child tax credit. That's an idea you could have stolen from us. In 2015 to 2019 we increased that child tax credit under the Rachel Notley government to even further the number of children who were no longer living in poverty. We cut the poverty line in half. The number of children living below the poverty line was cut in half by an increase in the child tax credit at a time, Madam Speaker, when we were under tremendous fiscal restraint, tremendous budget pressures. The price of oil was below zero, and we still did that because that's the priority of a New Democrat government: to look after people, to look after children, to look after those most vulnerable and not able to help themselves. That's the responsibility of government.

But is this government choosing to do that as their number one priority? Nah. Not at all. Not even close. They're looking at rehashing a piece of legislation that could have been left on the books and dealt with at another time and making Bill 1 to demonstrate to people in this province that they really, truly understand what's going on in this province, which is that people are hurting. Take a page out of the book of the New Democratic Party and make sure that people are not living in poverty, but in a way that has some dignity to it. We cut child poverty in half even when the price of oil was below zero. Now this government requires \$75-a-barrel oil to break even.

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

**Mr. Getson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thanks to the folks opposite. This has been very enlightening. It's been a good summer. It's been a good break for session. It's good to be back here. Bill 1 is the topic of the day, and it's an International Agreements Act. To the members opposite: I really appreciate the insight you provided to the Chamber here. Back of the napkin, I think we're spending about \$2,000 a minute to hear what you guys are saying, so this is money well spent for taxpayers when you start talking about incentives and kickbacks and whatever else you guys have been going on about.

**Mr. Sabir:** Point of order.

**Mr. Getson:** Well, that didn't take long.

#### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

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

**Mr. Sabir:** Madam Speaker, I rise pursuant to 23(j). The member just referred to the remarks of my colleague from Edmonton-McClung in such a disrespectful manner that will likely create disorder in this House. He can disagree with members' comments, he can come up with whatever he wants to share with the House, but speaking like this to the remarks of another member of this Legislature is certainly disrespectful and it will cause disorder in this House.

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

**Mr. Yao:** Madam Speaker, the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland said nothing offensive. There was nothing disrespectful said there. I would counter the opposition's claims that there was disrespectful wording chosen that's no different than anything the members across the way say about this side of the House. Perhaps the member across the way could give a little bit more clarity as to what was offensive there, because I heard nothing.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any others?

Seeing none, I think this is a great opportunity to reset this balance in the House, as we're really just early into the debate of Bill 1 here. I would urge all members to think that your mother is watching and will be very disappointed in some of the words that are said, as I would be. So the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has the floor and knows his mother is watching.

5:30

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Getson:** Thanks, Madam Speaker. I think, reading through the lines there, we're all a little befuddled of what our mothers might have not approved of there. I'm at a little bit of a loss, but we'll continue on.

Understanding how much it costs us to be here as representatives, depending on the size of your constituency, we want to make sure those taxpayers get the bang for their buck. Again, I am very happy that one of the biggest things that we are talking about in Bill 1 – Bill 1 is the International Agreements Act. The members opposite had lamented, if that's allowed to say in here, if it's not going to hurt anyone's feelings, for a while ad nauseam about what was going on, about why we would consider this important. Why would you not just allow the government of Canada to vote and represent Alberta in a number of these agreements?

What we have found – it says right in the legislation itself – is that there are some gaps in that. I can tell you full well, Madam Speaker, over the last several years, being the parliamentary secretary for economic corridor development, which for the record they all voted against back in the day when I made a motion of building pathways across Canada to try to join the economic regions together in doing that, which happens to be the flavour of the day, when you're hearing about projects of national interest, when you're hearing about pipeline corridors, energy corridors, transportation corridors, all of that, even the two parties that were running at the time in the last federal election were mentioning that, so I think Alberta actually led the charge on that.

The Premier for the record also this last May signed up all of the prairie provinces plus the territories on a pact with that for a five-year duration to talk about economic corridors. Internationally, though, however, and the member for Lloydminster – is it Hardisty-Lloydminster?

**An Hon. Member:** Wainwright.

**Mr. Rowswell:** And Vermilion.

**Mr. Getson:** Wainwright. I don't want to mess it up for the good folks back there that have the border city.

He and I were actually part of the Council of State Governments. This is going back three years ago, and this is going to have relevance of why we need to be in those rooms and why we need to tighten it up. We were requested by the German government to go over and talk about energy policy. We also got a chance to visit our consulate right over in Berlin. Interesting place. If you haven't been there, I absolutely recommend it. October 7, October 8 a few years ago, a little bit of an auspicious date there when we were actually on the ground, so it was very interesting in a number of regards.

The issue was there that when we go into this room, we're representing the Council of State Governments and also our respective regions. This is both Canada and U.S. legislators there at the consul. We're speaking about what's taking place in Canada. This is our representation, folks. We had to let our Canadian consul actually know what Alberta did. This is pretty wild. They're supposed to represent the whole country, but we actually had to talk about the portfolios of interest that were in that region. The consul of Quebec – they actually have their own embassy there. Quebec has done this a number of years ago. They got so frustrated with how they were being represented federally that they actually have their own consul. When you think about the transfer payments, Alberta is paying for Quebec's consul and we're also paying for Canada's consul, and we're not getting that representation.

I can tell you full well that when we're out on the road – and I'll take one as an example here. I'm also sitting on The Energy Council. Recently I'm up in Anchorage, Alaska. We've got the consul general from Seattle up on stage; good fella. He's got, you know, his mandates to take care of. We've got a policy-maker from the interior ministry of the United States at the national level. A senator from Alabama gets up and asks about the Keystone XL project: "Where is the national interest? What's going on here?" Again, this is supposed to be a nonpartisan group, which it is when you're in those areas, and they're asking for his constituents down in Alabama – God bless Alabama – what's happening with Keystone XL. His folks are asking about it. The representative from the minister of the interior for the U.S. goes: "We're all about energy solutions. We're interested in everything now. The U.S. administration is very interested in that. We want to work with our partners, et cetera, et cetera."

The consul general from Canada, unfortunately, can't say the same thing. It was lukewarm, tepid at best. He says: "Well, there's not a ton of interest right now. You know, it's kind of tied up in court. We're not sure where the proponents are at. You know what? We're not really sure or certain." That's when I interjected and spoke: "Well, actually, here's where we're at. We are interested. Here's what's taking place." I had to do that kind of behind the scenes.

Roll the clock forward. I'm also part of the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region. I was voted in as vice-president for that national organization; a Canadian president for that. We're down in Washington, DC. We still have another representative and former Speaker – I can say his name now – Mr. Cooper. He's right there. He's doing boots on the ground, God's work, for us down in Washington, and he's carrying on where James Rajotte had left off. Hats off to those gents, carrying on where they left off to be in these rooms.

Now we're going in and we're speaking with Senator Murkowski. For the record at the national level in the U.S. they have two senators per state. It's not like our system. When you're speaking to the senators, you're speaking to only one of two senators per state, regardless of population. These folks have a lot of stroke, a lot of authority there. When we're having these conversations about these international relations, going back and forth, the question came up about border crossings, corridors, pipeline corridors, also the A2A rail project, that corridor crossing, building ships, et cetera, and it came back to Keystone XL.

Now, it's interesting that our Prime Minister, Prime Minister Carney, in the time that I was up in Anchorage, Alaska, where it was tepid, had now had a conversation with the U.S. administration saying that: hey, we're gung ho now on Keystone XL. So those poor representatives that are back and forth there – and I actually went to her and said: "What changed? Like, you guys must have a hard

time. It's like a person using a laser pointer and cats chasing after it because you're not sure which position to have."

Now, take that at the macro level. When we're sitting at the table making these trade agreements, our provinces have different levels of authority than other jurisdictions. Alaska is similar to us because we own our resources, so Alaska has that. Not all states do. Not all countries do either. So when we're in that room talking about this, we have to make sure that our federal government is also respecting that. The other folks across the table don't know, so when they start making these trades or these pacts they may be making, if we don't have that second pause, folks – and I say this to everybody, regardless of whose feelings may be hurt. We need everybody in this room to get onside with that to make sure that our boundaries are still respected.

It's nothing to do with not liking our country, for crying out loud. My family came here in 1751. I kind of love this country, and I've been trying to build these corridors and do that for years to try to build our country up better. But if we're not having a sober second pause, if somebody rightly or wrongly, whether it's a change in intonation or policy or whoever might be at those tables, they may inadvertently – let's give them that benefit of the doubt – make a deal that isn't in our best interest or doesn't respect our items. [interjections] This member is heckling again, and I'm trying to be cordial, but he just doesn't want to do that either.

When we make these deals, we have to have that sober second pause to bring it back here, and that's the relevance of it. That is the absolute relevance.

When I was over in India on a personal vacation, I went to this little India Energy Week that they had last year, a small thing. They've only run it for three years; 70,000 people show up. Dr. Amit Kumar – hats off to him – from the University of Alberta, did our hydrogen plan, was actually a panel member speaking up on stage. He got me an audience with the secretary of energy. So at that time the secretary of energy made time for this person from Alberta on vacation to talk about their energy needs, and the way they explained it was they deal with the U.S. and they deal with Russia. They have to deal with both, so anything that we spoke about that might be out of turn there, anything that upset that balance, then he couldn't talk.

But the conversation – he gave us 45 minutes, which is amazing, and I'm not going to take that much. He gave us 45 minutes to have this conversation, and it came down to one thing that I said to him to understand where Alberta is at. If you want to secure your energy, we need investment in infrastructure, we need help with our economic corridors, we need to be able to put these things through, we need to make sure that you have secure oil, and if we are doing that for your energy needs – because they want both. They do want clean energy. They want as much hydrogen as we can get them, as much biofuel, but they understand there's an energy transition, too, and they're also growing their economy and changing things where they're at for infrastructure.

He says, "If we're doing this, we need to know a business case." And I said, "Well, the business case is that you invest in our stuff; we have long-term, long-lasting relationships and stabilize your energy needs so you have energy security plus your food security." Saskatchewan was there at the same time talking about the pulses and lentils.

The biggest thing that changed the conversation in the room is that I said: "You have to understand that our provinces actually own the energy assets. We own those resources and minerals." I said, "Quite frankly, when our Prime Minister," who was Prime Minister Trudeau at the time, "is telling you there isn't any business case or anything else here, that there is no interest, he has no lead in his pencil to sign a deal; our Premier holds the pen because it belongs

to the provinces." That was the substantive difference when we walked into those rooms and had those communications.

So trust us, folks. I know that you've seen the same thing if you step out of this for a sec, go back and look at your other interactions with other foreign nations and what you may have seen. This is to literally fill some of those gaps and those holes that we have right now to make sure that there is that sober second pause, that we don't inadvertently paint ourselves into a corner or others make deals that aren't in the best interest of Albertans and we can actually say no or correct it for the record before it's too late.

With that, Madam Speaker, I'll turn it back to the floor to the members. I hope that helped and I didn't hurt too many feelings in the process. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to address this bill, Bill 1, that was presented yesterday at second reading by the Minister of Justice for the Premier of Alberta. I've read every word of the Minister of Justice's opening for Bill 1 that's in *Hansard* yesterday, and I want to thank members on the opposite government side, the House leader and the other member who just sat down, for kind of giving a bit of an indication of what's in their minds about Bill 1 and why it's here.

5:40

As many of my colleagues have said and as the Minister of Justice indicates, this bill addresses gaps that were found to exist in the bill called international – what is it called here? [interjections] Yeah. Okay. I got it. The International Trade and Investment Agreements Implementation Act is repealed. It's a bill that was put together in 2000. If, you know, I guess you're hearing suspicions about why this bill has come forward in a revised way now – and those suspicions have been identified by many of my colleagues, and you can find them in *Hansard* as well, when many of my colleagues spoke after the Minister of Justice and talked about their concern – it's because it's 25 years since that previous bill.

Today we're dealing with it. It wasn't dealt with five years ago, it wasn't dealt with six years ago, but today. So if there are concerns and suspicions, it's kind of like the timing is really problematic, and it does feed into this thought that government is trying to, in a way, signal to people across the province who believe in, you know, a separate Alberta that we're going to go it alone and the feds should just back off. That's kind of why some of that suspicion is here. It's 25 years since the previous bill, and gaps are seen today or more recently by this government that need to be addressed.

I do want to say that the Minister of Justice talked about the gap, and I think the last speaker was a little unclear about it. We're not talking about international trade agreements. That was covered by the previous bill. We're talking about agreements that are not trade, that they say were missing in the previous bill. That now will be looked at, I guess, and I think it's worth while to kind of read that out a little bit. The Minister of Justice talked about:

Madam Speaker, if passed, [this act] will replace this legislation ... address gaps to include all international agreements, not just the ones [that are] trade and investment. Whether it's a climate accord, a declaration on social policy, or a multilateral agreement that affects our industries or our communities ...

Now, he kind of throws broad buckets out there. What does he say? "Climate accord, a declaration on social policy, or a multilateral agreement." No real kind of, you know: we, Alberta, had a problem with this, that, or the other thing, and that's what we want to address with this change in this new act that we're bringing forward.

The Government House Leader kind of talked about a number of agreements, whether they be trade agreements or the agreements that are talked about by the Minister of Justice that I just read out: the C-69, the tanker ban, the clean energy, the oversight of industrial carbon tax to provinces, the plastics as toxic, and economic immigration. I gather that the House leader is saying that those aren't the kind of ones that can go to the Supreme Court and that can be argued under the previous bill, which talks about the International Trade and Investment Agreements Implementation Act. I gather he's saying that these kinds of agreements that I just read out, that he talked about, are things that the federal government does, but they're not challengeable. Like my colleague from Calgary-Bhullar-McCall has talked about, the government of Canada was pushed back in 1937 with regard to labour agreements that they are trying to impose upon provinces. The high court then said that that was ultra vires; you can't do that. I gather that the House leader is talking about these agreements that won't go to the Supreme Court, but I think some of these agreements are ones that the government of Alberta has partnered with other provinces and tried to take to court.

This new International Agreements Act I think is trying to cover other kinds of agreements that the Minister of Justice says were gaps, but the timing is suspicious. It's been two years plus that this government has been in place, and they haven't brought this forward before. The times in Alberta are getting somewhat torqued up across this province, and we see this before us, and we're wondering if this is further trying to push that kind of rhetoric forward.

As many of my colleagues have said, Bill 1 gives a great opportunity to talk about a visionary way of addressing other problems, domestic problems that relate to the health and welfare of our citizens. That would have been my choice if I was sitting around Executive Council table. It was our choice in previous years, and, as colleagues have said, you know, it made a great deal of difference.

Madam Speaker, I think there are lots of reasons that I have concerns about the act before us. I will take my seat and let my colleague talk about it as well, but I do see my colleagues in *Hansard*, whether it's Calgary-Bhullar-McCall or others, who have raised many good points about why this bill doesn't meet the needs of Albertans at this time, and I agree with them.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North East.

**Member Gurinder Brar:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The key element of social control is the strategy of distraction that is to divert public attention from important issues and changes decided by political and economic elites, through the technique of flooding continuous distractions and insignificant information.

This is the quote from Noam Chomsky that comes to my mind when I look at the UCP priorities. Does this bill address affordability? No. Does this bill address health care? No. Does this bill address education? No. Does this bill address the economy? No. Then why this bill? Let me share why. This bill is introduced to distract, deflect, and deviate. This UCP government is like a magician. Every time Albertans ask about affordability, health care, or education: poof, they pull another distraction out of their hat. The only problem is that the rabbit is starving, the wand is broken, and the audience has stopped clapping.

Before I move on, Madam Speaker, let us look briefly at a key moment in Canada's constitutional history, the Labour Conventions case of 1937 that my colleague from Calgary-Bhullar-McCall

discussed yesterday in this Assembly. The decision of that case defined how international treaties are implemented within our federation and clarified the boundaries between federal and provincial powers.

5:50

In the early 1930s Canada ratified several International Labour Organization conventions. To implement them, the federal Parliament enacted national laws, but labour relations then, as now, fell under section 92(13) of the Constitution Act, 1867, property and civil rights in the province. The Attorney General of Ontario challenged these laws, and the case reached the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, then our highest court. In 1937 Lord Atkin ruled that while the federal government may sign and ratify treaties, it cannot legislate in provincial jurisdictions simply because a treaty exists. In plain terms, implementation must follow our constitution. Federal treaties that touch provincial matters require provincial legislation.

Here in Alberta the International Trade and Investment Agreements Implementation Act already provides the province authority to decide whether to implement trade agreements made by the federal government or not. Albertans deserve a government that focuses on solutions to real challenges, not one that merely restates settled constitutional law.

Madam Speaker, I meet my constituents at their doors, community events, and town halls where they share their issues with me. They tell me that their groceries, rent, mortgages are through the roof. Wait times in emergency rooms have gone up. Their kids travel one hour each way just to get to overcrowded classrooms. They deserve a life where they don't have to work two jobs to put food on the table. They deserve a life where there is a strong public health care system to take care of them and their family. They deserve a life where their kids get the best education in the world in small classrooms, and they deserve to live in an economy where their kids can find jobs.

Every second of this Assembly is important, Madam Speaker, and it should be focused on the priorities of Albertans. Unfortunately, this government's priorities aren't Albertans' priorities. The key question today is whether this bill does anything to make life better for Albertans. The answer is no. My constituents tell me that they are feeling buried under the weight of the crisis of affordability, of education, and this not-working economy.

For me, there are three ways that my neighbours, my community, and Albertans can be helped. The first is to lighten the load. We know that working two jobs to put food on the table is not the Alberta advantage. In fact, it is a disadvantage. It makes lives harder, shatters dreams, and kills the hopes of a better future. Under this UCP government Alberta has one of the highest insurance costs, lowest minimum wages, and grocery prices continue to go up. A report by MNP projects that for good drivers average premiums are projected to increase by 43.8 per cent between 2023 and 2033. Albertans who do not qualify as good drivers will likely see premiums increase by an average of 148 per cent over the same period. A hundred and forty-eight per cent, Madam Speaker.

In my riding many constituents were quoted home insurance premiums as high as \$21,000. Not only can they not pay this; they can't find any other affordable options. It not only hurts them financially; it hurts them mentally, too. It not only makes it hard to afford homes; it puts their futures at risk, too. They need this government focused on lowering insurance costs, grocery costs, and utility bills. They need their government focused on increasing the minimum wage, youth employment, and their incomes. They want their government focused on building schools, hospitals, and recognizing foreign credentials.

People are working hard yet struggling. People are doing their best yet struggling. People are cutting every corner they can, yet they are struggling. They cannot afford to take any days off. If they get sick, they lose income. We can and must lighten the load of the affordability crisis, Madam Speaker. We can do this by strengthening the path towards a better future, and the path towards a better future is education. [interjections] Thank you. Our kids deserve no less. They deserve a world-class education; they must get it. Public education is an equalizer. We must build schools, we must hire teachers, and we must address classroom complexity.

The UCP fired EAs during the pandemic, when the students needed them the most. The UCP has delayed building schools in my own riding and in the rest of Alberta, forcing kids to be bused an hour each way just to get to the overcrowded classrooms. The UCP has invoked the notwithstanding clause, showing its undemocratic face. Spending money in education is not an expense, Madam Speaker. It is an investment. Every dollar invested in education today will save us \$4 in the future. Not only do we need to create an educated workforce; we need to retain it, too.

That brings me to the third point. We know that having a job gives people dignity, respect, and a sense of purpose. Unemployment steals that away. It makes the young people feel useless. Dreams shattered, bank accounts empty, inability to see the future. Under this UCP government Alberta has the highest unemployment rate, the lowest minimum wage, and rent is going up. Great employment can come only with great education, in particular postsecondary education, helping people get the skills they need and the skills our economy needs. Under this UCP government tuition costs have also gone up. The UCP ended the STEP program. This was a brilliant example of government and businesses working together, good for young people, good for the province, good for the economy. It must be reinstated. And the UCP reduced the minimum wage for young people.

The UCP is the one responsible, that has crushed Albertans with the heavy weight of the rising cost of living, so we cannot trust this

government to fix it. To the Premier, who thinks that she can lower insurance premiums with a private no-fault system, I want to say that that system has failed in the United States.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, can you just tie it to the bill?

**Member Gurinder Brar:** Madam Speaker, I'm talking about the priorities that people have shared with me in my constituency. This government and this bill have not listed any of those priorities. I am speaking to that bill. [interjections] I know they don't like to listen to what the true priorities are, but we have to discuss that.

I want to say to the Premier, who thinks that forcing kids and teachers back to school by passing a bill that violated the Charter of Rights is helpful, that forcing kids back to complex, underfunded, and overcrowded classrooms is cruel.

We are facing big problems in Alberta, Madam Speaker, and we need big solutions. We can tackle these problems, we must tackle these problems, and given the chance, we will tackle these problems. President Franklin D. Roosevelt has said, and I quote: "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little." This government has failed to do that. We can give an affordable life to Albertans, we can fund education, we can build a better future, and we can build a better world. We can give people a life of dignity, respect, and hope.

Madam Speaker, let's make life more affordable, dreams attainable, schools well funded, future sustainable. Let's give our youth not just degrees but direction, jobs with purpose, pride, and protection. This bill fails to do just that. I would like all members to have a detailed look at this bill and make sure . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but the clock strikes 6, and the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]





## Table of Contents

|                                                                    |        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Prayers .....                                                      | 87     |
| Introduction of Visitors .....                                     | 87     |
| Introduction of Guests .....                                       | 87     |
| Members' Statements                                                |        |
| Access to Diagnostic Health Services .....                         | 87     |
| Hindu Heritage Month .....                                         | 88     |
| Lacombe Police Service 125th Anniversary .....                     | 88     |
| Government Policies and Cost of Living .....                       | 88     |
| Charlie Kirk .....                                                 | 88     |
| Education and Childcare Minister .....                             | 89     |
| Oral Question Period                                               |        |
| Collective Bargaining with Teachers .....                          | 89     |
| Teacher Recruitment and Retention .....                            | 89     |
| Alberta in Canada .....                                            | 90     |
| Investigation of Health Services Procurement .....                 | 91, 94 |
| COVID-19 Vaccination Policies .....                                | 91     |
| Access to Diagnostic Health Services .....                         | 92     |
| Affordable Housing .....                                           | 92     |
| Government Policies .....                                          | 93     |
| Coal Development Policies .....                                    | 93     |
| Pipeline Development .....                                         | 94     |
| Collection of Class Size and Complexity Data .....                 | 95     |
| Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage .....                     | 95     |
| School Construction in Airdrie .....                               | 96     |
| Tabling Returns and Reports .....                                  | 96     |
| Orders of the Day .....                                            | 99     |
| Government Motions .....                                           | 99     |
| Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech ..... | 99     |
| Government Bills and Orders                                        |        |
| Second Reading                                                     |        |
| Bill 1     International Agreements Act .....                      | 109    |

