



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, October 30, 2025

Day 5

The Honourable Ric McIver, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

Second Session

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New Democrat: 38

Independent: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, October 30, 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 to his government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideals but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Hon. members, we will now be led in the singing of *God Save the King* by Anika Stork. I invite you all to participate.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Our royal anthem singer today is Anika Stork. Anika is a lifelong Albertan who served the Assembly for three years with visitor services as an educational guide and occasionally as Legislature mascot Rocky the Ram. While encouraging others to participate in our democracy, she convinced herself to do so and is now in her first year of the juris doctor program at the University of Alberta. She hopes to find a career in constitutional or administrative law and is grateful for today's front-row seat to what is normally her homework. Welcome.

No school groups today. Introduction of guests, Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise today and introduce to you and through you my wife, Mary; my brother, Philip; and his wife. It's a good day to have family in the Legislature, so please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Ms Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague from Edmonton-Manning I'd like to introduce through you and to you three constituents of theirs. Sarah Wilson, who is a teacher, and Sarah's children, Calleigh Cardinal and Charlie Cardinal. If they could stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: For a change, let's go to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Ms Wright: Same thing. If they could stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House: Calleigh and her brother Charlie and Sarah, her mother.

Thank you.

Members' Statements

Food Bank Use

Ms Goehring: Mr. Speaker, last year I rose to speak about affordability and the financial strain on Albertans because of this government's policies, but the strain on Albertans is growing this year. My colleagues and I hear from constituents every day about how things have only become worse under the UCP's leadership. The new annual Hunger Count report from Food Banks Canada confirms it. Albertans are turning to the food bank in alarming numbers. Visits have surged by 134 per cent since this government took office: more than 210,000 visits last year alone, and 76,000 of them involved children.

In the last year usage of food banks has jumped here more than 21 per cent. That's a clear sign that Albertans cannot keep up with the cost of buying groceries. Behind every food bank visit is a story: a parent skipping meals so their kids can eat, a senior choosing between medication and groceries, a worker juggling multiple jobs and still coming up short at the end of the month. These are not outliers, but with high unemployment this is the lived reality for too many.

The cost-of-living crisis goes even further. This government continues to burden Albertans with the highest auto insurance rates, tuition hikes, no rent caps, to name just a few of the costs making life harder than ever. The government could take action today, but they have shown that making sure Albertans can afford healthy food is not their priority. They'd rather spend millions running attack ads against teachers.

No Albertan should have to choose between a meal and paying their bills. Albertans deserve better. Mr. Speaker, I sincerely hope that next year I will not have to speak to the issue of food security or affordability for my constituents, but without a plan from the UCP I doubt this will be the case.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose.

Mobile Health Clinics

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to bring awareness to the importance of the mobile clinics program here in Alberta. Access to quality health care should never depend on where you live, yet for many Albertans in rural areas, including my Camrose constituency, specialized cancer screening clinics can be hours away. This distance often leads to delayed diagnosis and increased health risks. Not every community has reasonable access to these essential health services, which is why mobile clinics are so important. They bridge the gap by bringing vital screening services such as lung cancer screening and mammograms directly to rural communities. These clinics reduce travel time, improve early detection rates, and ensure rural residents receive the same level of care as those in urban centres.

Mr. Speaker, research tells us that early detection saves lives. It's critical to spot early health conditions before they develop into something much more serious. 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 it's so important to champion innovative solutions like mobile clinics to help Albertans in rural communities. It's about providing faster care. It's about improving health outcomes for Albertans and ensuring they have access to health services they need when they need it.

Alberta's government also extended the Alberta lung cancer screening program with a one-year \$2 million grant supported by an additional \$500,000 from the Alberta Cancer Foundation until

its permanent implementation in 2026. This program has effectively screened over 3,800 eligible individuals and detected nearly 90 per cent of lung cancer at an early stage.

Investing in mobile clinics is not simply about convenience; it's about fairness and equity. I urge this Assembly to continue supporting and expanding mobile clinics.

Government Policies and Youth

Member Batten: Alberta isn't an easy place for young people right now. Their futures are being shaped by ideological decisions and misplaced priorities by a government that finds time and millions of dollars for vanity licence plates but not for investing in essential public services. What once was the gold standard for education is now underresourced and overcrowded. Young Albertans are witnessing this government claim to support education while undermining the very professionals dedicated to helping them learn and succeed. All the while young Albertans face record high unemployment and the lowest minimum wage in the country despite some of the highest cost of living. The math just doesn't add up, and judging by the UCP's curriculum, maybe that shouldn't be such a surprise.

Now, young Albertans have been doing much more than just watching and listening, Mr. Speaker. They are showing strength, standing with and for their teachers. They are having complicated conversations about the world around them and the future they want. They understand that they play an active role in the history that's being written right now. Invest in our futures now before we are the adults making the decisions for you: that's a message from a fierce group of grade 7 students from the constituency of Calgary-Acadia.

1:40

Just like these students, all Albertans deserve access to high-quality public education and public health care, good-paying jobs, affordable housing, and communities where they can thrive. Mr. Speaker, supporting Albertans is the only path forward.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

Official Opposition

Mr. Lundy: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we return to the Legislature for the fall session, like many Albertans, I'm curious. Just what do the NDP and their new leader stand for? To be honest, I wonder if they even like their own party, having recently passed some vague motion to distance themselves from the mother ship at the last political gathering. Now, I don't watch a lot of romantic comedies, but it sure seems like there's an "it's not you; it's me" breakup going on within the NDP right now. Maybe their new party tag line should be: 10 things I hate about you.

Look no further than last spring's federal election. The principled thing for the NDP to do would have been to rally around their boss and leader, Jagmeet Singh. Instead, what we saw was a hilarious exodus to the federal Liberals, including tacit endorsements, thinly veiled co-ordinated costume time in this Chamber, and even a resignation to run for them federally. All it took was for the central party to start dipping in the polls, and the opposition were immediately entranced into some sort of elbows up fever dream. I imagine that future federal progressive leaders must be racking their brains to come up with other hockey-related catchphrases to seduce Alberta's NDP. "What if we tell them to keep their sticks on the ice or hustle hard on the backcheck? They will do anything we want."

At the very least, you might have expected that after stabbing their own party in the back, the NDP would be willing to agree with

the new federal government when it comes to developing projects that would benefit Alberta, but of course you would be wrong. The NDP are choosing instead to fight our government's plan to develop a new bitumen pipeline project. What a shameful and confusing mess. First they sell their soul; then they sell out Albertans. The UCP are proud to be Conservative. We will always stand up for Alberta, promote free enterprise, and support our world-leading energy sector. The NDP? Honestly, who knows? Most days it feels like their principles are as shaky as a goalie with a weak five-hole.

Affordable Housing in Bow Valley

Dr. Elmeligi: There's an adage in the Bow Valley: the longer you stay here, the more people you'll lose. This used to be about the unpredictable mountain environment we call home, but now it's about the community members we lose because they can no longer afford to stay. People like my good friend Sean, who, even though he and his wife work two full-time, good-paying jobs, were forced to move their family to B.C., or Judy, who is living in her car because she can't afford to retire in Canmore after living there for over 30 years. The lack of affordable housing is the biggest issue facing Canmore. Doctors, nurses, teachers, servers, hospitality workers, young entrepreneurs, and community builders can't settle down in our town simply because they can't afford to stay. For years the town of Canmore has worked tirelessly to implement various affordable housing programs with no support from this government.

What has this government done? Well, first, the LGFF reduced municipal funding. Then the government downloaded close to \$5 million a year of additional cost to the municipality for everything from social programs to policing. Then they criticized the town's permitting processes rather than supporting efficiency improvements. They didn't support the town's request for federal funding through the housing accelerator fund, and they didn't want to pass the resort municipality status motion when I brought it forward in 2023, which would have provided crucial funding.

Canmore and Banff contribute \$1.2 billion to the provincial economy annually, but the cost of tourism-related infrastructure falls to municipal budgets of small towns. So what do they get for the amazing contribution to our province? No support for affordable housing; in fact, just more government overreach that actively undermines local decision-making. Residents of the Bow Valley deserve beautiful, affordable, livable communities to thrive, and their government should have their backs.

Support for Education

Mr. Kasawski: Mr. Speaker, there used to be two Conservative parties in this province, and now there are none. Former education minister David King said, "Any government that undermines or abandons the project of improving public-school education in the face of difficulty is undermining and abandoning democracy." Yet here we are. By cutting budgets, the government is cutting into the very heart of what keeps our economy and democracy alive, an educated and informed public. This government talks a big game about freedom and opportunity, but they're the ones taking both away.

Teachers are doing their best to stay afloat in a system that keeps asking for more while giving them less. Across this province, including the hamlet of Sherwood Park, support for teachers has grown stronger every day. Parents and communities see what is happening. They see the overcrowded classrooms, the growing list of special needs without support, and the rising costs that teachers are covering out of their own pockets. Now they see a government

ignoring the Charter, forcing teachers back to work without a fair deal or the right to negotiate.

It doesn't have to be this way. I believe Albertans want fair, transparent, and honest governing. I believe the majority want competent and ethical government. Alberta has every advantage a province could hope for. We have the natural resources and the talent and the drive to be the best place in the country to raise a family and build a future. What we don't have right now is a government that reflects those values. What we have is a kakistocracy.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 4 Public Safety and Emergency Services Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2)

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I'm pleased to rise and introduce Bill 4, the Public Safety and Emergency Services Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2).

This legislation focuses on changes to support the government's work to keep Albertans safe and secure. Mr. Speaker, I hereby move first reading of Bill 4, the Public Safety Emergency Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2).

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Protected Areas.

Bill 7 Water Amendment Act, 2025

Ms Schulz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to move first reading of Bill 7, the Water Amendment Act, 2025.

If passed, this act will modernize Alberta's water management system and help make more water available for farmers, ranchers, businesses, and growing communities while continuing to protect our environment. The amendments we are proposing are based on the feedback we heard from Albertans over the past year. I hope members on both sides of the House will support this important legislation, and I ask that we move first reading of Bill 7.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Bill 201 Employment Standards (Protecting Workers' Pay) Amendment Act, 2025

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted to rise today to request leave to introduce a bill being Bill 201, the Employment Standards (Protecting Workers' Pay) Amendment Act, 2025.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta is in an unprecedented affordability crisis, and this bill will help address it. It will raise the minimum wage, it will get rid of the youth differential, and it would protect workers' tips as well. I hope that all members of this House will join me in supporting this increase to wages to help Albertans.

With that, I move first reading of Bill 201. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 201 read a first time]

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The first question of the day belongs to the Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Investigation of Health Services Procurement

Mr. Nenshi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Justice intimated that Judge Wyant did not even ask to interview any politician or political staffer in his investigation into the billion dollar plus corrupt care scandal, yet Judge Wyant mentions in his report that people declined to be interviewed, people interviewed declined to answer questions put to them in the interview, and some people's testimony was not credible because it was not given under oath. Can the government categorically confirm today that Justice Wyant did not ask to interview any politician or staffer implicated in this scandal?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, Judge Wyant's report confirmed what we've been saying all along and that is, again, that not a single member of this government was implicated in any of the allegations or acted improperly. I also said – and let me correct the Leader of the Opposition – that no member of the government caucus, any cabinet minister, any member of the public service, or any senior political staffer declined any interviews with Judge Wyant.

Mr. Nenshi: Fascinating. If they didn't decline the interviews yet they were not interviewed, it means they weren't asked, which means that with all the time and all the taxpayer money the judge didn't think to talk to the people at the heart of the scandal, or could it be because, as the judge says on his very first page, his scope was so limited by this government that he couldn't get to the truth? Given that hundreds of millions if not billions of dollars have been diverted from front-line services to line the pockets of the UCP's friends, will this government finally commit to a real public inquiry, not a sham investigation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again, Judge Wyant's investigation was fully independent. Judge Wyant directed the interviews. Judge Wyant chose the people that he wanted to interview. Judge Wyant is the one that reviewed 2 and a quarter million documents and interviewed 26 people. It was up to Judge Wyant to decide who he wanted to interview. I've said it before and I'll say it again: no member of this government declined any interviews.

Mr. Nenshi: Mr. Speaker, I've never seen a judge's inquiry that on its very first page says, "I couldn't do what I wanted to do" until this one. That is this government's, not this judge's, fault.

I'm so interested that it's the Minister of Justice who keeps defending this, in fact, defending by name the company at the centre of this scandal, which just so happens to be owned by his best friend, relative, bro, hockey buddy, and travel partner. Albertans have been told over and over again that the minister had nothing to do with this. So why doesn't the minister recuse himself from everything to do with this scandal?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Amery: Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker, and once again the member of the opposition really has no clue. My office is not investigating anything. I am not investigating anything. An independent judge conducted an investigation and came up with the

conclusions that there was no wrongdoing or improper acting by any member of the government. Here's what they did find. Judge Wyant found that AHS failed to follow its procurement practices, that the senior leadership of AHS failed to oversee some of the practices that were taking place. That's why we've taken action.

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

Mr. Nenshi: I do appreciate that the minister admits that he doesn't do anything except he stands up here and defends things he had nothing to do with, which says a lot about how this government works.

School Class Sizes and Learning Supports

Mr. Nenshi: Speaking of that, this government seems to think they've solved the problem in public education at 2 o'clock in the morning on Tuesday, but it's not going away. Students are walking out of class, there are no extracurricular activities in many schools, and the ability to reduce class size is just a pipe dream. Beyond this mythical task force, what is the government doing today to help students catch up for all their lost learning from their engineered strike?

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I reject the characterization that we engineered this strike. We've been bargaining with the Alberta Teachers' Association for 18 months. At the very end we had invited the Alberta Teachers' Association to participate in enhanced mediation, and they rejected.

That being said, I of course want to prioritize finding opportunities for our students to recover lost learning. That has to be priority number one, and it is, and we'll be talking a little bit more about diplomas and other exams as well to make sure that students have every opportunity to learn.

Mr. Nenshi: You know, Mr. Speaker, I love hearing so much from this minister because he keeps telling on himself. He just said that we offered enhanced mediation. That enhanced mediation offer was: give up all your power, and we won't talk about the things you want to talk about. What did they think the teachers were going to say?

Yesterday the minister admitted to the media that he's only just now looking into what other provinces are doing to manage class sizes. He's been the minister for two and a half years. In that time he has built next to no schools. He has introduced a faulty curriculum. We ask students to do their homework. Why can't the minister do his?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, I'm not sure what the member opposite is referring to. We've been looking very carefully at situations and crossjurisdictional comparisons of educational policy for many years, and always we look to see what other provinces are doing when it comes to class sizes, when it comes to dealing with complexity, working with other ministers to share best practices. This is a common practice and something that I engage in regularly. So I'm not sure where the member is getting his information from, but it's incredibly incorrect.

Mr. Nenshi: Well, the minister may recall what he said in a podcast interview just yesterday that maybe last night he would start looking at what other provinces are doing on class sizes.

Mr. Speaker, I've been trying all week to figure out if this is malice or incompetence. I still think it's both, though that answer makes me think incompetence might be winning the day. The

minister allowed this to happen. Even if he was only operating under the Premier's orders to engineer this strike, this minister needs to take responsibility. If he's not willing to resign, will he at least apologize today on behalf of the Premier and this government to teachers, parents, and students for what they engineered?

The Speaker: The House leader.

Mr. Schow: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think now is a great time to remind the Leader of the Opposition that he is no longer in the city hall chambers in Calgary. He's in the Alberta Legislature, and he does not get to talk down to members of the Legislature like he would speak down to so many people who came before the chamber in Calgary, and there are several records of it.

But I can tell you that that minister is not going anywhere and has a fantastic record in this province, including investing \$10 billion more than any other government in history in our province, reducing child care fees to \$15 a day, and also building schools in Manning, Milk River, Red Deer, Sherwood Park, Camrose, Edmonton . . .

The Speaker: For the third set of questions, the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Nenshi: I'm so happy to be talked to by that minister about how other people are treated. At least he didn't suggest that I should be spanked.

Influenza Vaccine Availability

Mr. Nenshi: I got my flu shot yesterday, and I spoke with a bunch of patients and a bunch of pharmacists who were deeply upset about the entire situation. Yesterday the minister said that she thought pharmacists were happy. Perhaps she should talk to a pharmacist, maybe when she gets her own shot. What I heard was deep discontent. Why is this government making it so much harder for people to get vaccinated?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I heard the member opposite just say was that he, in fact, does not fall into the high-risk category, that he was able to go to a pharmacy, and he was able to get his COVID vaccination. We are continuing with our targeted approach, and in fact what I said yesterday was that the pharmacists that were going into the continuing care facilities to actually provide COVID vaccines and flu shots for those patients are happy with the rollout. That is exactly what I said.

Mr. Nenshi: The confusion in the minister's answer reflects the confusion in this government. I got a flu shot. I still haven't got my COVID shot, despite being in the high-risk group, because I can't get an appointment.

People are waiting, calling 811, waiting for hours if they even answer. Some public health clinics, if you can find them, take walk-ins; some do not. The whole thing is a debacle, and people are not getting their flu shots. One tip I heard: show up just before they close, and if there's any left, you'll get one. Why is the advice of the people who know what they're doing being ignored in favour of this make-it-up-as-you-go-along vaccine rollout?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite said people are not getting their flu shot. That is incorrect. There have been no changes to the flu shot distribution, Mr.

Speaker. In fact, 811, while they had an increase in calls, having spoken to the CEO of PCA today, Primary Care Alberta, she indicated that the calls were coming back to a more regular amount, and they had added additional supports, additional resources to meet the increased demand. We are seeing good uptake.

2:00

Mr. Nenshi: The minister can't even explain her own program. How are Albertans supposed to get it? She keeps talking about the NACI recommendations, but she doesn't mention that this government is picking and choosing amongst those recommendations. NACI says everyone over 65 should get a free vaccine, that people who work in every community environment should get a free vaccine, and many others that this government is excluding. Instead, the government has set up this ridiculous system. It's wasteful. It's gatekeeping. It encourages people to lie about their health status. I have an idea: how about we put a marker on our drivers' licences showing who's allowed to get vaccinated?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to hear the member opposite occasionally has an idea, but what we really need to look at is the fact that NACI, which is the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, in fact, did not recommend general immunization for the whole population this year. They recommended a targeted approach for those at highest risk, and that is what we have done to make sure that those at higher risk have access.

Minimum Wage Rate

Ms Ganley: Alberta is in an affordability crisis. People are working multiple jobs and still can't afford their rent and their groceries. It's because their wages aren't keeping pace. Albertans live with this stress every day, and the UCP's answer? Resounding silence. Alberta has the lowest minimum wage in the country. People are struggling just to get by. When is the UCP going to wake up and do something about it?

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I get to the answer of the question, I would like to pose a question to the members opposite. If anyone on the government side of this House spoke to a female member like the Leader of the Opposition just spoke to the health minister, would they accept that? Are they okay with the way the Leader of the Opposition is speaking to the minister of health? Not talking about policy. There wasn't even a question when he stood. It was simply a personal attack. I condemn that with the strongest terms, and I hope the members opposite in the female caucus would do the same.

Ms Ganley: Mr. Speaker, oh, boy, with that.

The UCP loves to spin a yarn about that and the minimum wage and saying that it's costing jobs, especially for youth. But let's look at the facts. Between 2015 and 2019 the minimum wage increased. The sector most heavily impacted, accommodation and food services, added jobs every year, over 13,000. Alberta has the lowest minimum wage in the country, an even lower youth minimum wage, and the highest unemployment. When is this government going to stop making up excuses and start raising wages?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. If we take a step back in history, we will see

that when the NDP raised the minimum wage disproportionately, it had a tremendously negative effect on the private sector. But what's worse is they did not consult the private sector on this and how it would affect them. In this province we believe strongly that if we're going to do something as dramatic as raise the minimum wage, we're first going to consult . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. That's what I meant when I said that, that we stop talking, right? We heard the question, which I think is very good, even if we didn't like the question. Now we're going to hear the answer even if we don't like the answer. That's how it works.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If we're going to raise the minimum wage in the dramatic fashion the NDP is proposing, we would first like to consult businesses and ask them how it's going to affect them. That's how this works.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I mean, in terms of dramatic the affordability crisis is pretty dramatic. Alberta has the lowest minimum wage in the country. It hasn't gone up in seven years. Albertans living on minimum wage, over 40 per cent of whom are parents, are living under constant stress. While this UCP government tells workers they just have to keep waiting, they tell insurance companies they can enjoy a 15 per cent increase. Why does this government think it's acceptable for corporations generating billions in profits to get 15 per cent while the lowest paid workers get nothing?

Mr. Schow: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would agree with the member opposite on the fact that people are concerned about employment. That's why this government has taken real steps in investing in youth and making sure they can get that first piece of work experience. That's why we introduced the youth hiring incentive to help derisk employers who are looking to bring on youth into their workforce. We're also making tremendous investments in the private sector to make sure they're bringing new companies, new manufacturing here to Alberta. That is the issue. It's about access to a job. That's what brings dignity to Albertans, and that's what we're focusing on.

The Speaker: Question 5, which is the first one without preambles on the supplementaries, goes to the Member for St. Albert.

AISH Client Benefits

Ms Renaud: In 1979 Premier Peter Lougheed's government created and passed the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Act, making Alberta the first province to introduce comprehensive income support legislation for disabled Albertans. Premier Lougheed's government shifted welfare-style supports to a rights-based income and recognized disability as a lifelong permanent condition, not a setback. Fast-forward 46 years: we have an authoritarian government undoing almost 50 years of stability. To the minister. Disabled Albertans protesting right outside these doors want to know why.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we have a great AISH program in this province. It's the Cadillac of disability programs anywhere in the country. It is established by law by this Chamber. It has been indexed by this side of the House, not by that side of the House, and it's going nowhere. But what is also happening: we're going to be the only other province who brings on a supporting disability

program that allows thousands of people that are facing disabilities but are also in the workforce who could not get on AISH because it's only for people who cannot work. This government is bringing in two disability programs to bring in the most supports in the history of disabilities.

Ms Renaud: Given that this government's revolutionary idea for 80,000 severely disabled Albertans is to blow up AISH, move everybody to a new program they call ADAP, cut core benefits by \$200, tell them they can work and call it a day, given that this dangerously ableist plan as described by this government is a thinly disguised cut wrapped in a ridiculous employment plan for disabled Albertans, to the minister. Disabled Albertans protesting right outside this door want to know why.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, Alberta has the highest disability payment in the country, and ADAP will also be the highest in the country. In fact, it's \$554 higher than NDP Manitoba, \$417 higher than NDP B.C., and over \$100 higher than the federal government. But that member has never risen in this House or supported the government's call on the federal government to fund disabled seniors at the same level as Alberta. She only cares about politics; she does not care about the disabled community.

Ms Gray: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:08.

Ms Renaud: Given that it's impossible to put a price on stability and predictability for people navigating life with a severe, profound disability and given this government's dangerous plan for 80,000 disabled Albertans will harm thousands – thousands will apply for MAID; thousands will die – this government's legacy will be one of corruption, cruelty beyond description, and authoritarianism. How do you justify that, especially to disabled Albertans right outside this door?

The Speaker: The hon. member will address the chair in the future.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what this side of the House rejects, the NDP's call to lower AISH payments to similar provinces. She continues to stand in this House and ask the government to go the way of other socialist provinces that are led by the NDP Party that pay almost \$500 less. This government is committed to the highest payments in the country, maintaining AISH, and better yet, doing what the NDP never did, which is making a second disability program to care for those with disabilities in the workforce. We're going to create supports for thousands of more Albertans while they sit on the sidelines and do nothing.

The Speaker: The Member for Grande Prairie.

2:10

Pipeline Development

Mr. Dyck: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Global demand for Alberta's energy resources has reached unprecedented levels, yet due to bad federal policy and antienergy policies that have hindered energy development, our province has been unable to build the pipeline infrastructure for Albertans to fully capitalize on this opportunity. Can the Minister of Energy and Minerals please tell us the estimated amount of private investment Alberta's energy sector has missed out on as a direct result of these bad federal policies?

Mr. Jean: Thanks to the hard-working member for the question, Mr. Speaker. I'm kind of wondering why the NDP, the No-

Development Party, keep supporting the nine naughty federal laws. They do. Maybe it's because they don't understand as we do on this side that the Conference Board of Canada reports that an estimated nearly \$1 trillion – that's with a "t" – in economic activity is lost to Alberta's economy between 2030 and 2050 if these laws don't change. Could the NDP please stand up for the people of Alberta and ask for those nine naughty laws to be gotten rid of, please? Talk to their BFF in Ottawa and make that happen because it's the . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for that answer. Given the very urgent need to expand our pipeline infrastructure to increase Alberta's capacity to transport our energy products to international markets and further given that rapidly growing economies in Asia are actively seeking access to our energy, to the Minister of Energy and Minerals: can you please tell us what our government is doing to ensure Alberta's energy products can get to high-demand global markets?

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, Alberta is home to the most responsibly produced oil in the world. We should be an energy superpower. Demand continues to grow globally, especially in Asia. The demand is insatiable, and we are committed to doubling our oil production to meet that demand. But we need more pipelines, especially to the northwest coast of Canada. We are acting as a proponent to develop a world-class pipeline for the national projects list. Good news, indeed. This pipeline will then be built by industry in partnership with First Nations. Best for Canada, best for Alberta, best for B.C., best for everybody. This pipeline will turn us into an energy superpower, and the people will receive the benefit.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Dyck: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, given the very critical importance of launching new energy pipeline projects by private-sector investors and further given the importance of working collaboratively to build the nation-building infrastructure and create very good jobs for hard-working Albertans, can the Minister of Indigenous Relations inform this Assembly of the government's plans to work in partnership with other provinces and Indigenous communities to get pipeline infrastructure built?

Mrs. Sawhney: Thank you to the hon. member for that question. Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes that lasting success in energy development depends on strong, collaborative relationships. We are working closely with Indigenous communities and neighbouring provinces to advance responsible nation-building projects. At the Nation2Nation conference in Kitimat I heard first-hand about the importance of building trust and ensuring that Indigenous voices guide key decisions. These efforts will create lasting community benefits, strengthen Alberta's leadership in Canada's energy sector, and support the responsible development of pipeline infrastructure.

Teachers' Attendance

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Mr. Speaker, this UCP government, as authoritarian as they come, took away the Charter of Rights from teachers with one fell swoop. They stripped them of their rights and forced them back to work with threatening big fines for noncompliance with their antidemocratic legislation. But it gets worse. In another new rule schools must track and report every single teacher's absence to the government every single day. Will

the minister explain why this government is forcing schools to report the absences province-wide of teachers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of education.

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand, of course, that our department is keenly interested to understand if there's any need for us to work to deploy additional resources if some teachers are unable to come to class to make sure that students have the full learning complement that they need in order to continue on with their studies. We're working very collaboratively with our school divisions to see what we can do to help and assist them during this time of transition.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Rutherford.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Albertans will recall the minister and his heavy-handed book-banning policy to remove books like *1984* from classrooms and given that the overreach is just like something Big Brother would do and given that the minister won't count class sizes but now demands to count teacher absences and given that spying on teachers will do nothing to build trust after legislating them back to work, why does this minister need to know where and when teachers are in the classroom?

Mr. Nicolaides: I think I just addressed that question earlier, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, we want to work carefully with our school divisions to make sure that they have all of the staffing supports that they need to be able to support students in their classrooms during this time of transition. We're working very closely and collaboratively with them to see what we can do to help and assist them. I'm really glad to see that our students are back in the classroom, where they need to be. They've lost out on three weeks of learning, which dramatically impacts their achievements, and we're happy to see them getting back to school.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Given that they are doing this so they can fine teachers and given that teachers help Alberta students learn to follow the rules of our society – and we are thankful for that – but given teachers don't know whether the fines are coming if they stop voluntary activities like supervising recess or the basketball team and given that teachers are feeling like they're being spied on by this extremist, authoritarian government, will the minister stop the scare tactics, drop the government attack ads on teachers, and resign?

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, I am bewildered every time the members opposite call for the hon. minister of education to resign. I don't think they have a clue what they are talking about. This is the same minister who is investing billions of dollars in building new schools, hiring thousands of new teachers and thousands of new educational assistants, building schools all across this province. There's a reason why the members opposite were rejected twice in a row now. It's because Albertans disagree with them, writ large, on the nonsense that they spew. You just heard it.

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

Automobile Insurance Rates

Mr. Ellingson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has now been a year since the minister informed Albertans that this government would advance a so-called care-first model for auto insurance. At the same time the minister told Albertans he would allow insurance companies to increase premiums by 15 per cent. That second increase is coming soon. I'm curious. How does the minister respond to his constituents

that couldn't afford \$150 last year, never mind being clobbered by the same amount again this year?

The Speaker: The hon. government Finance minister.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We continue to move towards the new system, the care-first system, which will be implemented January 1, 2027. We are in this transition period right now where we've dealt with a great many challenges when it comes to auto insurance. Another major hailstorm. We've all seen the inflationary pressures and what they've have done to the price of vehicles. What we did with the good driver rate cap, holding it at 7.5 per cent. We still have the profit provision. That is still at 6 per cent. We lowered that a per cent a couple of years ago to ensure that oversight. If you look at the GISA data, insurers in this province . . .

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

Mr. Ellingson: Well, given that insurance companies make more while Albertans pay more and given that Albertans struggle to understand how the supposed \$400 savings with the no-fault system come when their premiums increased by maybe \$150 last year and given that the Insurance Bureau of Canada has published a report saying Albertans would not see the promised cost savings, how can the minister keep a straight face when telling his constituents that this no-fault system will save them money?

Mr. Horner: With my straightest face possible, sir, I would tell Albertans, like the member just said, that insurance companies are making a lot of money. From GISA, the General Insurance Statistical Agency for Alberta's data: in 2024 they lost 1 and a quarter billion dollars. The good driver rate cap is subsidizing insurance currently in this province. That's hard for Albertans to see, but it's costing less than it would have within our old system. This is why we need to move to the new system. The insurance agencies will tell you they are excited to see how tight the tort window is, and there will be updated . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

2:20

Mr. Ellingson: Mr. Speaker, given that this government paid for a report that told them that the no-fault, privately delivered auto insurance system was not the option that provided the greatest level of savings to Albertans; given that Ontario has a similar system, that delivers the only system in Canada with higher premiums than Alberta; and given that our neighbouring Conservative province of Saskatchewan has a public system delivering significantly lower premiums, did the minister really consider all options before deciding on the no-fault model?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I've heard the opposition say that they would like a publicly delivered tort system, which would be the most expensive in both cases. It would take \$3 billion at least and over five years to build a public insurer. We're moving towards this model by January 1, 2027. The insurance companies are the delivery agent of the current system while they're building their software to help us deliver the care-first model, which will have the highest benefits for Albertans. You won't need to lawyer up if you need medical benefits over 50 grand that last longer than two years.

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

Lesser Slave Lake Constituency Boundaries

Mr. Sinclair: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to stand up for the residents of Lesser Slave Lake while I still can, anyhow. On Tuesday this UCP government tabled proposed changes to the electoral boundaries which included deleting the riding of Lesser Slave Lake. Given that northerners will have gone from 13 MLAs in 2001 to only nine in 2027 if this passes and further given that if we don't stand up now, it seems inevitable that perhaps we wake up with only two MLAs in all of northern Alberta, to the Minister of Justice: even if this commission is supposed to be unbiased, don't you think it's time we change the rules to protect the north?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. This government deeply cares about all Albertans. The boundaries commission was chaired by a judge of the Court of King's Bench. It consisted of two members that were appointed by the government, two members that were appointed by the Official Opposition. The recommendations in the interim report were unanimous. Nobody in this government was involved. It's a completely nonpartisan process. We do care about the north. The hon. member has the opportunity to make a submission to the final report.

Mr. Sinclair: Minister, to quote one of my daughters: the math isn't mathing.

Given that there were rumours back in April that if I didn't fall in line, my riding could be removed entirely, but I didn't believe it, will the minister table this fall sitting your ministry's written analysis of each section of 15(2) of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act as it applies to Lesser Slave Lake? That way northerners can see the map. Why in the 2017 commission report was it protected and now it's not?

Mr. Amery: Once again, Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing that the member opposite would cast doubt on the work of an independent commission. The member needs to read the report. The findings were unanimous. It's a nonpartisan process. Not only is it clear to me that the member doesn't fully understand the work of an independent commission, but the member didn't even bother participating in the process. All MLAs, all members of the public, and a number of organizations were invited to submit a proposal; that member did not.

Mr. Sinclair: Mr. Speaker, I'm curious if this minister has ever driven from Slave Lake to High Level. It's exactly why section 15(2) exists in the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. Given that your numbers don't include shadow population in all northern ridings and given that I recently read a report from the Northern Alberta Development Council that says that Slave Lake's shadow population could be 27 per cent higher than census data, Minister, will you commit to advocate to the commission to not reduce the number of northern divisions below today's level? Northern Alberta is starving for more representation, not less.

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's one thing we can agree with. Albertans deserve representation in all four corners. I'm happy to advocate for equal representation, making sure that every single Albertan has a member in this Assembly that can advocate on their behalf. I'll remind the member one more time, however,

that government has nothing to do with the boundary commission review. It is an independent, nonpartisan process chaired by a judge of the Court of King's Bench, two government-appointed members, two members appointed by the NDP. Their findings were unanimous. The member is certainly invited to participate in that final report.

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

COVID-19 Vaccination Policies

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Edmonton and Calgary hospitals are already beyond full, and respiratory illness season is now upon us. The current government could have shown leadership and respect to public health workers, but instead they fired some and silenced others, resulting in the largest measles outbreak in North America. Now they want most Albertans to pay out of pocket for a COVID vaccine if they're able to get themselves to one of the limited locations where they're available. Does the minister of hospitals understand that a low vaccination rate will only put more pressure on already overworked and underresourced hospitals?

The Speaker: The hon. hospitals minister.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have an evidence-based vaccine program, and I'd like to highlight that during respiratory virus season we do expand hospital capacity with additional surge beds, additional staff to handle the increased traffic. In addition to that, we're bringing forward plans to increase the operational efficiency of our hospitals to remove alternate level of care patients to more appropriate care settings so we can make additional inpatient spaces to free up flow in our emergency departments. We're also going to bring forward proposals to build multiple bed towers to expand acute-care spaces by over 1,000.

Ms Hoffman: Given that a current cabinet minister put in writing the following:

You are absolutely right to point out that medical professionals have consistently advocated for the importance of COVID-19 vaccination. Their expertise and experience must be central to . . . decisions about public health . . . I share your concern that the current approach may not reflect the full weight of that medical advice . . .

So is the minister who publicly disagrees with a government policy to charge many Albertans who want COVID vaccines the minister of (a) affordability, (b) children, (c) education, or (d) Indigenous Relations?

Mr. Jones: The fall COVID-19 and influenza immunization programs, which launched on September 19, target the highest risk groups, in alignment with the evidence: health care workers, all residents of continuing care homes and seniors' supportive living accommodations, home care clients, individuals six months or older with underlying medical conditions or compromised immune systems, individuals experiencing homelessness, and individuals 65 years of age or older receiving the Alberta seniors benefit. Mr. Speaker, our immunization program is based on science and evidence, and we're continuing to roll it out. We're also expanding acute-care capacity for respiratory virus season.

Ms Hoffman: Given that the answer was (b), the minister of children knows that the government policy isn't based on science or evidence.

All UCP cabinet ministers should be advocating for universal, no-charge COVID vaccines because this is a question of affordability. It's also about honouring bodily autonomy and choice for those who have \$150 or those who don't. This is about more

than 400 Albertans who died last year of COVID alone. Which minister over there will have the courage to stand up with the minister of children and fight for science and evidence-based decisions for their constituents and tell the Premier that her pay-up plan is poppycock?

The Speaker: Hon. member, that was a well-delivered question. You're on the edge of using a prop there. I don't want to stop people from using pieces of paper, but I don't think you are reading off of that. Anyways, that's advice for the future, okay?

The hon. minister of health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said earlier, we are using NACI's analysis. Also, Quebec did a similar analysis, and they came to the same conclusion. I've said it before. In fact, I know the AMA wrote a letter recently, and I have written a response letter back to the AMA president that outlines how their analysis was not only misleading but also in many cases inaccurate. The AMA analysis is based on outdated information and assumptions that are not supported by any evidence. We'll continue to make evidence-based...

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

Rural Mental Health Services

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mental health is a growing issue in our province today. Places like the Centennial Centre in Ponoka are safe havens for Albertans to get help with issues related to substance abuse, anxiety disorders, poor mental health, and brain injury. Given the rising mental health needs of youth in rural Alberta, to the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction: what immediate steps is your ministry taking to ensure timely access to mental health services in rural communities?

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

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hard-working Member for Lacombe-Ponoka for the question. The mental health of Alberta's youth is one of the highest priorities. Every young person deserves timely support no matter where they live. That's why services like Counselling Alberta and the Kids Help line provide immediate, no-wait help. Youth can also access free, confidential care through Kickstand hubs and through the virtual Kickstand connect, bringing hope and help within reach. We are increasing access to mental health supports through the expansion of the CASA Mental Health classrooms, many of which are in rural schools.

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and, through you, to the minister for that response. Given that facilities like the Centennial Centre in Ponoka are part of Recovery Alberta and given they provide assessment and treatment of addiction and serious mental health problems, including brain injury, for people of all ages, to the minister: can you update this House on how your ministry is supporting the centre's operations, staffing, and the expansion of services to meet growing mental health needs in rural communities?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you for the question. I recently visited the centennial centre with the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, and it is a fantastic facility that does such

important work. Alberta has more than 930 beds in five stand-alone psychiatric hospitals, including the centennial centre, ensuring specialized care for those who need it. Most Albertans facing mental health challenges will never require that level of acute in-patient care. However, they can access a broad range of in-person and virtual wellness supports close to home by calling 211 Alberta.

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and once again to that minister for his answer. Given the need to ensure mental health services are available to Albertans regardless of where they call home and given the importance of being able to obtain those services when and where Albertans need them most, to the minister: can you please provide the House an update on what our government is doing to ensure all Albertans continue to have access to the highest quality mental health services?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through the Alberta recovery model, which is backed by an investment of \$1.7 billion, we are building an unparalleled publicly funded continuum of mental health and addiction care. As part of that health care refocusing we created what we call Recovery Alberta, a provincial health agency solely dedicated to delivering mental health, addiction, and correctional health care services for Albertans. We also work with valued partners to deliver diverse, life-changing services across the province. Our government firmly committed to providing the best possible mental health care to Albertans when and where they need it.

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

Child and Youth Mental Health Supports

Member Eremenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If things were going so well, I wouldn't have to ask this question. A month ago I heard from a grieving mother in Medicine Hat who lost her 14-year-old son to a mental health crisis. He did everything right. He reached out for help, and after 12 hours in the ER he was released without a full assessment or the in-patient care he needed. A week and a half later his bright light was extinguished, and a community will never be the same. To the minister: how can the entire region of southeast Alberta not have access to these critical, life-saving in-patient services?

The Speaker: The Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Of course, every lost life to suicide is a tragedy, and my heart breaks for this family. Dealing with the loss of loved ones to suicide is terrible, and we all have a part to play in ensuring anyone thinking about suicide knows that help is available. Such help is that we've got a 988 suicide hotline, the Kids Help Phone, and Counselling Alberta available for those in need. Albertans who need help finding supports for services for themselves could use that 211 number as well and get connected with a range of options.

Member Eremenko: Given that this tragedy highlights a devastating gap in our system and given that in rural and smaller cities there is often no access to adolescent in-patient mental health treatment and no timely access to child-focused psychiatry and given that young people in crisis are being pushed to outpatient services that cannot meet their urgent needs; it's a lot more than a phone call, Mr. Speaker. In light of his story and many more in crisis, what is the government offering to expand access to critical,

in-patient care for adolescents in crisis outside Calgary and Edmonton?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you for the question. I've made kids' mental health a priority. Improving the mental health of children and youth is a top priority for our government. In addition to our virtual supports we also have Counselling Alberta, like I said, the Kids Help Phone, and the Kickstand youth hubs. I recently joined our federal Health minister to announce \$10 million to expand this program along with the \$15 million that Alberta is putting into it. Kickstand provides therapy and support for mental health and substance use, specifically tailored to young people aged 11 to 25. Our government is . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Member Eremenko: Given that last week the Canadian Institute for Health Information found that 36 per cent of Canadian youth with a mental health disorder had an unmet care need last year and given that that rate is 41 per cent in Alberta – 4 in 10 youth are not getting the mental health care that they need – and given that I and, I'm sure, the local MLA want to assure this mother that her son's life will lead to change, to the minister: when can this mother and other families like her expect to see an adolescent mental health unit established at the Medicine Hat regional hospital?

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you for that question. The MLA for Cypress-Medicine Hat regularly hosts community mental health summits. He brought together over 75 community organizations to raise awareness of available supports and services. Our budget provides about \$74 million in operating funding to deliver community-based mental health services for children and youth to address mental health issues early and build resilience. So, of course, like I talked about, the Kids Help Phone, 24/7 access to counselling, and funding for – this is important – the 25 CASA Mental Health classrooms, expanding to 60 schools across the province.

Arts and Culture Industry Support

Member Ceci: Mr. Speaker, there's been no action from the minister of arts and culture to truly support the province's music industry. It's been seven months since the minister agreed that a provincial music commission could help support and grow the sector, but there's been no movement. Instead, an industry with immense potential for growth is struggling to thrive and, for many, even survive during these challenging economic times. To the minister: when will our music industry finally get the music commissioner to support them now and into the future?

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is committed to growing our vibrant cultural industries, including music, film, television, and performing arts as vital contributors to economic diversification and job creation. The music commissioner position that we're looking into is something that we continue to work on, and the member opposite can stay tuned for more news about that.

Member Ceci: No date.

Given that the minister of arts and culture has indicated a music commissioner may be forthcoming someday but is showing no actual urgency to provide that support and should the government

surprise us all and naturally do the right thing and establish a music commission, will the minister assure Albertans that there will be an open recruitment process for a commissioner so that the music industry and Alberta musicians can have trust in the person in that role?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just like our film and television sector, Alberta's music sector is poised for significant cultural and economic growth. With nearly \$15 million invested annually since 2021, our government is ensuring Alberta's music sector continues to grow and thrive. Budget 2025 allocated \$8 million to the Alberta media fund to continue growing Alberta's cultural industry, and community grants supported major national events hosted in Alberta, including the 2023 Junos and the 2024 Canadian country music awards, and the music commissioner will continue to do great work in this regard.

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

Member Ceci: Thank you. Given that the minister's recent mandate letter, dated September 17, 2025, offered a few more indications of the department's work plan and given that absent from this mandate was any mention of magazine and book publishing despite their contributions of tens of millions to Alberta's GDP and hundreds of jobs, how does the minister plan to keep her promise to grow the creative economy when she ignores critical sectors like this?

Ms Fir: Mr. Speaker, our investments in Alberta's culture industries are diversifying our economy, creating jobs, and sharing our culture. Budget 2025 supports books and magazine publishers and the music industry as part of our \$8 million investment into the Alberta media fund to support our cultural industries. Books and magazines published in Alberta help careers in the arts to be more sustainable for Albertans and contribute to the cultural and economic impact of our industry, and I encourage everyone in the Chamber to attend the upcoming Alberta Book Day, where you can get some great, free books as great Christmas gifts for adults and children.

2:40

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

Oil and Gas Export Market Development

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is an economic engine that has been held back from reaching its full potential by bad, very bad federal policy for over a decade. From agriculture to energy our goods and services only reach markets through economic corridors and good trading partners. Without having our own ports, all Albertans rely on other jurisdictions to reach global markets such as our good friends in Texas. To the Minister of Energy and Minerals: how many barrels a day of Alberta crude are shipped to the refineries in the U.S. Gulf coast, and how much has that increased over the last several years?

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

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hard-working member. I will tell you that, you know, it's odd that we've only reached 531,000 barrels per day to the Gulf coast. Since 2020 there's only been a 3 per cent increase, so it's not what you'd think, but the issue is not quality. We're the most responsibly produced oil on the planet. It is not our reserves, because we have the fourth-

largest oil reserve on the planet. What the issue is is pipelines. We need more pipelines north, south, east, west, and we're going to work towards that. Despite some rough patches, the U.S. remains our biggest trading partner and ally, and we're going to work with them to get more.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for the answer. Given our vast oil sands and natural gas deposits in the province, it's no secret that exporting our valuable resources to markets near and far is essential to not only our economy and Alberta workers and further given that this energy sector helps fill the provincial coffers for things like schools, hospitals, and given that oil and gas jobs bring home strong paycheques to those families, to the same minister: what are the economic benefits of selling our resources to global customers?

Mr. Jean: The benefit is, Mr. Speaker, that we're going to have the greatest quality of life on the planet because we got \$17.1 billion in oil and gas revenues just last year, and we expect to get more. But what we need to do is that we need to get more oil and gas to market, and oil has got the best profitability to that. The key is becoming an energy superpower. We need to get more of our products to tidewater, especially oil. Canada has some of the largest oil reserves in the world, and if we get it to market, the people of Alberta, the schoolteachers, the nurses, everybody sees the value, not just big business. It's about employing Albertans and doing a better thing for Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister. Given the geopolitics regarding secure and reliable energy needs, governments at home and abroad are looking for ways to protect their energy security and given that well over 75 per cent of Canadians want new oil pipelines to be constructed and further given that renewed interests in energy security and prioritizing domestic production on both sides of the 49th parallel are critical, to the same minister: how can Alberta become a leader in the model of fortress North America?

Mr. Jean: Great question, Mr. Speaker. I think it's true that Canadians have seen a true appreciation in change for energy because they understand how important it is and how important energy security is and the opportunities to eliminate energy poverty. We have some of the largest reserves of oil and gas on the planet. What we have to do is make a choice either for environmentalists, like the NDP, or for dictator oil. I, for one, want to see more oil out of the ground for Albertans, for Canadians, for, honestly, our allies, the people that keep this world safe. That's what I'm interested in: ending energy poverty. Together we can do just that.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds we will continue with the daily Routine.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you. I rise to table copies of e-mails, more of the thousands of e-mails that we've received from parents and teachers in regard to the UCP's egregious use of the notwithstanding clause. So Nadine, Jessica, Jackie: we hear you, we're listening, and thank you for writing.

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

Mr. Wright: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with two tablings. One is an infographic from Urbanation Inc. and Rentals.ca where it shows that Alberta's got the biggest reduction in rentals across the country in regard to cost.

The second one is a Narcity article that showcases the most affordable places to live in the country, which highlights my own town of Medicine Hat.

The Speaker: Calgary-Varsity.

Dr. Metz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of 242 e-mails out of about 2,000 that I received from constituents that support the teachers and oppose trampling Charter rights. They're from students, parents . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. That was a great tabling. I appreciate that.

Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's been a lot of talk about mediation this week. I rise to table five copies of an article outlining how, despite being ordered at mediation to release survey results from Alberta Next, the government is arrogantly refusing to comply.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of correspondence that I referred to today in question period where the MLA for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain, the minister for children's services, disagrees with government policy.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the five requisite copies of an e-mail sent to me by my good friend and former high school mate Bob Cove, who says that he's watching the introduction of Bill 2 and can no longer in good conscience support the Conservative Party.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Member for Airdrie-East.

Ms Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a copy of the NDP constitution, which states that their provincial council must consist of two members of the Alberta Federation of Labour.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Ellingson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise and present the requisite copies of a letter from a teacher explaining that they find themselves spending more time managing student behaviours and complex needs than they do teaching and are pleading . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. That was a great tabling.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of hon. Mr. Nicolaides, Minister of Education and Childcare, pursuant to the Teaching Profession Act Alberta Teachers' Association 2024 annual report.

On behalf of hon. Ms Schulz, Minister of Environment and Protected Areas, pursuant to the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act the environmental protection security fund annual report April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025.

The Speaker: Now, if my records are correct, we had one point of order today at 2:08 p.m. I think it was from the Opposition House Leader.

Point of Order

Allegations against a Member

Ms Gray: That is correct, Mr. Speaker. At 2:08 I rose on 23(h), “makes allegations against another Member,” 23(i), “imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member,” and 23(j), “uses abusive or insulting language of a nature . . . to create disorder.” I also reference *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* chapter 13, page 623: “personal attacks, insults and obscenities are not in order.” The Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services said to the Member for St. Albert: she only cares about politics; she doesn’t care about disabled Albertans. This is a laughable statement and also an unparliamentary one. I understand that the minister is upset – his own team released new electoral boundaries that cut his riding in half – but he still needs to adhere to the rules of this place. I ask that he apologize and withdraw.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: I’m not sure we needed to reference electoral boundaries in that comment, but absolutely a point of order. We can’t make personal attacks against other members in this Chamber. On behalf of the minister I withdraw and apologize.

The Speaker: Well, that addresses and closes that item, I hope to everybody’s satisfaction. Thank you very much.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

Amendments to Standing Orders

10. Mr. Williams moved on behalf of Mr. Schow:
 - A. Be it resolved that the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, effective November 20, 2023, be amended in Standing Order 52(1)
 - (a) in clause (a) by striking out “10 members” and substituting “11 members,” and
 - (b) in clause (c) by striking out “10 members” and substituting “11 members.”
 - B. Be it further resolved that the amendments in this motion come into force on passage.

The Speaker: What we just heard, hon. members, is a debatable motion. Is there any debate?

[Government Motion 10 carried]

2:50

Committee Membership Changes

11. Mr. Williams moved on behalf of Mr. Schow:
 - Be it resolved that the membership of the Assembly’s committees be replaced as follows:
 - (a) on the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund that Mrs. Johnson replace Mr. Rowsell as deputy chair, that Mrs. Johnson replace

- Mr. Boitchenko, and that Mr. Ellingson replace Member Gurinder Brar;
- (b) on the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices that Mr. Lundy replace Mr. Getson as chair, that Mr. Lundy replace Mr. Getson, that Ms de Jonge replace Mr. van Dijken as deputy chair, that Ms de Jonge replace Mr. van Dijken, and that Ms Wright replace Member Eremenko;
- (c) on the Standing Committee on Private Bills that Mrs. Johnson replace Ms Pitt as chair, that Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk replace Ms Pitt, that Mrs. Sawyer replace Mr. Wright, and that Mr. Guthrie be appointed;
- (d) on the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing that Mr. Getson replace Mr. Cyr, that Mr. Gurtej Brar replace Mr. Dach, that Member Gurinder Brar replace Mr. Ceci, and that Mr. Singh be appointed;
- (e) on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts that Mr. Lundy replace Mr. Rowsell as deputy chair, that Mr. van Dijken replace Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk, that Mrs. Sawyer replace Mrs. Johnson, that Ms Lovely replace Mr. McDougall, and that Member Eremenko replace Mr. Ellingson;
- (f) on the Special Standing Committee on Members’ Services that Mr. Yao replace Mr. Getson as deputy chair and that Mr. Wright replace Mr. Hunter;
- (g) on the Standing Committee on Alberta’s Economic Future that Mr. Wiebe replace Mr. Getson as chair, that Mr. Wiebe replace Mr. Getson, that Mr. Bouchard replace Mr. Cyr, that Mr. Dach be appointed, and that Mr. Dach be appointed as deputy chair;
- (h) on the Standing Committee on Families and Communities that Mr. Getson replace Mr. McDougall and that Mrs. Sawyer replace Mrs. Petrovic;
- (i) on the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship that Mr. Dyck replace Mr. Rowsell as chair, that Mr. Cyr replace Mr. Boitchenko, that Mrs. Petrovic replace Mr. Hunter, and that Mr. Ip replace Mr. Eggen.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe that Government Motion 11 is debatable. Is there any debate?

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, I rise to dispute Government Motion 11 section (c) specifically, where the UCP have unilaterally appointed me to the Standing Committee on Private Bills. I ask members of this House, including the UCP caucus, to vote against this motion once hearing my full remarks.

Over the past number of weeks Albertans have witnessed one of the most significant power plays in Alberta’s history. The government has invoked the notwithstanding clause, a tool written into Canada’s Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982 as a limited safeguard, never intended as a political weapon. The objective was to give provinces and Parliament a narrow override mechanism in exceptional circumstances, a last resort when an elected government believed a judicial ruling had overreached its authority or made an error.

The fact this government imposed this measure without ever testing its case before the courts is in itself an admission of guilt. The UCP know they cannot defend their actions in court or succeed in arbitration, so it becomes: win at all costs. The clause was meant to protect democracy, not . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I’m severely hopeful that you are going to tie this back to Government Motion 11. I don’t want to cut

off your debate, but I'm going to ask you, before I have to do that, to tie this into what's before the House, which is Government Motion 11.

Mr. Guthrie: I've got to say, Mr. Speaker, I'm very surprised that you cannot see the connection.

The Speaker: Help me, sir.

Mr. Guthrie: What this UCP government has done with Bill 2, the back to work legislation, turns the principle on its head. This wasn't an act of democratic balance; it was an act of dominance. The clause was used not to defend freedom but to suspend it. We all remember the frustration when the federal overreach occurred not so long ago, so what does it say if we now accept it from our leaders here at home?

When a government uses the Constitution to silence teachers rather than support them, that is not conservatism.

The Speaker: Hon. member, this is the second reminder to tie this to Government Motion 11. I really don't want to cut off your debate. I just need to hear something that ties this to Government Motion 11 and the appointment of people to committees.

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, this pattern of control doesn't stop at the classroom door. The same instinct that led this government to silence teachers is now being turned on members of the Legislature. My colleague the Member for Lesser Slave Lake on Tuesday was informed that his constituency was being gerrymandered out of existence. Quite a coincidence. Conflict has become this government's oxygen, and instead it needs a steady supply to breathe.

The same reflex appeared here again when the Government House Leader informed me Tuesday night, without consultation, notice, or consent, that I was being placed on the Standing Committee on Private Bills. I am an independent member of this Assembly. I do not sit with the UCP caucus, and I certainly do not answer to them. Yet this government, which claims to be the champion of freedom and autonomy, the self-proclaimed libertarians of Canada, now seek to impose their will on a member who no longer serves under their banner. Mr. Speaker, this is power without restraint. They claim I have no say, that consent is not required, but I beg to differ. They presume they can claim my time, my labour, and my role as they see fit. That is not democracy. That is arrogance where humility should be.

Let us recall, Mr. Speaker, that this is the same government that dissolved Alberta Health Services into politically controlled agencies, centralized communications under the Premier's office, fired AIMCo's leadership to install loyalists, blocked municipalities from working directly with the federal government, and created a provincial sheriffs branch answerable to cabinet. They reject control from others, but they embrace it for themselves. Now they wish to extend that control here to the opposition, to independents, and to anyone who dares to stand on their own. Let me be clear. There is no universe that exists where this UCP government will impose its will on me again. I will decide how I serve my constituents.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the first encounter that I've had with the Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Mr. Williams: Point of order.

The Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader on a point of order.

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, like you, I reluctantly rise on 23(b)(i). The member is speaking to a matter other than the question under discussion. As we know, we're talking about Government Motion 11. These are all important topics, ones that this Chamber can and should address when those motions and pieces of legislation are before the floor. What's on the floor right now is assignments for all the members who are not government members of this House to do work on committees, standing committees. That is the norm for all of us. This is what is debatable, the membership of those committees. That is the motion put forward. I respectfully ask the member opposite to address substantively that. He seems to be reluctant to do so. The other topics are of great importance, however, not the topic at hand today under Government Motion 11.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask you to rule in our favour that this member addresses comments to Government Motion 11 or that we move to a vote.

The Speaker: Do you have a rebuttal, hon. member?

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, I think it's clear I was talking exactly on this subject. It's how this all came about. There's a pattern here. There's a pattern of behaviour that's, you know – and, actually, I'm seeing quite an interesting strategy developing here to interrupt my speech and to try to get in the way. Certainly, there are tools in this House that could be used in order to further their side and to slow me down.

I am clearly on subject and on topic. As you asked me to do, I furthered my initial couple pages along and got to the meat of the subject. I mean, I clearly followed your instruction.

3:00

The Speaker: Any other submissions? The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I only speak to observe that the member was speaking to Government Motion 11, that the Deputy Government House Leader has called a number of these points of order in this week alone, allowing very little flexibility. I suggest that as a practice of this Assembly the right to free speech, the right to be able to make these connections is incredibly important. The government trying to be too restrictive is a pattern that I worry about.

The Speaker: Hon. members, any other submissions?

I have listened to the arguments on all sides, and the hon. Member for Airdrie-Cochrane, after being cautioned a couple of times about returning to Government Motion 11, actually did that. Thank you. If you made me impatient before you got there, it was an honest impatience. So carry on with, I hope, a gentle caution to remain connected to Government Motion 11 so that you can complete your debate, sir.

Debate Continued

Mr. Guthrie: You will see, as it moves along, where I'm going, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the first encounter that I've had with the Member for Cardston-Siksika. He has previously blurred the line between debate and intimidation. Last spring in this Chamber he unbuttoned his coat and suggested that I might want to take my words outside. I let it go; I said nothing publicly, and when asked by reporters, I downplayed it. But it happened.

If that weren't enough, on the day I resigned, February 25, 2025...

The Speaker: Now it's time to get back to Government Motion 11, hon. member.

Mr. Guthrie: Yes. On February 25, 2025, the government whip for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland confronted me outside the Federal Building, offering his thoughts in a manner that I could only describe as aggressive. Mr. Speaker, from your chair you have access to that video and you can see it for yourself. The previous Speaker did.

Twice members of this government have sought to take debate beyond these walls, and twice I have declined to engage because here, Mr. Speaker, ideas are supposed to fight, not the people. There is a pattern of behaviour within this government that rewards confrontation and punishes dissent. In any other organization Bruce McAllister would have been expected to step aside, but here he's protected.

I no longer work for the UCP, and that has been the greatest relief of my public life. What they forget, Mr. Speaker, is what they forget every time they legislate without listening, that they work for Albertans, not the other way around. Governments work for the taxpayer, yet every action of this UCP government suggests the opposite. Their instinct is control: control of classrooms, municipalities, agencies, messaging, and now its members. This is not leadership; it's vindictiveness lacking integrity.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today not out of inconvenience but out of principle and a culmination of actions. No government regardless of its majority has the right to conscript the independence of another member of this Assembly. The UCP believe that they can dictate compliance in a classroom, so they can dictate compliance in this Chamber. That's not happening. It's all part of the same pattern: a government uncomfortable with dissent and allergic to dialogue.

Privilege

Appointments to Assembly Committees

Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

Mr. Guthrie: The argument you have just heard outlines my prima facie breach of privilege of the Government House Leader, the Member for Cardston-Siksika, and I respectfully ask for your review. His actions represent an abuse of power, an attempt to impose the will of cabinet upon an independent member, and a clear effort to interfere with my duties and freedoms as a Member of this Legislative Assembly. I will not be intimidated, constricted, or controlled by that member or any other, and this UCP government will not unilaterally impose its will on me or the people I represent. I will continue to serve the people of Airdrie-Cochrane with integrity, independence, and commitment. Mr. Speaker, the measure of leadership isn't how much power you hold. It's how you use it. And Albertans expect a government that uses this power to protect their rights, not its own interest.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. member, did you just make or attempt to make a point of privilege?

Mr. Guthrie: I did.

The Speaker: Okay. Well, now we're into a different kettle of fish.

The government can respond to that now or the next day at your choice. The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: This is as much of a surprise to me as I suspect to most members of the Chamber. Given that the point of privilege is raised, if I understand this correctly, against me, I would like to take the day to evaluate the remarks and then respond at my earliest convenience.

The Speaker: Okay. The point of privilege will be dealt with at some point tomorrow or the next sitting day. Not tomorrow, as it turns out, but the next sitting day.

Debate Continued

The Speaker: Now, at this point on Government Motion 11, which has been moved and debated, are you rising to – you're a little bit late. I was just calling the question.

Mr. Schmidt: We were dealing with the point of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yeah. I saw the same thing you saw and heard the same thing you heard. Let's hear what you have to say, hon. member.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recognize the danger of standing up and speaking at a time when members' patience has already been severely tested this afternoon, but I do have some important points that I would like to make about what this government motion represents. It builds upon some of the things that the Member for Airdrie-Cochrane said about the government using its power in this Chamber to protect its own reputation.

Specifically, clause (e) of Government Motion 11 proposes that Mr. Lundy replace Mr. Rowswell as deputy chair of the Public Accounts Committee. Mr. Speaker, this is important for Albertans to understand because this is not just a routine human resources matter; this is the government using its power in this Chamber to cover up all of the potential investigations into corruption related to the health care ministry.

Here's why, Mr. Speaker. When the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright was deputy chair of the Public Accounts Committee, he worked very productively with the chair of the Public Accounts Committee, my friend from Calgary-Bhullar-McCall, to change the practices of the Public Accounts Committee from reviewing just the annual reports of the government every year to allowing the Public Accounts Committee to look at the Auditor General's reports in detail, and we had two reasonably successful meetings, one that looked at the Auditor General's report looking at surface water allocations and a second one looking at the state of public housing in the province.

Now, during those meetings, Mr. Speaker, the deputy chair, or the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright, committed to us on record that once we got through those meetings and the Auditor General's reports into the DynaLife contract and procurement practices at AHS, the Public Accounts Committee would be allowed to look at those reports. However, it seems that somebody, perhaps the Premier's office – we don't know – caught wind of this, and now the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright is no longer the deputy chair.

The Speaker: Hon. member, this is all interesting. Nonetheless, Government Motion 11 merely changes the personnel on committees, which is typically negotiated, I think, between the government and the opposition, so I would caution you to restrict your remarks to the personnel on the committees.

3:10

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I'm not aware of any negotiations that occurred between the Official Opposition and government when the decision to remove Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright as the chair – in fact, my House leader is saying that there were no consultations with regard to that. So this change comes as a surprise to members of the Official Opposition.

I just note for members of the House what that member, the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright, did in his role as deputy chair. I suspect that he's being punished for trying to get to work with the members of the Official Opposition to look into the Auditor General's reports on DynaLife and procurement practices at AHS because not only is he being replaced as a deputy chair on Public Accounts . . .

An Hon. Member: He can speak for himself.

Mr. Schmidt: If he has an explanation as to why he's being changed, I would love for him to stand up during the debate and share that with us.

. . . but he's also being replaced on the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund. He's being replaced as the chair of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship as well, Mr. Speaker. So it looks to me and to anybody who's observing the practices of this House that the Member for Lloydminster-Vermilion-Wainwright is being punished for trying to allow the Public Accounts Committee to do its work looking into the DynaLife and the procurement practices reports from the Auditor General that are going to be forthcoming in the immediate future. If that's not the case, as the members opposite seem to be implying by their outraged reactions to my statements, then I encourage them to stand up and tell us exactly what's going on with these changes that are being proposed in Government Motion 11.

The Speaker: Hon. member, thank you. I am grateful for your concern for other members' feelings though none of us know what other people's feelings are, so I think if there's an hon. member that wants to complain about how they do or don't feel, they can choose to stand up and discuss that or choose not to.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you for that helpful interjection, Mr. Speaker, but my point stands that it is certainly my suspicion that the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright is being moved because of his initial eagerness to look at the Auditor General's reports into DynaLife and procurement practices at Alberta Health Services.

If I may offer a couple of other comments, Mr. Speaker, on the government motion, I also note that in clause (e) here that the hon. Mr. McDougall is being replaced on Public Accounts Committee. I understand that over the summer that member has been appointed as the Minister of Advanced Education. I congratulate him on that appointment. As the former Minister of Advanced Education myself I know what a pleasure and honour it is to serve in that role, and I sincerely hope that he does everything within his power to make Alberta's higher education system as good as it can possibly be and to serve Alberta students in that role.

I also note that the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland is getting demoted from a bunch of his positions as well, which follows a demotion from position of whip. I'm certainly curious to see why. I mean, I would have demoted him many months ago, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that the Premier's office finally clued in to how ineffective that member has been, but I would be more than interested to hear government members' opinions as to why those changes have been made as well.

With that, I urge government members to vote against this motion and show the people of Alberta that they are actually committed to investigating the corrupt care scandal that is racking this government. Nothing disinfects like sunlight, Mr. Speaker, and by voting against this motion, we can finally clear the air on this awful thing that's hanging over the government's head right now.

Thank you.

[Government Motion 11 carried]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 1 International Agreements Act

[Debate adjourned October 29: Member Gurinder Brar speaking]

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

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful to be here today and to have the opportunity to respond to Bill 1, arguably what the government believes is the most important legislation, the one bill that was introduced as part of the throne speech a week ago today.

I just want to begin with a little bit of context for what was happening while Bill 1 was introduced in this House. There were tens of thousands of people gathered outside on the steps and the grounds of the Legislature in protest, calling on the government to take decisive action to address the need for collective agreements to be reached between Alberta's teachers from across this province employed by all school divisions and the people of Alberta to ensure that students could get back to school, that staff could have reasonable work conditions, and that everyone could have a great educational outcome.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Instead of Bill 1 addressing what would arguably be the most pressing issue of the day, definitely the longest strike in our history and the largest strike in our history, the government chose to bring forward the International Agreements Act. There are a few things, wording here, that I think were great opportunities for the government to have addressed the issue of the day, which, I will say, has not gone away. Just because kids are in school today does not mean that the government has done anything to address class size, complexity, or the ongoing underfunding of Alberta at the lowest student rate of any province in the country when educators and students and families are asking for us to be somewhere among the average. That isn't something that I thought I would come to this place advocating for, but being not the bottom would be a huge improvement to where we are today.

The government in Bill 1 has an opening clause: "Whereas the Government of Alberta recognizes the benefits of." I would have loved the government to have said: strong public education, world-class public education.

I'm going to take a moment here – I've met with many students over the three weeks that they were not in school – to just read into the record part of a letter, and I will happily table it on Monday at the first opportunity post this debate. This letter is from a student who begins by saying: "What the heck? In less than two months we've been at school . . ." [interjections] Yeah. To the government members, again, I am referring to the first clause, "Whereas the Government of Alberta recognized the benefits of," and saying that the government could have very directly addressed the largest issue of the day. Just for everyone's clarity the largest issue of the day for

this and many Alberta families is around public education, Madam Speaker.

The student goes on to say:

What the heck? In the less than two months we've been at school we've had two fires caused by students. That's a lot, and that might not have happened if our school had more EAs. We lost all of our single-stall bathrooms due to graffiti coating the walls, and a few years ago there were gun threats. Have you thought that maybe if you gave teachers a little bit more and stopped wrecking the environment, students like me could feel safe? So I ask again: what the heck? As you know, Alberta is one of the richest provinces in Canada, yet we have the most stressed teachers in the world.

The student goes on to talk about his desire to have a strong public education, world-class education, and to feel safe at school. This is really what teachers have been talking to me on the line about every single day when we gather, whether it be in protest or in other settings in the community.

There was another opportunity the government could have addressed the education crisis through Bill 1. They go on in the third clause to say, "Whereas the Government of Alberta has the responsibility and authority." One of the first things kids tell me when I visit grade 6 classes and we talk about provincial government is that the provincial government has the responsibility and the authority over public education, and they are absolutely right. It would have been great if the government took a moment to act on that.

3:20

Another student here signed their name; it's Lucas. The letter begins with salutations.

I'm an elementary student, and I'm writing you today about the terrible education policies. Your funding plan is garbage...

That's his polite word. I'm sure his mom helped come up with that.

... because class sizes are too big and our teachers are stretched to the limit with our classes, that are at different levels. The government has not been able to begin to understand what teachers are going through. My grade 6 class has students with reading, behaviour, mental health problems and learning disabilities. We don't have enough EAs, which would help the students with special needs. Maybe you should focus more on teachers instead of on new licence plates. What the heck? Please fund the next generation of leaders and schools.

Sincerely, Lucas.

The number of letters – and I know the Member for Calgary-Varsity talked about thousands of letters. I'm just highlighting a few of the handwritten ones. I know many of us have gotten thousands of letters on what clearly should be and is, I would say, the largest pressing issue of provincial responsibility today, and that is around ensuring that all of our students have great educational opportunities in the province of Alberta.

The International Agreements Act as presented here is one page, probably the smallest bill I've seen from this government. It only includes a few definitions, application, how it could be repealing one other piece, that the International Trade and Investment Agreements Implementation Act be repealed to replace it with this very brief law, which has a preamble that's actually larger than the actual law. It's got a five-clause preamble, and then it's got one section of definitions. Then the application, again, is very brief, one line. Then it actually talks about provincial approval being required on matters that are negotiated by the federal government. Literally, there is one very small paragraph of what the government would arguably assert is their biggest issue of the day. Usually that's what Bill 1 is, the one bill that's presented on the same day as the throne speech on behalf of the Crown.

I'm going to touch on a third letter that I received also on that same day. It's also from a student. This one's in grade 11. "How do you expect our future world to operate?"

Mr. Williams: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Williams: Madam Speaker, we are now more than 50 per cent elapsed into the member's speaking time. There's been a grand total of 47 seconds spoken about the act itself, simply reciting the act. This Deputy Government House Leader has risen multiple times, including today, as the Opposition House Leader has mentioned, on particularly 23(b)(i). It is up to the Speaker's chair to decide whether these rules have force and give shape to our debates or not. There is no substance related to this Bill 1 in that speech to date other than 47 seconds of summarizing.

I would like to either hear the member's contribution to this debate or ask the chair to please intervene. Without the chair intervening in these matters, we have no power and no way to organize ourselves into meaningful, deliberative debate. This body is a deliberative body. This rule allows us to be deliberative on it, and the members opposite are making a mockery of the decisions with the leeway that the chair continues to give members opposite. We ask them, please, to stay on topic to the debate at hand.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you. I'd like to respectfully disagree. In fact, we had this similar conversation yesterday, and it was ruled by the chair that there is much latitude, especially at second reading. The member did a fine job of referring to the preamble in Bill 1, which directly relates to education, and she's using the opportunity to, quite splendidly, I would say, connect the two. I would love to hear her continue her debate, and I ask that the chair rule as has been ruled in the past.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, we are at second reading on Bill 1, the International Agreements Act. Second reading, of course, is where great latitude is given on large swaths before we get into the meat of the matter. I am often frustrated with debates that surround themselves about things that should have been in the bill that are not in the bill that are not related. However, the member, I'm certain, moving forward is going to refer more to the meat of the matter of Bill 1 in second reading with the remarks that she has to make. Great caution given for the first speech here this afternoon.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has the floor.

Debate Continued

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Yeah. I'm simply referring to Bill 1, the International Agreements Act, and the clause – perhaps the minister would like me to read portions of this clause. "Provincial approval required" is around international agreements as

part of an international agreement, that includes a matter that is not exclusively within [the] ... 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 ... under an Act of the Legislature of Alberta.

Of course, I'm drawing a direct connection between this bill and the Education Act. Rather, what should be, I think, highlighted within this bill is the opportunity for us to address the most pressing issues of the day.

I just have a third letter I'd like to reference today. There are many more for other days for tablings, but I think this one also adds to the context of the first two. We had an elementary student, a junior high student, and now a high school student. This one is talking about: how do we expect the future world to operate if the next generation doesn't know that we are a part of it? This is specifically speaking, Madam Speaker, to the author of this letter feeling left out by the government actions that were taken, impacting the student's educational opportunities: speaking as a student, teachers are crucial to every child's development, and underpaying teachers while overwhelming them with overcrowded classrooms is not good for anyone in the equation.

Madam Speaker, I am speaking about this in direct relation to the International Agreements Act and the fact that the act of the Legislature that I refer to is the Education Act. I understand that there are some folks who maybe don't want to hear students' voices amplified in this space, but I am grateful to be able to have the latitude within second reading to be able to address the bill, the title of the bill. I've referred to specific sections, and it also, I think, is becoming of us to have opportunities to highlight the voices of the youth who are feeling directly negatively impacted by the government failing to act on the biggest issue that they're facing.

Again, this student highlights stress and the fact that they know that teachers are expected to work unpaid overtime.

Yet a number of mine are still spending extra time and money to provide students with the resources that they need to learn, and I hope that you can see why this is simply not fair, not healthy, and won't help anyone in the school system. We need you to listen. Listen to our teachers and the students whose lives their work shapes, investing in education, developing a real plan for class sizes, and implementing it.

Madam Speaker, this is why . . . [interjections] I appreciate the government would rather we talk about symbolic bills that replicate pieces . . . [interjections] I appreciate that the government or at least some members of the government would rather I not talk directly about things that are impacting people in the province of Alberta right now, that they would rather debate bills and their symbolism in this place. Certainly, there are many, many, many pressing issues, and I am sure that partially what maybe is leading to some of the frustration from some members opposite is the fact that their families are also experiencing frustration with the impacts of not having respectful negotiations with front-line education workers.

When I first ran, in my maiden speech I think I touched on sort of my political path and how I ended up here, Madam Speaker. That was, of course, in response to Bill 1 in 2015. What I will say is that I am the daughter of two teachers in northern rural Alberta and that when I was thinking about a career path, my dad said: do not choose education. He said that the politics are too nasty in this province, and this was, of course, after he and my mom had been both forced to take a 5 per cent rollback. Every other light bulb in our classroom was taken out, and he didn't feel respected or valued by the province that he devoted his career to. When I responded to Bill 1, I made mention in 2015 that I'm a little bit stubborn, so I chose the career path they did not recommend, partially because I wanted to make the politics in this province better for public education.

3:30

I think that all of us should take the few days we have between when we rise this afternoon and when we return on Monday to think about the role that we're playing in causing greater disrespect and

division for people who are working in public education or the role we could play to make sure that our schools are great places for students to work and learn and that they themselves aspire to be public education teachers in the province of Alberta when they are done their K to 12 education.

With that, I will cede the remainder of my time. I know that the Member for Peace River is very excited for me to sit down. I will respect his nonverbal cues. Thank you, Madam Speaker and members of the Assembly, for allowing me to highlight some of these voices of students who have been negatively impacted by these government actions.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others to join the debate on Bill 1 in second reading?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a second time]

Bill 3

Private Vocational Training Amendment Act, 2025

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. McDougall: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to speak on the second reading of Bill 3, the Private Vocational Training Amendment Act, 2025.

Madam Speaker, these proposed amendments reflect our government's commitment to protecting students while supporting innovation and growth in Alberta's private vocational training sector. Private career colleges play an important role in Alberta's adult learning system. They offer diverse learning approaches to career-focused training and the flexibility to respond to the changing needs of Alberta's economy. With Bill 3 we want to ensure that this important role is formally recognized in legislation.

Madam Speaker, students make significant investments, both financial and personal, in their education. If passed, these amendments will strengthen protections for students by establishing a student tuition protection fund, voiding agreements between schools and students that violate refund or consumer protection rules in the Private Vocational Training Act, improving tuition refund requirements to make the rules more equitable for students, and extending the cooling-off period to give students more time to change their mind after they sign an enrolment contract. These measures would ensure students are treated fairly and that their investments are safeguarded.

Madam Speaker, most private career colleges conduct themselves responsibly. Unfortunately, however, there are some that do not. Amendments in the Private Vocational Training Amendment Act would help address concerns about false and misleading recruitment practices used by some private career colleges. The amendments would establish the authority to set clear rules for institutions on the use of third-party recruiters and financial incentives promised to students during recruitment. This will help ensure students can make more fully informed choices, choices based on the quality of the programs, not merely sales tactics.

Madam Speaker, transparency is critical for maintaining trust in Alberta's postsecondary system. Earlier this year my ministry launched the Private Career Colleges Registry, which publishes information about licensed vocational training programs, including location, cost, and licence status. Amendments in Bill 3 would codify our authority to publicly post program and licence information and build on the success of the registry. The amendments would also establish our authority to set rules or standards around the publication of information by career colleges.

By enhancing transparency, these amendments would help students make better informed decisions on their educational investments.

Madam Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, unfortunately, some bad actors have emerged in the private career college sector over the last few years. To ensure basic quality standards are met by all vocational training providers and to address this problematic behaviour, this legislation would expand and modernize policy and compliance tools. This would include allowing policy directives and guidelines to be issued, which would provide clarity on the interpretation and application of legislative provisions, enhancing mechanisms to restrain unlicensed operators from offering vocational training, strengthening the oversight of changes in ownership that would ensure buyers can't circumvent the approval process, and clarifying court enforcement, statutory appeal, and judicial review processes to ensure they are fair and timely. These updates would ensure greater accountability for training providers and better protections for students.

Madam Speaker, Alberta's reputable private career colleges have spent years developing the systems and competencies needed to deliver quality vocational training. These operators have made significant investments to develop their programs and training resources to align with the best practices in adult education. Unfortunately, some schools have prioritized growth at the expense of education quality and the needs of Alberta's labour market. This has created a risk in the private vocational training sector that puts quality training institutions, students, and employers at risk.

The amendments in Bill 3 are intended to help improve confidence in Alberta's private vocational training system. It would separate new institution and program approvals, allowing governments to assess the competencies of providers before they start providing training. Under the proposed amendments government would be able to set program standards, including basic program requirements, entry-specific requirements, along with training standards. This would ensure that all licensed programs will meet minimum standards. The amendments would also allow a range of restrictive conditions to be imposed on institutions and their program licences and removed when concerns have been resolved. This revised authority would allow my ministry to introduce a probationary registration category for new or noncompliant providers.

Madam Speaker, Alberta's private vocational training landscape has evolved, and our legislation must adapt to reflect these modern realities. Amendments would update language, clarify existing authorities, and align the legislation with current practices, reducing the administrative burden while maintaining strong oversight. For example, amendments would address online delivery, which is long overdue given the changes that have existed in our training ecosystem, and clarify our authority to set standards for the maintenance and retention of student records. Student records are critical to the integrity of training and the issuance of credentials required for employment.

Madam Speaker, our government is committed to supporting a variety of pathways into the workforce and to further learning, and for this reason the amendments in Bill 3 would establish the authority needed to set standards for vocational training credentials. Students and their employers that hire them should have a clear understanding of the differences between a certificate and a diploma. These amendments would support students to make informed decisions and provide confidence to employers in their hiring decisions. This change would also help support transferability and student mobility across Alberta's postsecondary system.

Madam Speaker, these proposed changes were informed by engagement with private career college operators, student advocacy

groups, industry partners, and others, including regulators from other provinces across Canada. Since 2022 Advanced Education has worked closely with student advocacy organizations such as Momentum, a Calgary-based community economic development society, along with the Alberta Association of Career Colleges and the National Association of Career Colleges. We've also engaged with professional associations and conducted surveys with private career college operators and their students. This collaborative approach ensures the amendments proposed in this legislation are grounded in real-world experience and are responsive to the sector.

In closing, Madam Speaker, Alberta's private vocational training sector plays a vital role in helping students gain the skills and knowledge needed for their in-demand careers. These proposed amendments would help modernize the licensing framework, strengthen student protections, enhance transparency, and ensure more consistent vocational training quality standards across the province. I am confident this legislation will support a stronger, more accountable, and more innovative postsecondary education system, one that serves students, employers, and the province's economic future. I urge all my hon. colleagues to support this important legislation.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. minister, can you just clarify that you're moving second reading?

Mr. McDougall: I'm moving second reading of Bill 3.

The Deputy Speaker: Perfect. Thank you.

Any other members to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to make some comments in second reading on Bill 3, Private Vocational Training Amendment Act, 2025. I appreciate the minister's overview of this bill. Certainly, it's quite a long time coming. There have been people working on certain aspects of what we see contained in this bill for more than five years now.

3:40

We know that thousands of Albertans are accessing our private career college institutions here in the province. The regulation of these career colleges and the integrity of the education that people receive at the colleges' level of education and, you know, just the safety and security to maintain the programs that people sign up for, the financial aspect to going to a private career college: all of this needed to be updated for sure. We have lots of reputable career colleges here in Alberta, but there's been an explosion of so many new colleges that just need to be under some oversight that only the provincial government can provide.

I appreciate many aspects of this bill. I certainly have some questions just focusing on, let's say, the financial aspect of the operation and the tuition around career colleges, but I'm sure we can work something out to make sure that we serve students in Alberta in the best way possible.

I make another happy note to see that the minister did mention Momentum from Calgary and then the Alberta Association of Career Colleges. These both are very reputable advocates for a high-quality, affordable education system here in the province of Alberta. I think that a lot of their ideas are reflected in this bill, so that's quite reassuring to see as well, Madam Speaker. As I said, some people have been working on this for more than five years to get better regulation in this part of our education industry.

I think that we know that, as I said, the financial aspect of this: it does address it here in Bill 3, but something that I have just been

really concerned about for quite a long time and I just want to see clarity on – we will because we’re going to be debating this, right? – is career colleges directing people to get their financial aid from some different sources. I have stories of certain colleges directing or strongly encouraging students to get a loan from a source to pay their tuition on terms that are just absolutely ridiculous. It’s like getting a loan from a loan shark. I mean, someone getting 30 per cent interest on an \$8,000 loan, for example, you know, literally digging a hole that you can’t get out from.

Then another element, and it is to do with finances as well, is having people advocating to look for students to come to the college and then putting a price on the head of those students that they bring in, right? It’s like piecework. You know, someone might get up to \$3,000 or even \$5,000 as a reward for getting someone to sign up for the college. I mean, this kind of thing is just really predatory, I think. I can see some pieces of this bill that seek to address that, but let’s make sure that we put in bold letters that these kinds of behaviours are just not acceptable. I see the minister reflecting on this. We’ll have lots of discussion over these weeks and months.

As Alberta New Democrats we recognize the importance of making sure that there’s a place that’s affordable and high quality for all students that want to choose to pursue a higher education diploma or degree and certificate. Those certificates and those degrees have to have integrity themselves. They have to have value because, of course, it’s very expensive to go to a private college, and they have to be regulated as well. We know that our public universities and colleges and polytechnics have really suffered over the last few years since 2019, almost half a billion dollars taken out of the system. Private career colleges have an important role to play

to make sure that there are spaces available because they’re not. We’re losing spaces in our public polytechnics and universities and colleges, and that’s not acceptable.

Each year a new cohort of graduates come through from grade 12 or maybe the new people that have just moved to Alberta and to Canada, thousands of new people every year in those cohorts, and there has to be a space for them to study. It has to be affordable, it has to be of a high quality, and it has to fit into what our economy needs to educate people for the jobs of this 21st century.

I see lots of room for optimism in this bill as my colleagues will study this further, and we will look at third-party validation further as well. I did have a chance to get some notes from Momentum, and they’re cautiously optimistic with this bill. All right? I think that’s not a bad way to live in general, to be optimistic. In other words, just make sure that you are doing your homework and making sure that we’re not just building something that’s good for private career colleges but good for the reputation of students being educated here in the province of Alberta.

With that, Madam Speaker, I would like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Williams: Madam Speaker, it’s been a long Thursday afternoon. Members are excited to return to their constituents and their families. I hope everyone drives safely. I move that the Assembly stand adjourned until 1:30 on Monday, November 2025.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:47 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 31th Legislature - 2nd Session (2025)

Activity to Thursday, October 30, 2025

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

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

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

Bill 1 — International Agreements Act (Smith)

First Reading — 6 (*Oct. 23, 2025 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 77-85 (*Oct. 28, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 109-18 (*Oct. 29, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 133-35 (*Oct. 30, 2025 aft., passed*)

Bill 2 — Back to School Act (Horner)

First Reading — 26 (*Oct. 27, 2025 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 27-28 (*Oct. 27, 2025 eve.*), 29-35 (*Oct. 27, 2025 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 35-36 (*Oct. 27, 2025 eve.*), 37-45 (*Oct. 27, 2025 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — 45-46 (*Oct. 27, 2025 eve.*), 47-54 (*Oct. 27, 2025 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 28, 2025 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on October 28, 2025]

Bill 3 — Private Vocational Training Amendment Act, 2025 (McDougall)

First Reading — 65 (*Oct. 28, 2025 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 135-37 (*Oct. 30, 2025 aft., passed*)

Bill 4 — Public Safety and Emergency Services Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2) (Ellis)

First Reading — 121 (*Oct. 30, 2025 , passed*)

Bill 7 — Water Amendment Act, 2025 (Schulz)

First Reading — 121 (*Oct. 30, 2025 , passed*)

Bill 201 — Employment Standards (Protecting Workers' Pay) Amendment Act, 2025 (Ganley)

First Reading — 121 (*Oct. 30, 2025 , passed*)

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