



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, November 17, 2025

Day 10

The Honourable Ric McIver, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

Second Session

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

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

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

Party standings:

United Conservative: 47

New Democrat: 38

Independent: 2

Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Shannon Dean, KC, Clerk

Trafton Koenig, Law Clerk

Vani Govindarajan, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Clerk Assistant and

Executive Director of Parliamentary

Services

Nancy Robert, Clerk of *Journals* and
Committees

Aaron Roth, Committee Clerk

Amanda LeBlanc, Managing Editor of
Alberta Hansard

Terry Langley, Sergeant-at-Arms

Paul Link, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

Gareth Scott, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

Lang Bawn, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

Executive Council

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

Parliamentary Secretaries

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

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Yao
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Johnson
Ellingson
Kasawski
Kayande
Rowswell
Stephan
Wiebe
Wright, J.

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Wiebe
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach
Boparai
Bouchard
de Jonge
Elmeligi
Hoyle
Stephan
van Dijken
Wright, J.

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Lovely
Deputy Chair: Ms Gohring
Batten
Getson
Haji
Johnson
Lundy
Sawyer
Singh
Tejada

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Lundy
Deputy Chair: Ms de Jonge
Chapman
Cyr
Dyck
Lovely
Miyashiro
Petrovic
Shepherd
Wright, P.

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. McIver
Deputy Chair: Mr. Yao
Eggen
Getson
Gray
Metz
Petrovic
Sabir
Singh
Wright, J.

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Mrs. Johnson
Deputy Chair: Mr. Cyr
Armstrong-Homeniuk
Bouchard
Ceci
Deol
Dyck
Hayter
Sawyer
Sigurdson, L.
Vacant

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk
Deputy Chair: Mr. Wiebe
Arcand-Paul
Bouchard
Brar, Gurinder
Brar, Gurtej
Getson
Gray
Sinclair
Singh
Stephan

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Sabir
Deputy Chair: Mr. Lundy
de Jonge
Eremenko
Lovely
Renaud
Rowswell
Sawyer
Schmidt
van Dijken

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Mr. Dyck
Deputy Chair: Ms Sweet
Al-Guneid
Armstrong-Homeniuk
Calahoo Stonehouse
Cyr
Ip
Petrovic
Rowswell
Yao

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, November 17, 2025

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Hon. members, let us pray.

Prayers

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

Hon. members, it is the first sitting day of the week, and we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Andrew Cook. I invite all to participate in the official language of their choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all of us command.
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,
Il sait porter la croix!
Ton histoire est une épopée
Des plus brillants exploits.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

The Speaker: The Legislative Assembly is grateful to be situated upon Treaty 6 territory. This land has been the traditional region of the Métis people of Alberta, the Inuit, and the ancestral territory of the Cree, Dene, Blackfoot, Saulteaux, Iroquois, and Nakota Sioux people. The recognition of our history on this land is an act of reconciliation, and we honour those who walk with us. We also acknowledge that the province of Alberta also exists within treaties 4, 7, 8, and 10 territories and the Métis Nation of Alberta.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Members, seated in my gallery today is Vivienne Horne, who was the MLA for Spruce Grove-St. Albert from 2015 to 2019. She is now a constituent in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and is pursuing a master of arts in justice studies at Royal Roads University. I ask that Vivienne please rise to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Members, today we had the privilege of hearing *O Canada* performed by Andrew Cook. Born and raised in Alberta, Andrew Cook is a father, husband, and brother who cares deeply about his country. His ancestors immigrated to western Canada from British factories and shipyards in search of a better life. Andrew mentioned that Alberta has given him a place to grow up, bask in the glory of championship hockey, while also feeling the pain of defeat. As a proud Canadian he feels fortunate to call Alberta home and is committed to defending our province's and

country's values, the right to live strong and free. I ask Andrew to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

It is my pleasure to introduce a group of outstanding guests who are visiting us today from 4-H Alberta, an organization that has shaped generations of young leaders across our province. These individuals spent the day at the Legislature and enjoyed lunch with the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation and a meeting with the Premier. Their dedication to youth development, community service, and strengthening Alberta's agriculture sector is truly commendable. I ask them all to please now rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

We have two school group introductions today, starting with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my absolute honour to introduce a group of grade 6 students who are here from Glenora elementary school, as well as a group of grade 6 students who are here from Talmud Torah school. I ask that they all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise as well today to introduce to you and through you 27 grade 6 students and their teacher, Lindsey Todd, plus chaperone Cera Dixon, from Talmud Torah school. I hope to see you all again soon, the evening of December 14 here on the Legislature grounds, for the Hanukkah menorah-lighting ceremony. Talmud Torah, please accept my offer to rise once again and receive the warm applause of the Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Introduction of guests, starting with the hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege to introduce some guests today from 4-H Alberta, a youth leadership development organization that has done absolutely incredible work in our province for more than a century. I'm happy to introduce Grace Tabler and Vanessa Hadwin, two recent recipients of the 4-H Premier's award, as well as 4-H Alberta CEO Tracy Gardner and board chair Syeda Khurram. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Chamber.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier. I had the privilege of meeting those award winners today.

Our next introduction is the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you on behalf of the Member for St. Albert Owen Colwell and Cai Colwell. Owen is a high school student and very heavily involved with the St. Albert EDA. We thank them for joining us today. Please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Member Irwin: I'm honoured to introduce some wonderful queer and trans folks that are here today: Tess, Claire, Erica, and Danny from Pride Corner; Chris Tanzi, who's a registered nurse working in gender-affirming health care; Ryder, who runs the organization Trans-Inclusive Athletes of Alberta; and Darian and Jadejha, two proud folks who are living in my constituency. Please rise if able and be welcomed by us all.

The Speaker: The Minister of Primary and Preventative Health Services.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you I want to introduce a brave young Albertan, Isabella Murray. Isabella is joined by her parents, Danielle and Thomas Murray, and grandparents Don and Sherry Guenette. I met with Isabella before today's session, and she wanted me to express her extreme gratitude for our government and our commitment to the health, wellness, and safety of all children and families in Alberta. Thank you for your bravery, Isabella. Please rise.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Haji: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Habiba Ali, a community builder and mental health advocate and Awale Ahmed, a community leader and advocate for fair Uber drivers. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A pleasure to rise today to welcome a constituent and volunteer, Laura Penner. Laura is an active volunteer in our community and all of Edmonton, regularly going out with Water Warriors and showing up wherever she can lend a hand. Today she is here as a proud trans woman and activist, and I ask Laura to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

Member Boparai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Sikh Motorcycle Riders Canada, Calgary. They promote motorcycle safety and lead fundraising efforts for local and global causes such as cancer care, Punjab flood relief, antibullying, and many more. I ask that President Gurjit Singh Rai and the entire club rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Currie.

Member Eremenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Member for Calgary-Falconridge I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Baldev Mutta, a leader, innovator, and founder of Punjabi Community Health Services, also known as PCHS. His work in culturally sensitive care has supported many thousands across Canada facing challenges in mental health, addiction, and family well-being. I ask that he rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Long: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you representatives from the Alberta Cancer Foundation, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. Joining us today are members from their board of trustees: Darren Baumgardner, Joan Forge, Sandra Lau, Shenaz Jeraj, and Danielle Thorkelsson as well as executive team members Ryan Kelly, Christy Holtby, and Shelley Valaire. I ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The Member for Lethbridge-West.

Member Miyashiro: Mr. Speaker, thank you. To you and through you I'd like to introduce Diane Richard, a long-time volunteer, friend, and advocate for the LGBT2S-plus community. Diane, would you like to rise and get the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

Acute-care Action Plan

Mr. Wright: Mr. Speaker, our government took decisive action to strengthen Alberta's health care system by launching the acute-care action plan. It begins with substantial capacity increases, including 1,000 new hospital beds in Calgary and Edmonton. We're also expanding surgical access by adding 50,000 additional surgeries over the next three years. This will be achieved through increased hospital operating room capacity and strengthened partnership with chartered surgical facilities, ensuring Albertans receive timely surgeries within clinically recommended wait times.

At the Royal Alexandra hospital, where pressures remain particularly high, dedicated investments will support improved patient flow, shorter wait times, and better outcomes. The successful strategies developed at the Royal Alex will then be expanded to benefit hospitals across the province. It expands treatment capacity through 12 new psychiatric beds and the permanent transition of 30 temporary beds.

In the coming weeks our government will also announce a major expansion of continuing care spaces province-wide. This will help transition hundreds of patients from hospital settings into more appropriate care environments, freeing up urgently needed hospital capacity. The action plan also includes the development of a province-wide NICU strategy to address neonatal pressures to better support Alberta's youngest patients and their families.

Beyond these immediate pressures the plan establishes six long-term priorities that modernize care delivery, strengthen system performances, and improve outcomes, including expanded surgical access, modernizing emergency health services, improving patient flow, developing a long-term health workforce plan, strengthening community-based care, and developing a 50-year capital infrastructure strategy.

Mr. Speaker, this plan provides a clear, responsible, and forward-looking path to a stronger, more responsive health system, one that delivers better health care for every Albertan.

The Speaker: The Member for Lethbridge-West.

Municipal Governance

Member Miyashiro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In last week's Alberta Municipalities conference I spoke to mayors and municipal councillors from across the province, and they have concerns. Since municipal governments are the closest governments to the people, these governments need to be allowed to do the work they've been elected to do, but instead the UCP has decided to micromanage the way they govern.

Let me give you a couple of examples. This UCP government passed laws that interfere with elections by telling municipalities where and how they can count votes. They're forcing municipalities to ban vote tabulators, which have been proven effective and efficient to get results out as quickly as possible. But this government doesn't care about the facts. They're more concerned with keeping up with the latest conspiracy theories pushed by the U.S. MAGA movement than running smooth elections.

They've also given themselves power to pick and choose who gets to sit on municipal councils. They brought in power to allow cabinet to remove individual council members from any council on a whim. At the same time, they have removed the codes of conduct for council members, just like they give themselves a free pass on gifts from insiders and special interests.

Wait; there's more. They also think they know how to plan bike lanes. The minister responsible for pavement has decided to add his two cents about what alternative transportation means in urban centres because he doesn't trust our cities. With all the micromanagement where's the willingness to fund the infrastructure our communities need without restricting their freedoms? This government talks a big game about standing up against the federal government, Mr. Speaker, but it's time they finally practice what they preach and let municipal governments make decisions in their own council chambers, not as dictated by the minister's office.

David Ennis Parole Application

Ms Pitt: Mr. Speaker, in August 1982 David Ennis lurked in the bushes while watching the Johnson-Bentley family of six enjoy a family camping trip. He snuck into their camp and murdered the four adults with the sole intention of gaining access to the girls, who were sleeping in the tent. They were only 11 and 13 years old. His motivation for murder was to fulfill his sexual fantasies of torture, molestation, and rape. For the following week he carried out his sadistic tendencies on the girls. He left a permanent scar across this country. David Ennis is seeking parole again, and he wants to walk free in Alberta. I say: not on our watch and not in our province.

David Shearing, who now goes by David Ennis because he was allowed to change his name after being incarcerated, is a convicted mass murderer and pedophile responsible for one of the most horrific crimes in Canadian history. This man has been denied parole three times and rightly so. He is the definition of evil. His crimes were calculated, cruel, and incomprehensible. Albertans are fed up with a justice system that even thinks of releasing monsters like this. By even considering parole, we send a dangerous message. We tell families and victims that the worst crimes imaginable can be forgotten with time. That's not justice; that's betrayal.

This government stands firmly against allowing this man parole. We stand with the victims and the families who believe that someone so vile should remain behind bars for the rest of their life. No murderer, pedophile, or anyone who violates human life so comfortably should ever return to society. Mr. Speaker, the Parole Board needs to hear our voices and know that we still care about keeping David Ennis behind bars. Please sign the petition at change.org. We need to ensure justice is permanent. David Ennis should never walk free; not now, not ever.

Edmonton-Rutherford Constituency Concerns

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: I rise with deep gratitude and love for the citizens of Edmonton-Rutherford. Over these past months you have written, called, and visited our offices in unprecedented numbers: over 100 contacts in July, 200 in August, 300 in September, and more than 1,000 in October. Your voices, your stories, and your worries are not just data points; they are a call to action, and I am listening.

The most urgent concern I continue to hear is the state of public education. Families and teachers have shared heartbreak about chronic underfunding, overcrowded classrooms, declining supports, and a government that refuses to collaborate with the very experts we trust with our children. Many of you expressed anger and disbelief at the government's willingness to use the notwithstanding clause as a weapon to force teachers back to work instead of working in good faith.

Health care remains another pressing concern. I recently sat with Penny and David, lifelong public servants in mental health and Alberta Health Services who earned their pensions and have served Albertans for decades. Penny described the current reality:

Albertans without family doctors, without access to vaccines, facing harmful cuts and long wait times that are simply, quote, inhumane.

Finally, many of you are deeply worried that this government may use the notwithstanding clause to override Charter rights of the 2SLGBTQI-plus people, including youth and families in our neighbourhoods.

To every teacher, every parent, every health care worker, every senior, and every 10-year-old like Eric, who wrote me to tell this government to fix their mess: we hear you, we respect you, and on this side of the House we are fighting for you. Hay-hay.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Election Recall Petitions

Mr. Nenshi: Mr. Speaker, one-third of the UCP government caucus is now under threat of citizen-led recall petitions, with more to come. The Premier has been a fan of recall her entire political and media career, enthusiastically cheerleading for the recall effort, for example, against Mayor Gondek. Suddenly she doesn't love it so much anymore. Some might call it being hoisted on one's own petard, or in more modern terms: this is the find-out phase. Does this Premier still believe in recall, or does she only believe in recall for her enemies?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute mischaracterization of my relationship with the former mayor. We actually did a lot of great work together, and I wish her well in whatever her next steps are.

As for recall, clearly there are some fences that we need to ensure are in place to make sure that it's not abused or misused in the way it is being abused and misused by the unions and others who are trying to take down this government. They're being very open about the fact that it's a government overthrow, Mr. Speaker, so we're talking to caucus, we're talking to elections officials to see whether or not there do need to be any modifications to make the rules fair.

Mr. Nenshi: It's fascinating to hear the Premier use words like "abuse" and "misuse" and "overthrow" when people are simply using her legislation as written. This is contempt for citizens. The Premier characterized grandmas going door to door in Bowness with radical militants overthrowing her government. And the Member for Airdrie-East recently doxed and insulted a citizen, suggesting that public servants should not be allowed to ever criticize the government.

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

Mr. Nenshi: Does the Premier believe that public servants must swear an oath to her and her alone, or does she believe in their freedom of expression?

The Speaker: A point of order was noted at 1:52 p.m.
The Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would note that in other jurisdictions one of the issues that they have is that citizens can seek the removal of elected officials for neglect of duty, misuse of office, or incompetence. Those are the kinds of things that I believe, when the initial intention of this law was brought forward, were the initial

intention for how it was going to be used. It was not intended to have unions weaponize it to bus people in and put GoFundMes online in order to be able to topple the sitting government. That's what elections are for.

Mr. Nenshi: The list of quotations of the Premier saying exactly the opposite, that recall is about keeping people honest between elections, is too long to get to in 35 seconds. Certainly, she didn't make any of these arguments against Mayor Gondek's or Mayor Gandam's petitions when she felt that it was convenient for her.

Now, listen, it is never acceptable to harass staff, politicians, and their families – members on this side are no strangers to receiving that harassment – but how you respond matters. This government has no problem insulting opponents. Is this behaviour of the government members acceptable to the Premier, or will she be demanding apologies from her members?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would invite the member opposite to look at my feed from time to time to see how people communicate with me. I always behave in a way that I expect others to treat me. I have always been respectful, even to those who ask me some pretty tough questions on the radio show that I do every couple of weeks. I would hope that we could elevate the level of debate. That includes this side of the Chamber, that side of the Chamber, our various supporters. I think that that is what people would like to see, and that's certainly what I would expect as well.

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

Mr. Nenshi: I am very much looking forward to that elevation of debate, starting with a number of the members' social media this week.

Health Services Administration

Mr. Nenshi: Now, last week the Premier admitted that Justice Wyant's corrupt care investigation did not request an interview with a single politician or political staffer, shocking given that politicians and political staffers are at the centre of the issues, yet the Premier blames AHS. The Premier must remember that Justice Wyant didn't request those interviews because he couldn't; he was restricted from doing it. That's why the government was not cleared by that investigation. Will the Premier finally agree to a full public inquiry on this matter?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Judge Wyant could talk with anyone that he chose to. As I understand it, there was only one person who indicated that they did not want to be interviewed by him, and that included no elected government officials, no one who is working within government, and no political staffers. This, quite frankly, was an independent procurement decision. All procurement decisions at that time were under the umbrella of AHS. In fact, there was a lot of praise for the procurement department of AHS at the time. We discovered some problems; we're going to fix them.

Mr. Nenshi: It never fails to impress me that the Premier doesn't understand that every single time she blames AHS, she tells on herself. She's forever finding someone else to blame. She never takes responsibility for anything. The buck never stops with her. But she runs AHS. She's hired and fired multiple hand-picked CEOs, multiple boards, yet she tells us that it's their fault. So will

the Premier today clear the air and tell us: who does run AHS? Is it the World Economic Forum? Is it the chemtrail people? Or is it big pharma?

Ms Smith: Well, I'm glad to see the member opposite is looking at elevating the debate. That demonstrates there's no real commitment to do so, Mr. Speaker.

There were clearly troubles with AHS being not only the service provider as well as the entity that was contracting to its competitors. We found all kinds of problems with that, Mr. Speaker, and we indicated our intention very clearly to split out the role of procurement to Acute Care Alberta, which will now be responsible not only for contracts to AHS but to Covenant Health as well as to chartered surgical centres. That makes good sense.

Mr. Nenshi: Remembering, of course, that AHS said, "Don't buy the Turkish Tylenol," and this Premier and her minister forced them to do it.

At the Alberta Municipalities conference last week the Premier admitted that she didn't even know that Fairview campus was closing until a week after the public announcement. This is a pattern with this Premier. She doesn't seem to know what's going on. Is that because of plausible deniability or because she just doesn't care? I'll ask a very specific question. It's been almost a year without permanent leadership of AHS. If the Premier has been paying attention, will the Premier inform us when she's hiring the new board, the new CEO, and the permanent CMOH?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The board of northwest voted to close down the Fairview campus. The Minister of Advanced Education let me know, and I've been working with my northern MLAs to see if there's another alternative. There are other campuses that might be able to take that on. Maybe we can direct money to them directly. Maybe they can be part of a school board. I'm not prepared to say that this is the final answer on this.

When it comes down to how we have refocused health care, we've got a lot more work to do to make sure that we're optimizing each of the different entities responsible for each aspect of the health care system. We're going to keep doing that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. member for the third set of questions.

Immigrants to Alberta

Mr. Nenshi: That answer really makes me believe, as Albertans believe, that this Premier does not have a handle on difficult files that her government is dealing with. I knew about Fairview campus months ago, and she found out after a public announcement has been made. Not even a year ago she wanted to double Alberta's population. She wanted Red Deer to have a million people. But this week she claims she's only learned of Alberta's true immigration and interprovincial migration numbers because she saw a tweet from an *Edmonton Journal* hockey columnist. How does this Premier get briefed on big issues like immigration? Or does she just read things on social media?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Prior to COVID we were as a country getting in 300,000 to 500,000 newcomers each year. The federal government campaigned on 500,000 newcomers. Imagine all of our great surprise when they took the restrictions off every single program and brought in 2 million newcomers per year for the

last three years. No, they didn't ask me for my permission on that. They didn't ask Albertans for their permission on that. Heck, they didn't ask for Canadians' permission on that. What has happened is that it has put incredible pressure on all of our social services, almost to the point of breaking, and we're glad to see they're reining it in.

2:00

Mr. Nenshi: Well, I'm glad she learned a lot from a tweet, Mr. Speaker, because well after COVID, in 2024, the Premier demanded that the Prime Minister grant even more immigrant allocation to Alberta, writing, "I am requesting that your government immediately increase Alberta's Provincial Nomination Program allocation" and on and on and on. Now she says: oh, no; I was shocked, I was surprised, and I want to curtail immigration. Will the Premier clarify the exact number she wants, the number of immigrants she thinks is right for Alberta? And what are, as her folks have been saying, quote, the right kind, unquote, of immigrants? Who are those people?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. People used to come to Canada because they wanted a job. They wanted to be taxpayers first, and that's what we're looking for, people who want to come here and contribute to our economy. That is why we asked for more economic migrants. That is why we believe that 1 per cent of the population is probably the amount that we would be able to reasonably ensure came here, had the services that they needed, were able to get a good rental apartment and a good job. That would be about 50,000. And, yes, I think Alberta should be responsible for offering all of that group the provincial nominee status because the federal government has demonstrated they can't.

Mr. Nenshi: As an immigrant family myself I'm fascinated to know who she thinks is coming to Canada not wanting to work. She's highlighted that she thinks the wrong kind of immigrants are coming even in that answer, and now the government has hinted very strongly that they'll be restricting services to legal Canadian permanent residents and people on work visas. That's why they're putting it on the driver's licence; let's be real here. Maybe they'll use the notwithstanding clause on that as well. Exactly what services is this government planning to restrict from legal permanent residents who are not yet citizens of Canada?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm watching with great interest in the U.K. as a socialist Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, is having a discussion about whether to increase the number of years that a newcomer has to be in his country before they're eligible for benefits. It is currently five years; they're talking about increasing it to 10 years. That, I think, is a reflection on the fact that people are feeling like they're not getting the services first. They're not getting a doctor, they're not ensuring that their kids are able in classrooms to be able to get the support that they need, and that's an active discussion we're having about: how do we prioritize? [interjection]

The Speaker: Hon. member, you had three questions times three. I hope you enjoyed them, but now it's somebody else's turn.

Bill 2 and Charter Rights

Ms Pancholi: Last year the Premier amended the Alberta Bill of Rights to protect the right of Albertans to choose their own medical treatment. She fiercely defended it, saying, quote: we want to make

sure that every person is able to talk to their medical professional and be able to get the advice that makes the most sense for them. To support her position, the Premier quoted philosopher John Locke, who said that when it comes to foundational democratic rights, quote, rulers who fail to protect those rights may be removed and replaced. So when did the Premier stop believing in the right of Albertans to make their own medical decisions, and does she agree with herself that she should be replaced if she violates those rights?

The Speaker: The hon. . . . [interjections]

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: No. I'll recognize you as soon as I can hear myself. The hon. minister of health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we are going to make sure that we follow through with our medical rights guarantee to all Albertans. That has not changed. We're going to continue to do that. In fact, we are ensuring that everyone has a family practitioner. We are proud to say that we now have over 12,769 medical practitioners, doctors here ready to practise in Alberta. That's a far cry from when the members opposite were there, when there were only about 10,500.

Ms Pancholi: So everyone gets access to medical treatment unless you are a trans youth or their parent.

The Premier is offside every legal organization in the country when it comes to violating Albertans' Charter rights. The Canadian Bar Association said:

The preemptive use of the notwithstanding clause cannot be allowed to normalize. Neither should the curtailment of legislative debate become routine. Overuse of these extraordinary measures . . . risks undermining the constitutional and human-rights architecture that protects all Albertans.

So why does this so-called freedom-loving Premier now seem to love trampling on the freedoms of Albertans?

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:05.

The Minister of Justice has the floor.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again, a ridiculous concept here. We've said time and time again that we uphold the rights of Albertans. That's exactly why we introduced the amendments to the Bill of Rights. That's exactly why we stand with parents and children in this province. That's why we're bringing forward a number of policies that help ensure that children and youth can grow and develop in this province without undue influence from the NDP and the like.

Ms Pancholi: It sounds like this government is picking and choosing which Albertans have rights in this province. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association says, "When governments use the notwithstanding clause to dodge accountability and silence opposition, they don't just target workers – they threaten the rights of everyone." Amnesty International says, "Alberta's use of the notwithstanding clause continues an alarming trend of provincial governments putting political expediency ahead of people's human rights." Pflag, an LGBTQ parents' group, says, "Using it in this way sends a chilling message: dignity and equality can be set aside for political purposes." Why is this Premier putting her political future ahead of dignity, equality, and Albertans' human rights?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker. This is about children's rights. We think it's important, though, that parents have a role to play in our children's lives. When that happens, we know that our children are better supported. They feel better, they're more cared for, and they're more successful in their journey. Contrary to what the member on the other side says, we think that parents should always have a pivotal role in the major decisions of their children. That will never change.

Members' Acceptance of Gifts and Benefits

Mr. Kasawski: The new policy on gifts from insiders that the Premier pushed through last month behind closed doors is riddled with loopholes. It allows expensive gifts for ministers from their friends and relatives up to \$500 or more without disclosure, including pricey tickets to skybox suites. Why would the Premier push this unacceptable policy that allows more conflicts of interest and more gifts to cabinet from their friend Sam Mraiche?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is incorrect. We made amendments that were consistent with the rest of Canada. The fact of the matter is that we've got independent offices – the Ethics Commissioner, for example – that are tasked exclusively with dealing with any gift exchanges that are inappropriate, and that is exactly what that office does. The changes that we made in the gifting processes are consistent not only with the rest of Canada but far below the federal limitations. If they have a problem, they should look to their federal friends first.

Mr. Kasawski: Given that this government has a history of accepting gifts that don't pass the smell test for Albertans, given that now is the time to pass new legislation that increases transparency, to crack down on unethical behaviour, and to eliminate kickbacks to UCP insiders, will the government support Bill 202, the ethical governance act, or will they keep their loopholes so they can continue to accept luxury gifts from their friends and insiders?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the Ethics Commissioner and the office of the Ethics Commissioner is to make sure that they have a handle on the Conflicts of Interest Act and the conduct of all members in this Assembly. That is the role of the legislation; that is the role of the office. We know full well that the Ethics Commissioner is working diligently to make sure that each and every member complies with the act, and that's what we'll continue to do. There is good legislation in place, and we'll abide by it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the government is obsessed with accepting luxury gifts from friends, insiders, and lobbyists and given that the rules that the minister just stood up and talked about are made by themselves and allow them to accept lavish gifts, why won't the government commit to supporting Bill 202, the ethical governance act, that eliminates their excuses, and finally try to meet the standards of ethics, transparency, and accountability that Albertans deserve and expect?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member needs to take yes for an answer. There is an existing Conflicts of Interest Act that deals with gift provisions and a number of other

things that the hon. member's bill seeks to address. They've already been addressed time and again. We have an independent office, an Ethics Commissioner that deals with this every single day. Each and every one of the members in this Assembly is required to abide by the provisions of the Conflicts of Interest Act. Every single member on this side of the Assembly certainly does.

Thank you.

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

Acute-care Action Plan

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday our government took decisive action to strengthen Alberta's health care system with the launch of the acute-care action plan. The acute-care action plan commits to expanding surgical access by – listen to this – delivering 50,000 additional surgeries over the next three years. This builds on a record 318,920 surgeries that were completed last year. This is going to reduce surgical wait times and ensure Albertans receive care within clinically recommended timelines. To the minister: can you explain how the government plans to achieve this?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of hospitals.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta did provide a record 318,000 surgeries last year, and we are planning to do even more this year. About 80 per cent of our surgeries are performed in-hospital, so to build on that, we're going to allocate additional funding, increase utilization of our ORs, and continue the great work of the Alberta surgical initiative and our medical device reprocessing initiatives. We'll also leverage chartered surgical facilities to decant low-complexity surgeries so that our hospitals can do even more complex and urgent surgeries, more across the board. That's good news for patients waiting on wait-lists.

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

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for the answer. It's given that the acute-care action plan intends to deliver 50,000 additional surgeries over the next three years and plans to add 1,000 new acute-care beds in Alberta. God knows we have the space. There's an entire floor in Fort McMurray's hospital that's vacant. The U of A has an entire floor as well. I would argue that Grande Prairie has the entire old QE II hospital that could be reutilized. Given that this requires additional health care professionals to reduce wait times, improve access, and ensure Albertans receive the care they need, can the minister explain how he's going to help our world-class health care workforce achieve this?

The Speaker: The minister of hospitals.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You can't operate hospitals, transport patients, or perform surgeries without our world-class health professionals. I'm pleased to share that over the last year we've added over 600 physicians and over 1,000 RNs, LPNs, and health care aides, and we're going to continue to expand training opportunities. We're going to use incentives, bursaries and reduce barriers to health care professionals coming here from other parts of Canada and the world because, again, you can't do any of the things that Albertans expect in our world-class health care system without our health care professionals. I thank them for their work each and every day.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister. Thank you so much for those fantastic answers. It is given that Alberta's growing population and increasing number of families with young children are moving to our province. Can the minister explain how the acute-care action plan is helping to deliver higher quality care and strengthen health services to Alberta's most vulnerable children, ensuring they receive timely, safe, and effective care within our hospitals and right across our health system as we manage that?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of hospitals.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the great questions. The acute-care action plan includes plans for a 400-bed tower at the South Health Campus, which would enhance women's health services and expand neonatal units. It also establishes a provincial NICU strategy to ensure our infants receive timely, specialized, and high-quality care wherever they live.

Mr. Speaker, in the coming days we will share an exciting update on the Stollery children's hospital. Our children deserve the best care, and that's what our government and the acute-care plan will deliver. I'd like to thank the members opposite for joining us in advocating for the Stollery.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Northwestern Polytechnic's Fairview Campus Closure

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fairview campus has been a postsecondary institution for more than 70 years. It has been an integral part of the regional economy and offers high-quality postsecondary education right in the heart of the Peace Country. So what happened? Six years of UCP neglect and budget cuts is what happened. Since 2019 close to a half a billion dollars has been removed from postsecondary by this UCP wrecking ball of a government. When will this minister restore operational funding to Northwestern Polytechnic and keep Fairview open?

Mr. McDougall: Mr. Speaker, the board of governors of Northwestern Polytechnic have determined that the future for Northwestern Polytechnic is best situated with a separation between themselves and the Fairview campus. There is no indication at all that Northwestern Polytechnic or any institution will be receiving any cuts in funding going forward. Northwestern Polytechnic has a big role to play and will continue to have an increasing role to play in the future. In terms of the Fairview campus, we were working together with the community to see what other alternatives could be in that facility, and we're looking forward to that continued work.

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the MLA for Central Peace-Notley said that the decision to close Fairview campus would be reversed and given that the Premier didn't even know about the plan to close Fairview campus until a week after it was announced, there's no time for this minister to dither while a wrecking ball is swinging over the Fairview campus. I'm wondering why this minister hasn't got around to briefing his cabinet colleagues. Or is it that the minister from Central Peace-Notley hasn't told the Minister of Advanced Education what's actually going to happen to our Fairview campus?

Mr. McDougall: Mr. Speaker, there have been a lot of conversations about the future of Fairview College, including with the minister of that area. We met with the mayor in the community of Fairview. We are talking about options going forward, and we're looking forward to that continued conversation. [interjections]

Mr. Loewen: Tell the truth this time.

Ms Gray: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order has been noted at 2:17 along with a lot of chit-chat from people who haven't been recognized to speak on both sides. So let's just try one at a time and see how that works. Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that dozens of rural and smaller colleges across Alberta are watching the situation at Fairview campus very closely to see where their fates lie, given that these colleges are a very important part of the economy and community in each of the regions that they are located in and they're all threatened with budget cuts, too, when will this minister stop dithering, talk to the people in Peace Country, maybe starting with the MLA for Central Peace-Notley, and get cracking on the plan to keep Fairview campus open and thriving like it has been over the last 70 years?

Mr. McDougall: Mr. Speaker, all the educational institutions in the postsecondary system within Alberta have evolved and developed over the years to respond to the different situations that exist within Alberta. The future of Fairview campus, as I mentioned before, is under conversation. We were meeting and discussing options with the community. My department is assisting in that discussion, and we will continue to work with the community to see what the future of Fairview campus will be going forward.

Insurance Premium Costs

Member Boparai: Mr. Speaker, an old proverb goes, "An elephant has two sets of teeth: one for eating and one for show," just like this UCP government. They flaunt talking points on affordability while feeding corporations, causing major price increases for Albertans, like for insurance. Given that this UCP government makes big promises but the only big thing they make are profits for their friends, how can this government justify this betrayal of Albertans, and when will this government stop pretending and start helping Albertan families?

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

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're very proud to be part of a government where every single ministry puts Albertans first. Making sure we're working for affordability is one of the reasons why we brought forward the tax cut for Albertans that will save every single working Albertan \$750 every year. We want to continue to further that by bringing a care-first model for insurance that will lower rates while increasing the services provided to each and every person that's in an accident. We are looking after Albertans. We're doing the jobs that the NDP failed to do when they were in office.

Member Boparai: Given that taxi drivers have been waiting for months while this government holds meeting after meeting with no results, given hard-working Albertans who drive taxis need coverage for hail, theft, and fire now, not another series of empty discussions that don't bring down costs, when will they stop going around and around like a roundabout and actually take action? Is this government's plan to keep circling endlessly while drivers struggle, or will they finally deliver instead of delay?

2:20

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, as we've said many times, we're moving towards a January 1, 2027, implementation date of the care-first system. If you're referencing the challenges in the current system, that's kind of the whole point. We know that this system is driving up costs. It's the second most expensive system in the country. We know we need change. It's a heavy lift. It's a heavy lift for my department. It's a heavy lift for industry as well. We need to continue having those conversations with all the stakeholders. It's a very important thing and very important to this government.

Member Boparai: Mr. Speaker, given that home insurance costs have quadrupled, making housing even more unaffordable, and given that this government is helping corporations profit off the backs of regular families while increasing their own housing allowances and given that families are losing protections while their insurance bills explode, how can they justify this? When will this government stop siding with big insurance and start standing up for Albertans who need a break?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, we work for all Albertans in this House. That's why we're doing something as complicated as this on the auto side. It would have been far easier to stick our heads in the sands like every previous government and just say: well, there's more hail in Alberta; our cars more expensive. That would have been an easy answer. That's not what we chose to do. We chose to do the hard thing. Home property insurance: when the insurance companies lose a collective 1 and a quarter billion dollars in 2024 in Alberta, there are pressures across the system. We need a new system. We're going to continue to do that work.

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

Social Assistance Program Funding

Mr. Wright: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2023 and 2024 the Medicine Hat Root Cellar supported 12,000 households and nearly 25,000 individuals facing food insecurity through its emergency food pantry service. This was made possible by a grant made by this government. With food banks playing a vital role in our province helping Albertans to access nutritious meals, can the Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services please share what this government is doing to continue to support food banks across Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Interestingly enough, in the history of Alberta no government had been investing in food banks or in food service programs. This government saw the challenge that was taking place with the affordability crisis and has invested \$31 million inside this space underneath the leadership of this Premier, something that we're very, very proud of. I want to tell you that we've really focused on making sure that gets to lots of providers across the province, like in the hon. member's riding, to be able to make sure they can build capacity and be able to provide food services all across Alberta, not just inside our largest cities. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, let's hear from the person with the floor and only them.

The hon. member.

Mr. Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that food security plays an essential role in supporting seniors' wellness and independence and further given that there are community organizations across the province that help ensure seniors have consistent access to nutritious food, can the same minister please outline how this government is working to ensure older Albertans can have access to food supports that they need, and how you are supporting the community organizations that provide those supports?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're investing an unprecedented \$6 billion inside senior services in Alberta, a reflection of both our fast-aging population and the fact that previous governments did not invest heavily in this area. Examples would include \$8.5 million specifically for transportation programs helping connect seniors in places like rural Alberta, where I know the Official Opposition has not really been, to be able to make sure that they can get to places like for food, investing in Healthy Aging Alberta to be able to make sure that they can provide support services to our seniors all across Alberta.

The Speaker: Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Wright: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that food banks like Medicine Hat's Root Cellar are often the first point of contact for Albertans in need and further given that many individuals facing food insecurities also require broader supports like housing, employment, and mental health services, can the same minister please explain how this government is working with community organizations to ensure that these wraparound services are strengthened and supporting Albertans who are moving from insecurity to long-term sustainability?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We continue to invest in our partners, with FCSS as an example: \$105 million in all their programs all across Alberta. We've increased our rental supplement programs to 12,000 more households across the province, and of course we continue to invest in senior affordable housing. That is the number one way we can help our senior population. As the *Edmonton Journal* said last week, we are a mecca for housing, which continues to make sure that we remain the most affordable jurisdiction to raise a family in but also to retire in.

Class Size and Complexity Cabinet Committee

Ms Chapman: Having scrapped class size tracking years ago and sitting idly by while class sizes have ballooned to unmanageable levels, earlier this month the UCP announced their grandly named Class Size and Complexity Cabinet Committee, but as always it's too little too late with this government. We've been calling on the government to tackle these challenges for years, but all they've done is duck and dodge responsibility. Why has it taken this long for the minister to finally see the light?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of education.

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We had a very productive first meeting of the Class Size and Complexity Cabinet Committee. Really insightful to hear directly from our superintendents, the Alberta Teachers' Association representative who joined us, and other individuals as well. We'll be collecting data from all of our school divisions. Most of that is due back on November 24. That data will give us a better understanding of

class composition and class sizes for every school in the province, which will help us to make a much more informed decision about where to allocate resources and help alleviate pressures that we're seeing.

Ms Chapman: Well, given that a meeting isn't going to cut class sizes, given that teachers and students continue to struggle under the conditions this UCP government has created for them, given that principals are being required to implement changes with little notice and that the hastily published online forms are vague and difficult to answer, can the minister please tell Albertans why this government continues to talk a big game about red tape reduction when all they do is add more of it?

Mr. Nicolaides: As I mentioned a moment ago, collecting the data is necessary so that we can provide greater transparency to Albertans and, furthermore, to help inform next steps. It's important that, when we look at future resource allocation, when we look at addressing some of the challenges that we're seeing in our school divisions, we want to have the best possible view with respect to individual classrooms and individual schools that are facing significant challenges. Some, of course, may have more unique challenges dealing with refugee students or students with English as an additional language or other dynamics. Once we have that information, it will help us to make the best informed decision. [interjection]

The Speaker: Edmonton-Glenora, maybe we'll wait. Maybe the person standing will be heard if we're able to.

Ms Chapman: Given that we have the lowest per-student funding in the country and that classroom complexity, class size, and other issues remain unaddressed, given that teachers and parents have asked this government for years to improve conditions in our classroom with no response and given that this committee does not include even a single representative from one of the largest school boards in the province, Edmonton public, can the minister tell us: is there anyone in this government who is actually listening to the people of Alberta?

Mr. Nicolaides: I'm extremely happy to have the superintendent of the Calgary public school division at the table with us. In addition: the superintendent of the Edmonton Catholic school division as well as other superintendents, school trustees, and representatives from the Alberta Teachers' Association, in addition to some of my other government colleagues. Having all of these individuals present is going to help us, of course, address some of the challenges that we're seeing in our education system. Mr. Speaker, we will absolutely get the job done that Albertans expect.

Northern Alberta Utility Costs

Mr. Wiebe: Well, Mr. Speaker, northern Alberta is a beautiful area that people want to live in because of its endless opportunities. To take advantage of those opportunities, constituents in my riding need access to affordable, reliable power that often face higher electricity costs because of living in the north. To the Minister of Affordability and Utilities: can you please inform the Assembly of how our government plans to make electricity more affordable for people in northern Alberta?

2:30

The Speaker: The Minister for Affordability and Utilities.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for his outstanding advocacy to lowering electricity costs. Geography does

play a role in utility costs for northern Albertans, and that is one of the many reasons why we invest \$8.5 million in the rural utility grants we fund each year, to help support the construction of critical electricity and gas services, to help offset higher utility costs in these remote areas so that we can ensure that all Albertans can access the utilities they need to be successful and provide for their families.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you. Thank you, Minister. Given that I was pleased to see that in your mandate letter from the Premier you were tasked with addressing distribution rate disparity across the province and given that distribution rates make up a significant part of electricity bills, especially for northern Albertans, to the same minister: can you please tell this Assembly what steps are being taken to ensure northern residents will receive meaningful relief from elevated distribution charges?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so proud of the progress that we've already made as a government to make electricity more affordable for all Albertans, including consumers saving more than \$280 million in utility costs, lowering the default electricity rate by 63 per cent from its peak, and encouraging the more efficient use of power infrastructure. We know there's more work to be done, and I look forward to exploring the best answer we can find to better balance the distribution across the province. I hope to have more news to share on reducing those delivery costs in this Chamber very soon.

The Speaker: The member.

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for that response. Given that the Alberta Electric System Operator's own analysis found that the federal government's so-called clean electricity regulation will disproportionately raise electricity costs for Albertans, including those for residents in my riding, to the same minister: please inform the House of how our government will shield northern residents and all Albertans from further power bill increases as a result of the federal government's irresponsible overreach.

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member. We will not leave Albertans to freeze in the dark by allowing reckless federal policies to impose multibillion-dollar costs on Albertans, not to mention the increase of power bills by at least 35 per cent or making our electricity grid a hundred times less reliable, all while doing nothing to reduce emissions. Our government is taking this fight to the courts to defend the constitutional right to manage our own grid. As per my mandate letter from the Premier, I will do everything in my power to fight these regulations until they are defeated. [interjections]

The Speaker: Members, let's just leave the floor to the person recognized, shall we?
Calgary-Acadia.

Neonatal Intensive Care Unit Capacity

Member Batten: On World Prematurity Day I'm thinking of Alberta's tiniest patients and their dedicated health care teams who fight for them every day. These professionals were promised support, resources, and safe workplaces, promises this government

has repeatedly broken. Staffing shortages worsen, pressure grows, and the families wait longer for care. There is zero urgency from this government when babies and families are suffering through delays. To the minister: why should Albertans trust a word this government says, and what concrete steps are you actually taking to improve the care?

The Speaker: The hon. minister for hospitals.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I outlined earlier today in this House, we're greatly expanding hospital capacity, and part of the acute-care action plan is a dedicated focus on our NICUs. We're already making investments at the Foothills. We will be making a further announcement about the Stollery in the coming days. And we continue to invest in training and resourcing for our staff so that they can provide world-class health care to our youngest and most vulnerable patients.

Thank you.

Member Batten: Given that I was there in 2019 when a very similar government made those same promises and given that every dollar redirected from public health care to private delivery widens the gap between those who can pay and those who cannot and given that these contracts pull staff and capacity from the public system that cares for the premature babies and their families and given that Alberta's smallest patients should never be put at risk because of decisions that weaken the system they rely on, on World Prematurity Day will the minister stop funnelling public funds into private profits and instead invest in people?

Mr. Jones: Mr. Speaker, the acute care action plan includes additional planning, which will be followed by investment in our NICUs. We are also planning to expand the Stollery here in Edmonton. More details on that will be announced in the coming days. We're also working with other providers, like the Alberta Children's hospital, to expand their operations so that they can serve more of Alberta's children. I completely agree with the member opposite: children are paramount. They will receive the best care that Alberta can provide, and we will put resourcing behind that.

Thank you.

Member Batten: Given that in 2021-22 I was also at rotary flames, at children's hospital where they also promised this and given the pending labour action, this government's willingness to use the notwithstanding clause to claw away and overwrite workers' rights and given that the public remembers exactly how quickly this government silenced workers, will the minister commit today to respecting workers' rights, guarantee that they will not use the notwithstanding clause against health care professionals or, honestly, any Albertan would be great, and finally act with the urgency to strengthen the public health care system Albertans rely on?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we tremendously value the work that our LPNs, health care aides, paramedics, and others perform on behalf of and for Albertans and our children every day, and we respect the collective bargaining process. It's my hope that a negotiated settlement will be reached in the coming days and that we continue to have a world-class compensation model for our health care professionals, but also we will address some of the challenges that health care professionals have raised with us. We do need to build capacity, and we do need to increase the throughput of our hospitals and get patients to the most appropriate care setting.

Provincial Police Agency

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, Albertans have been clear that they don't want a provincial police force. Indeed, I just returned from the Alberta Municipalities convention where I spoke with dozens of leaders from mid-sized cities, rural municipalities, and not one of them was in support of this idea. RMA president Kara Westerlund says that her members say the same. Yet the UCP continues to charge ahead, spending public money to produce a product their intended customers have already rejected. To the Premier: why is your government refusing to listen? Is it arrogance, incompetence, or both?

Mr. Ellis: You know, Mr. Speaker, the arrogance that comes from the NDP is quite frankly – rural Albertans have rights. I don't know how I can explain this any better. They have a right to a police service that shows up to a call when a call to service comes in. I have a letter from Cypress county that has been tabled by the MLA from Cypress county that specifically says, "no officer available on April 8," "no officer available on April 17," et cetera, et cetera. We are going to make sure that when somebody calls 911, the police are showing up to that call.

Mr. Shepherd: Given that rural leaders have rejected this minister's plan repeatedly and given that the minister for public safety repeatedly claims he's creating this provincial police force because the federal government plans to end contract policing in 2032 but given that at a Senate committee meeting three weeks ago the federal minister of public safety stated, "Our expectation will be . . . as the contracts expire in 2032, to be in a position to renew . . . We don't anticipate . . . reduction in services from the RCMP," to the minister. It's never been clearer that Albertans support the RCMP and the RCMP will be here to support Albertans. Why does this government refuse to support either?

Mr. Ellis: This is going to be fairly awkward for the member opposite, but I met personally with the federal minister last Friday, Mr. Speaker, and there is no decision that has been made by the federal cabinet post-2032. We have to prepare for any given scenario, and that's precisely what we are going to do.

Mr. Shepherd: Given that no Albertan takes this government's word for anything and given that this minister isn't just ignoring his supposed customers; he's ignoring his own employees because multiple sheriffs have told me this minister still hasn't spoken to them about his plans for his sheriff-based provincial police service – the only time they hear from him is when he tables a new bill – and given that means sheriffs with decades of service are left wondering about the future of their jobs and careers: if this minister won't listen to Albertans, will he at least take the time to talk to and listen to the people his entire plan depends on?

2:40

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure it's awkward for somebody who's supposed to be the critic for this particular portfolio, but there is a difference between a peace officer and a police officer. What we are doing is creating a service that is augmenting and supporting police officers in the province of Alberta. We have people out there that are performing policelike functions; they deserve to get paid like police officers. I do not understand why the members opposite would be opposing that.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds we will continue with Members' Statements.

Members' Statements

(continued)

Métis Week and Louis Riel Day

Mr. Rowswell: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Métis Week and reflect on Louis Riel Day, marked on November 16. Earlier this week on Louis Riel Day we honour the leader whose vision, courage, and advocacy helped secure the rights of the Métis people and shape the history of our country. Although the day has passed, the significance of his legacy continues to resonate through Métis Week and serves as a reminder of the ongoing contributions of the Métis communities to Alberta and Canada. Métis Week, observed from November 15 to 22, is a time to celebrate the history, culture, and resilience of the Métis people, one of the three distinct Indigenous peoples of Canada. Today more than 127,000 Métis call Alberta home. Their contributions enrich the cultural, social, and economic fabric of our province.

It's also an opportunity to acknowledge the unique heritage of the Métis, born from both Indigenous and European ancestry, and to recognize the role they've played. Throughout the week Métis communities across Alberta host a variety of events, including commemorative ceremonies, cultural gatherings, markets, and youth-focused activities, which reflect the strength, creativity, and vibrancy of Métis culture. These events provide an opportunity for people across Alberta to learn about the history, experiences, and ongoing contributions of Métis citizens while fostering respect, understanding, and meaningful engagement.

As we continue to observe this week, it's important that we recognize the resilience of Métis people, to support their efforts, to support their culture, and to ensure their voices are heard and respected. By honouring Métis Week and remembering the contributions of Louis Riel, we reaffirm our commitment to supporting reconciliation, inclusion, and building a more equitable, informed, and united future for everybody in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Vaccination Policies

Dr. Metz: Vaccines are the most successful and cost-effective public health intervention of the past two centuries. They eradicated smallpox and controlled polio, measles, and diphtheria. Vaccines saved millions of lives from COVID-19 and allowed the pandemic to end. They are effective and safe, yet the antiscience UCP continues to amplify dangerous vaccine misinformation, hyping rare risks and ignoring life-saving benefits.

Now Canada has lost its measles elimination status. Alberta recorded nearly as many measles cases as Ontario, a province with three times our population. One hundred and fifty patients were hospitalized and, tragically, one infant died shortly after birth after its mother contracted measles during her pregnancy. The UCP government has even gone so far as to make Albertans pay for vaccines and limited access to poorly accessible public health clinics, as most appointments must be booked by phone and many wait for hours on hold or give up altogether.

Members opposite should be ashamed of their willingness to put Albertans' lives at risk. Instead of sharing truth, they promote conspiracies. Instead of protecting Albertans, they falsely claim to be saving tax dollars when we all know this antiscience government will cost the Alberta health care system more money from preventable diseases. The antiscience, antivaccine UCP is not focused on ensuring Albertans have access to quality, life-saving health care. Instead, this government is determined to destroy

publicly delivered health care. They're willing to sit idly by as sick and dying patients crowd our hospitals and emergency departments.

Notices of Motions

Ms Al-Guneid: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give oral notice of Bill 203, the Energy Storage Planning For Investment Act, sponsored by myself.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Bill 5

Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2025

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The time has arrived for me to do what I love to do best and what I know everyone in this Chamber waits for, which is to introduce the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, Bill 5.

As usual, this bill makes minor amendments to existing statutes, sometimes in a corrective manner, and I look forward to robust debate on Bill 5, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act.

With that, I move first reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction.

Bill 10

Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2)

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Boy, if you liked that last one, you're going to love this one. I request leave to introduce Bill 10, the Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2).

This is the 10th red tape reduction bill we've introduced since 2019. The changes proposed in this bill will further cement Alberta's reputation as a leader in the country in reducing red tape.

Mr. Speaker, I hereby move first reading of Bill 10, Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2).

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Wright: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with three tablings. The first one is the letter referenced in my Bill 4 speech and by the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services.

The second one that I have is an article titled Actions Have Consequences – Unless You Break the Law in Canada, Apparently. It highlights the soft-on-crime approach the federal government has taken.

The last one is an essay written by a teacher in my riding titled From Edwin Parr [Winner] to Stress Leave in Two Years, highlighting some of the challenge he's had as a teacher.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today. First, I have five copies of the relevant pages from a transcript of the Senate Standing Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs, in which the Public Safety minister

confirms they expect to begin renegotiating provincial policing contracts for the RCMP beyond 2032 in the next few months.

I also have five copies of the relevant pages from Public Safety Canada's 2025 to 2026 departmental plan, which references engagements with partners in preparation for those renegotiations.

Lastly, I have five copies of an article from November 8 in the *Medicine Hat News* titled [Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat] Wrong about Damning RCMP Story, referring to allegations the member made against the RCMP in debate on November 5.

2:50

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table three documents in a court case brought about by the United Conservative Party against myself, the MLA for Lesser Slave Lake, and the Alberta Party. The first document is the statement of claim filed on November 7, 2025, in the Court of King's Bench, the second is an application filed on November 14 requesting an injunction, with a hearing on December 17, 2025, and the third is the affidavit of Dustin Van Vugt, the executive director of the UCP, sworn on November 14, 2025. I table these exhibits for review by the House.

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

Mr. Lundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In accordance with section 19(5) of the Auditor General Act as chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices I am pleased to table the office of the Auditor General results report for the year ended March 31, 2025.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings and the appropriate copies. First, from October 27, an open letter to the Minister of Primary and Preventative Health Services Alberta from my amazing constituent Carol Wodak.

Second is an article in the *Sherwood Park News*, a column titled No More Skyboxes, from November 13.

The third is another article from *Sherwood Park News* from November 13, Conflict of Interest Reform . . . Bill 202 Looks to Limit Gifts to \$100 for Alberta MLAs.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Ms Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a tabling which consists of an e-mail that I received from a constituent that is about this government creating some frustration with her in wasting taxpayer money on things like licence plate changes.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a poem written by a grade 3 teacher named Andrea. The poem is called Power, Notwithstanding. She's urging the UCP government to no longer employ the notwithstanding clause.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite five copies of a letter from my constituent Stephanie Krysa, who is concerned about support for teachers, trans youth, the environment, and affordability.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a letter from Vicki Boudreau, who writes urging the government to reverse a decision around defunding tests for minors with sleep apnea.

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

Mr. Ellingson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table an e-mail from a Calgary-Foothills constituent and learning leader at the Calgary board of education with her concerns for lack of supports for kids with complex needs.

The Speaker: Are there any other tablings? Seeing none – oh, not seeing very well, however. Edmonton-Whitemud.

An Hon. Member: Edmonton-Mill Woods.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Mill Woods. Not speaking very well.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand up so often your eyes just glaze right over. It's fine.

I rise to table five requisite copies of an e-mail received from constituent Kim Villanueva, concerned about the changes to vaccination bookings and the risks being posed to Albertans.

The Speaker: My apologies to Edmonton-Mill Woods. I didn't intend to not see you there.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of hon. Mr. Horner, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, pursuant to the provincial judges and applications judges registered and unregistered pensions plans regulation the provincial judges and applications judges registered and unregistered pensions plans 2024-25 annual report; pursuant to the Conflicts of Interest Act and Legislative Assembly Act the report of selected payments to the Members and former Members of the Legislative Assembly and persons directly associated with Members of the Legislative Assembly for the year ended March 31, 2025.

On behalf of hon. Mr. McDougall, Minister of Advanced Education, pursuant to the Land Surveyors Act the Alberta Land Surveyors' Association report of proceedings of the 116th annual general meeting, April 24 and 25, 2025; pursuant to the Architects Act the Alberta Association of Architects 2024 annual report; pursuant to the Chartered Professional Accountants Act the Chartered Professional Accountants of Alberta 2023-24 annual report with attached financial statements for the year ended March 31, 2024; pursuant to the Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act the Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta 2024 annual report and Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta 2024 annual report.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are now at points of order. The first point of order was called at 1:52 p.m. I think the Government House Leader might have something to say.

Mr. Schow: Withdraw.

The Speaker: Withdrew. Okay. That matter is dealt with and concluded.

Point of order 2 was called at 2:05 p.m. by the Government House Leader.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This point of order I will stick with.

I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j). At the time noted, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud was speaking in a question being posed to the government. In that question, the member said: the Premier loves trampling on the rights of Albertans. Similar language has been used on multiple occasions, particularly on October 27 of this year and October 4 as well. While most of these instances were referring to the government as a whole, which in that case I would acknowledge it would not be a point of order, in this instance the member was referring directly to the Premier. Now, whether the member likes what the government is doing or not, the member does not have the right to use abusive language, the member does not have the right to make allegations against another member, and the member does not have the right to impute false or unavowed motives against a member in this Chamber.

If I look back as well into the history of *Hansard*, there is a line from March 27, 2024, where the Speaker of the day, Speaker Cooper – shout-out to Speaker Cooper, wherever you may be today. “You’re breaching human rights”: that line was ruled, and there was an apology and a withdrawal made at the time.

Mr. Speaker, during question period the Leader of the Opposition said that we should all raise the level of debate in this Chamber. I would encourage the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud to do the same. Many points of order have been called in the past, apologies have been made, and commitments to do better, though today I don’t believe we saw that. I believe that forthcoming is an apology from a member on our side for conduct that was unbecoming.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage you to rule that this is a point of order and ask the member to apologize and withdraw.

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I disagree with the Government House Leader. I believe we are dealing with a matter of debate, and your ruling on this will be very important. I do not have the Blues, but to my best recollection the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud said, “Why does this so-called freedom-loving Premier now seem to love trampling on the freedoms of Albertans?” In this case, clearly talking about the government and the Premier. To be very clear, the Premier represents the head of state here in our province. In this Chamber the right to talk about the Premier and the Premier’s decisions has been a matter of debate repeatedly, with rulings from Speaker Cooper on November 5, 2024, saying, “I think the Premier’s record is a matter of debate on which members will have a variety of opinions.” Similarly, on April 11, 2024.

The Premier and the Premier’s actions have special status, Mr. Speaker, and we are talking about a government that has used the notwithstanding clause once in an unnecessary way and perhaps may again. I think talking about rights of Albertans and talking about the Premier’s decision-making as well as the Premier’s record should all be things that we are able to talk about in this Chamber in a parliamentary way. I look forward to your ruling.

The Speaker: Yeah, we can talk about all those things, but you can’t drag items outside of the point of order into the point of order, as was just attempted.

Anyways, listen, this is not helpful. There have been several rulings on this, and I would call this very much on the line. I’m going to caution both sides about the – I think the phrase that was used today by somebody in here was about raising the level of debate. I think that phrase was used on both sides at one time or another. It’s a good idea. We should try it. While I don’t think this is a point of order, it’s not helpful and it’s, I would say, quite close to causing disorder in the House. I would urge the Opposition House Leader to caution members that made the statements to not go down that road.

The next point of order was called at . . .

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Sir?

Mr. Shepherd: Just under 13(2).

The Speaker: Yes.

Point of Clarification

Mr. Shepherd: Just for clarification, are you referring in this case, then, to referring to the office of the Premier or the use of the phrase “trampling on people’s rights”?

The Speaker: Neither specifically. I was referring to the whole statement because the whole statement was made.

3:00

That takes us to point of order 3 at 2:17 p.m. by – is there a volunteer that made that point of order? Okay. The Opposition House Leader. Sorry, please go ahead.

Point of Order Allegations against a Member

Ms Gray: Thank you. At 2:17, and hearing the Government House Leader earlier suggest that there may be an apology forthcoming, I will simply say that the minister was heard clearly, because he chose to time his remarks during a moment of silence, to have said, “Tell the truth this time.” I will say that that member has been heard to say similar language a number of times. It’s a point of order, and I would appreciate if he apologized and withdrew.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Loewen: Yes. I withdraw my request for honesty in the House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Well, I think that was the right thing . . . [interjections] No. I heard “withdraw my remarks,” so I . . .

Ms Hoffman: For asking for honesty.

The Speaker: Minister.

Mr. Loewen: I withdraw my remarks.

The Speaker: Thank you. That second example was a very good example of how to do that.

That deals with points of order today.

Orders of the Day
Public Bills and Orders Other than
Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading

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

[Debate adjourned November 3: Member Irwin speaking]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Oh, pardon me. Oh, yes.

They're reminding me to remind you that you have a whole minute left.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I have one minute to appeal to that side of the House to do the right thing. Wish me luck.

We've heard many times from those UCP MLAs that they won't support an increase to minimum wage because it's a small number of people who make minimum wage. So what? Those 130,000 Albertans don't deserve a boost? They deserve to make the lowest minimum wage in Canada? They are our constituents. They are people, and they matter. Those members may have never struggled to make ends meet. Let me tell you, they're very lucky if they haven't. That's not the reality for many Albertans. A minimum wage increase would help so many of our constituents, so I'm urging the UCP to do the right thing for once. Support Bill 201, and support a boost to minimum wage.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: With 10 seconds left to spare. Oh, no. That ship has sailed now.

Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Ellingson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise and speak in support of Bill 201, Employment Standards (Protecting Workers' Pay) Amendment Act, 2025.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Now, Madam Speaker, before I came to this House, I worked at Calgary Economic Development. I was the VP of strategy there and the steward of the economic strategy for Calgary. We maybe had a unique approach to economic development in Calgary, understanding that, you know, our goal was building a city where everyone could prosper, that there are real economic reasons for raising a minimum wage for people who are earning the very least.

Studies show that those who are earning minimum wage, when given an increase to those wages, fully spend those increases on goods and services, that there is no saving. They spend everything that they earn. That, of course, could in turn lead to a boost to our economy. This could have a positive effect on GDP. In fact, the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago conducted a study showing that an increase to the federal minimum wage in the United States by \$1.75 could increase the GDP by .3 per cent. So there are benefits beyond just the fact that people who are earning minimum wage could actually maybe live a life that is a little bit closer to a life of dignity, which is really tough for them to live today.

At Calgary Economic Development when we did that work, we worked together with Vibrant Communities Calgary. Vibrant Communities Calgary was the steward of the poverty reduction strategy for the city of Calgary. The city of Calgary I think was the first city in the country to have a poverty reduction strategy, and we were probably the only city in the country that integrated the

poverty reduction strategy with the economic development strategy.

Vibrant Communities Calgary recently published their most recent living wage report, that showed that the living wage in Calgary now is \$26.50 an hour. This is considerably higher than the \$15 an hour minimum wage that workers in Calgary would be earning. This would go a long way to workers in Calgary who are earning minimum wage, give them the ability to buy food rather than go to the food bank, to pay for their rent rather than being stressed every month whether or not they have somewhere to live, and maybe even be able to pay for their transportation. You know, I think it's not lost on minimum wage workers that this same government that won't give them a raise is increasing their auto insurance year after year and that minimum wage earners are more likely having to use a car to get to work because public transport is built around bringing people in and out of a downtown core rather than to retail jobs or household jobs out in the suburbs.

What I'd also like to point out is that maybe this government is unaware that since the UCP came to power in 2019, the inflation rate in Alberta has increased by over 20 per cent. The people earning \$15 an hour: since 2019 they have not seen a raise. Meanwhile prices for everything have increased by 20 per cent. I would ask anyone in this House to put their hand up and say: "Yeah, I can live off \$15 an hour today. I can pay rent. I can put gas in my car. I can buy food for my kids on \$15 an hour." People who are earning \$15 an hour in 2019 are earning significantly less today than they were seven years ago, and that simply, Madam Speaker, is inexcusable.

I also want to talk for a second about, you know, who's earning minimum wage. The government says that it's primarily youth who are earning minimum wage. As the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood just pointed out, the government says that only 5 per cent of workers earn minimum wage. Well, Madam Speaker, you know what Albertans who are earning minimum wage hear when the government says that? What they hear is that the government doesn't care about them. I am here to say that Alberta's New Democrats do care. We care about all workers. We care about all people in Alberta having a right to live a life of dignity, and we care about those people getting an increase to their minimum wage so that they can live that life with dignity.

This government also talks about how all people on minimum wage are youth and that we keep minimum wage suppressed so that more youth can have work. Well, that's a little bit tough to stomach these days given that Alberta has among the highest youth unemployment rates in the country. If the government is going to say that is their strategy, their strategy is not working.

You know what their strategy is doing? The 43 per cent of minimum wage workers who are over the age of 25 are finding it harder every day to live. What this government is saying to the 10 per cent of minimum wage earners who are over the age of 55, who are maybe working part-time, who are maybe trying to supplement income security for seniors: this government doesn't care about how they're struggling; this government doesn't care about how they're seeking part-time employment to supplement their wages so that they also can live a life of dignity after the age of 55. Again, I'm here to say that the Alberta New Democrats care about youth who are earning minimum wage. We care about the people over 55 who are earning minimum wage. And we know that with costs today you cannot live off \$15 an hour. That's why we are proposing that we increase the minimum wage a dollar a year over the next three years and then index to inflation.

3:10

I also want to point out to this government that they talk about all of the jobs that are going to be lost if we increase minimum wages, but this also is not true. At the very least what we could say is that in the myriad of studies that have taken place over the employment impacts on increasing minimum wage, there is no real conclusion on whether or not there is a negative effect on unemployment. In fact, this government points to a study that was done before minimum wage increases started in 2015 that prophesied, you know, what might happen. They seem to neglect and don't turn to the fact that the very same professor did a study after the minimum wages went through in Alberta and found that in urban areas in Alberta there was no net negative effect on unemployment. There was no change.

It's important to point out urban areas because there's a higher percentage of minimum wage earners in urban areas because that's where the pool of services is. That's where the pool of retail services is, so that's where those workers work. To know and understand the fact that in those urban areas there was no negative impact on raising minimum wage, there is no reason, there is no excuse for this government to vote no to Bill 201.

I say to you, Madam Speaker, that if the members opposite choose not to vote for Bill 201, they're sending a clear signal to Albertans that they don't care. Alberta's New Democrats do care, and that's why we support Bill 201.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others who would like to join the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-North East.

Mr. Gurinder Brar: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I came to this country as an international student. I still remember standing in the line of Tim Hortons at SAIT watching the price of coffee. I used to think: can I buy a coffee today, or should I postpone so that I can pay the bill for my cellphone at the end of the month? For six months I could not work in this country because I had no access to a work permit. But after six months I got a job, and that was the first time I got a paycheck of \$120. That was the first time I took my friend to the same Tim Hortons, and we had a coffee and we had a doughnut. That was the moment I realized the feeling that I can have when I have good money in my pocket.

Workers today are struggling, standing in the same line. I request all members of the House to support those workers and stand in their favour.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Excellent timing, hon. member.

It is now time for the mover of this bill to close the debate. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Bill 201, Employment Standards (Protecting Workers' Pay) Amendment Act, 2025, is a concrete step that the members of this Legislature can take on the number one issue for Albertans, and that is affordability, the fact that their wages haven't kept pace with their costs and they're struggling to pay their rent and to put food on the table. This is a concrete step on something that is important to so many Albertans.

The UCP have been laser focused on issues that either don't exist or no one raised. We hear from constituents all the time. This is their number one ask, and I would urge the members over there to listen to the people they represent and do something about the affordability crisis.

This bill would bring in tip protections. I think that's a pretty clear issue of fairness, Madam Speaker. When people tip, they expect those tips to stay with the workers that did the work. This exists in many other jurisdictions. I don't think it's a really big ask. It would get rid of the youth minimum wage. On this side of the House we are big fans of equal pay for equal work. Finally, it would increase the minimum wage: \$1 immediately, another dollar the year after – that would bring it to \$17 – up to \$18 in 2027, and then index it to inflation. Alberta has the lowest minimum wage in the country, and it hasn't gone up in seven years. Most other jurisdictions index their minimum wage to inflation, and if Alberta's had stayed that way, we'd be closer to \$18.50 right now.

It's worth noting as well that over 40 per cent of minimum wage earners are actually parents. This isn't a situation where people don't need those basics covered. They would like to house and feed their children, which I think, Madam Speaker, is a very reasonable ask. We did have the opportunity to consult with chambers of commerce and small businesses as well as workers. That's why it phases in. It phases in at \$1 an hour but also recognizes that for a lot of people this is urgent. They face risks of homelessness. They face going to a food bank every single month.

The UCP really like to talk about how this would increase youth unemployment. I think the most definitive evidence we have, Madam Speaker, is that Alberta has the lowest minimum wage in the country and among the highest youth unemployment in the country. Their artificial depressing of minimum wage for seven years has not increased youth employment, in fact quite the opposite. They like to cite a UCP report. It's based on a regression analysis that imports a lot of assumptions, and one of those assumptions is that increases in minimum wage are a problem. The fact that that's the conclusion they get – I mean, it's some evidence, but I think the facts on the ground, the fact that we have the lowest minimum wage and the highest youth unemployment, are pretty clear evidence.

At the end of the day, Madam Speaker, this is about choices. Do we want a world where everyone has the opportunity to prosper or where only some do? Businesses, small businesses have a lot of costs. They have rent, they have insurance, and yes, this is one. But when it comes to rent and insurance, which they're telling us are the top drivers right now, this UCP government plans to do precisely nothing. In fact, they've demonstrated their values clearly. Minimum wage earners get absolutely nothing. Meanwhile insurance companies posting a billion dollars in profit get 15 per cent because they can't possibly live without it. But nothing for minimum wage earners.

This is about who we care about. It's about who we think has the right to get ahead in our society. We have an economy that is governed by rules. What we are talking about here is not whether we should or should not have rules. What we are talking about is who those rules tilt in favour of, and we are trying to tilt them back to the workers, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has moved second reading of Bill 201, the Employment Standards (Protecting Workers' Pay) Amendment Act, 2025.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:18 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Al-Guneid	Elmeligi	Kayande
Arcand-Paul	Eremenko	Metz
Batten	Ganley	Miyashiro
Boparai	Goehring	Nenshi
Brar, Gurinder	Gray	Pancholi
Brar, Gurtej	Haji	Sabir
Calahoo Stonehouse	Hoffman	Schmidt
Chapman	Hoyle	Shepherd
Dach	Ip	Sweet
Deol	Irwin	Tejada
Eggen	Kasawski	Wright, P.
Ellingson		

Against the motion:

Amery	Johnson	Sawyer
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Jones	Schow
Boitchenko	LaGrange	Schulz
Bouchard	Loewen	Sigurdson, R.J.
Cyr	Long	Singh
de Jonge	Lovely	Stephan
Dreeschen	Lundy	Turton
Dyck	McDougall	van Dijken
Ellis	Nally	Wiebe
Fir	Neudorf	Williams
Getson	Nicolaides	Wilson
Glubish	Nixon	Wright, J.
Horner	Petrovic	Yao
Hunter	Rowswell	Yaseen
Jean	Sawhney	

Totals: For – 34 Against – 44

[Motion for second reading of Bill 201 lost]

Bill 202 Conflicts of Interest (Ethical Governance) Amendment Act, 2025

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to stand up and move second reading of Bill 202, Conflicts of Interest (Ethical Governance) Amendment Act, 2025.

The bill is asking the Assembly to stand up for ethical governance in Alberta. It is the no-more-skyboxes bill. When we become MLAs, we take an oath of office. It's a commitment to selfless service to Alberta and to the rule of law. That oath reminds us that we govern not by force or favour but by laws that protect the public interest. Albertans expect their elected officials to act with integrity, transparency, and accountability. When that trust is broken, democracy suffers.

Bill 202, the Conflicts of Interest (Ethical Governance) Amendment Act, is about restoring that trust and ensuring that public service remains a public duty, not a private opportunity. In our democracy elected representatives don't govern alone. We rely on trusted advisers and political staff to help us do the work of governing. That's why it's so important that those individuals, especially those closest to the Premier, are held to the same ethical standards as elected officials.

Unfortunately, the UCP: that has not been the case for them. In 2023 one of Premier Smith's first moves was to pass legislation that gutted the Ethics Commissioner's authority in Alberta. That decision paved the way for hockeygate and the corrupt care scandal. When we learned that the Premier and cabinet ministers accepted

skybox tickets to Oilers playoff games from a businessman who is receiving sole-source government contracts from the province: that's not public service; it's self-service and it's unacceptable.

Here's the irony. MLAs are prohibited from using constituency office budgets to buy NHL tickets. It's explicitly forbidden, but the UCP saw that rule and must have thought: if we can't use public money, there must be someone else that will pay for it. It's ludicrous, and it didn't stop there.

In 2023 the UCP quietly raised the threshold for undisclosed gifts from \$200 to \$500 and for event tickets from \$500 to \$1,000. They moved these allowances into cabinet-controlled regulations, meaning they could change the rules without legislative oversight. That's not transparency; that's self-interest. These changes have widened the door for influence peddling and insider perks while ordinary Albertans are left wondering who their government really works for. Albertans expect integrity. Instead, they've seen skyboxes and perks.

Bill 202 is about restoring that trust and ensuring that public service remains a public duty, not a private opportunity. This legislation did not appear in a vacuum. It comes after repeated failures by the current government to uphold their most basic ethical standards. If the rules allow insiders to sip champagne in skyboxes while lobbyists pick up the tab, then the rules aren't protecting Albertans. Bill 202 slams that door shut. It expands the definition of conflict of interest to include not just the actual conflict as in the rules but the perception of conflict. Perception matters.

Section 2 of the bill addresses the furthering of a private interest. It makes it clear that if there is a reasonable perception that a member's ability to make a decision is affected by a private interest, that member must declare the interest and withdraw from the meeting if it is determined to be a conflict by the independent Ethics Commissioner. No more hiding behind technicalities, no more pretending that it looks bad but isn't enough to warrant a decision or action.

3:40

The bill also strengthens disclosure rules. Under section 7 any gift or benefit over \$100 must be disclosed to the Ethics Commissioner within 15 days and approved before it can be kept. Gone are the days when ministers could accept expensive perks under the guise of protocol. The Ethics Commissioner must now ensure that there is no reasonable perception of a breach before proving the retention of a gift. That's accountability in action.

The Premier's and ministers' staff, those unelected insiders who wield enormous influence: for them Bill 202 will introduce a mandatory code of conduct under section 23.41. This code sets maximum cash values for gifts, requires the disclosure of anything over \$100, and prohibits gifts from lobbyists or anyone with business before the Crown. It even empowers the Ethics Commissioner to investigate breaches and report them publicly.

Amendments made to section 3 address the potential for an MLA to use their position to influence any decision, not just decisions made by or on behalf of the Crown. These are not optional guidelines. They are enforceable standards designed to protect the public interest. If you're not ready to serve Albertans with integrity, then you should go work somewhere else because this place is not for you.

Yes, there are moments when Canadians want to see our leaders at major events, so pay for the ticket or disclose the gifted ticket and get approval of the Ethics Commissioner to use it. That's how it should be: simple, transparent, accountable. Why does this matter? Because democracy depends on trust. When Albertans see politicians enjoying skybox perks while claiming it's all legal, that trust evaporates. When ethics rules are treated as suggestions

instead of obligations, cynicism grows, and when cynicism grows, participation falls and our democracy weakens. Bill 202 is about reversing that trend. It's about saying loudly and clearly that integrity matters. This bill is a step towards rebuilding trust. Let's be clear. Ethical and transparent governance should never depend on which party is in power. It must be the foundation of our democracy.

Madam Speaker, let's bring high standards back to Alberta. Let's restore the power of the Ethics Commissioner and recommit ourselves to selfless service. Albertans deserve nothing less. I urge all members to support this legislation and send a message to Albertans that their government and the Members of the Legislative Assembly work for them, not for well-connected UCP insiders.

Bill 202 is a good thing. It will be good for democracy. It will increase transparency. It will increase accountability. Let's prove that accountability still matters in Alberta.

I can go for three more minutes if you want.

The Deputy Speaker: It's up to you.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mrs. Sawyer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak in opposition to Bill 202, the so-called Conflicts of Interest (Ethical Governance) Amendment Act, 2025. While I appreciate the intent behind strengthening ethical standards, this bill does not achieve that goal. Instead, it introduces redundancy, ambiguity, and impracticality into a framework that already holds Alberta's elected officials to a high standard.

We all share the goal of ensuring our elected members represent their constituents to the best of their ability, but good intentions are not enough. What matters is whether the bill improves Alberta's integrity framework in clear, enforceable, and workable ways or if it is just another NDP attempt at reconfiguring existing legislation to call their own. It is the latter, Madam Speaker. This bill wants to lock in numbers that should remain adaptable and introduces ambiguity that will make compliance harder for members, staff, and even the Ethics Commissioner. We should be strengthening clarity, not sowing confusion.

Let me begin by addressing the core issue. Bill 202 is redundant. Alberta already has a robust ethics framework in place. It was introduced by our government in 2023. Madam Speaker, in 2023 this Assembly modernized the Conflicts of Interest Act through the Justice Statutes Amendment Act. Those reforms updated section 7 on gifts and benefits, section 12 on disclosure thresholds, and, crucially, created regulation-making powers in section 47.1 so that ticket rules, conference waivers, and dollar limits can be set by regulation. Why? Because costs change and outreach evolves. Regulation lets us tune details without reopening the statute each time inflation moves or practices shift.

Additionally, a code of conduct for the Premier's and ministers' staff exists and is enforced. The Conflicts of Interest Act clearly prohibits members from influencing decisions to further their private interests. It also clearly sets limits on gifts and benefits: \$500 for acceptance, \$250 for disclosure.

What does Bill 202 do? It legislates what is already in practice. This risks overlap, creating contradiction and confusion. For example, the bill proposes a \$100 disclosure threshold. Why \$100? It is arbitrary and would create an excessive administrative burden for members and staff alike. Hard coding a low threshold like \$100 into statute ignores inflation and local realities around major

community events where members are expected to show up and represent their constituents. The 2023 framework already allows us to set the right number and adjust it as conditions change.

Alberta's current limits were recently updated to reflect modern costs and align with other Canadian jurisdictions. Hard coding thresholds into statute makes our ethics laws less adaptable to changing circumstances, and being less adaptable is a characteristic we all know leads to eventual failure. Albertans expect laws that are clear, fair, and effective, not confusing or partisan.

Bill 202 also proposes replacing the actual knowledge standard with a reasonable-perception test. This test shifts us from objective standards to subjective ones. That doesn't help a member decide on the spot whether to recuse or declare. It only helps critics argue after the fact.

This change introduces vagueness and subjectivity into a domain that demands clarity. Ethics laws should be enforceable, not open to interpretation or politicization. Restating existing provisions with new language does not clarify; it creates complications. The bill adds layers of complexity without improving transparency or accountability. In fact, Alberta already has stricter rules than most other provinces even after raising limits from \$200 to \$500. Other jurisdictions do not impose dollar limits on nonmonetary gifts given as part of protocol or social obligation. Alberta does.

This government is committed to clear, fair, and effective laws. We have strengthened rules for staff to enhance clarity and accountability. We have ensured that members can represent Albertans at major events like the Calgary Stampede without being hampered by rigid or outdated restrictions.

Ethics laws should be principled and practical. They should serve the public interest, not political optics. That is clearly what we set out in 2023. Bill 202, unfortunately, feels more like a symbolic gesture than a substantive improvement. It risks politicizing ethics and undermining the very clarity it claims to promote. Madam Speaker, Albertans expect their elected officials to uphold the highest ethical standards – that is what I expect from my colleagues – but they also expect coherent laws. We should not build a compliance maze that confuses members, staff, and the public. We should build a framework that is predictable, workable, and credible. That is what our government will continue to deliver.

3:50

More importantly, we must resist the urge to legislate for appearances' sake. Bill 202 does not strengthen our ethics framework; it muddies it. Madam Speaker, ethics are too important to legislate for show. Bill 202 adds rigidity where we need flexibility, ambiguity where we need clarity, and duplication where we need coherence. Our duty is to uphold the highest ethical standards with laws that are clear, fair, and effective, laws that the public can trust and that members can follow.

For these reasons, I will be voting against Bill 202. I encourage colleagues to do the same and to continue strengthening Alberta's integrity framework in ways that truly serve the public interest. Let us focus on meaningful reforms, not performative ones. Let us uphold the principles of good governance with clarity, consistency, and common sense. Albertans want accountability that works in the real world. Strengthening ethics laws should be practical, principled, and in the public interest. Let us keep the flexibility we created in 2023, resist vague perception tests, and avoid hard coding numbers that will be outdated next year. Vote no to Bill 202 and yes to ethics that are principled, practical, and credible.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Member Gurinder Brar: Thank you, Madam Speaker. There was a king who ordered the construction of a massive fort using heavy stone, metal doors, and best quality material. It took 12 years to complete the construction. On the day of inauguration the king entered the fort to feel the massive building. He walked in the corridors, went to the roof, and saw his empire from the top. He touched the majestic walls, looked at the sky-touching basins, and felt the power of the fort. Amazed by its construction, he gathered his advisers and ministers to celebrate. He proudly said to his ministers that no enemy would be able to come to this fort ever.

One of the ministers objected to the king, Madam Speaker. The king was surprised and asked about his rationale, and the minister took the king out of the fort and into a small tent. He handed him the clothes of ordinary traders or merchants. They both went into disguise, and they went to the door of the fort. When they went to the door, they were stopped by the guard, and the guard yelled at them. He said: the king has ordered that you guys cannot enter the fort. The minister offered the guard a pouch full of silver coins. The guard still refused to let them in.

After some time the minister of the king offered two bags full of gold to that guard. The guard looked around, and can you guess what the guard did after he got that offer? I'll let you guess for some time, and I'll come back to this later.

In the meantime let's have a look at the record of this government on ethics. This government rushed through Bill 22, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions and Government Enterprises Act, while the Election Commissioner was conducting investigations into the UCP leadership race. The members of the UCP caucus who were under or associated with investigations should have declared conflicts of interest when voting on the legislation. They did not do so. The UCP ministers came under scrutiny after accepting free skybox suites for Edmonton Oilers playoff tickets from Sam Mraiche. Instead of apologizing, not only did UCP relax ethics rules in July 2024; they increased the gift and ticket limit for politicians to \$500. They also kept the backdoor loophole to accept higher value gifts. Then, Madam Speaker, corrupt care, and then the investigation into the corrupt care. Seems like the UCP has shredded the books of ethics. Albertans deserve an ethical, competent government, and they deserve it now.

My constituents tell me that they feel betrayed by this government. They tell me that they are struggling to put food on their table, a roof over their head, and keep their lives going. They tell me that their wages have fallen flat under this UCP government. They tell me that their doors to a better future are shut while this government's back door for their friends and insiders is wide open. They ask me what could be done to hold this government accountable. They ask me what it would take for this government to understand that their duty is towards Albertans, not their insider friends. They ask me what could be done to close the back door for the wealthy insiders of the UCP.

My colleague from Sherwood Park has introduced a new bill, and this bill does three things to shut this door. It lowers the gift disclosure threshold. Any gift worth \$100 or more must be approved by the Ethics Commissioner and disclosed within 15 days. This bill also bans gifts from lobbyists or parties with business before the Crown to ministers and their staff and a mandatory code of conduct for political staff with stronger oversight, clear rules on gift acceptance and disclosure. This bill also broadens the definition of conflict of interest to not only include direct benefits but also situations that appear to influence decisions.

If this government thinks that these are too harsh rules for them, I ask them to step aside and let people with integrity do this job. If this government thinks they want to continue to work for their wealthy insiders, Albertans are also ready to fire them come next

election. We are elected by our constituents, and we must work for them and not the wealthy insiders. It's time to vote in favour of this bill. It's time for ethical, competent government. It's time to restore the trust of Albertans in our democracy.

Madam Speaker, let me take you back to the door of the fort, where the minister offered the bags full of gold if he allowed them to enter the fort. You know what the guard did? The guard looked around and quietly took the bags and asked them to follow him. He led them to the hidden door at the back of the fort, the door only supposed to be used by the king. The king's heart sank. They walked silently through the courtyard until the minister finally turned to him and said: Your Majesty, it is neither the height of your bastions nor the thickness of your walls that protects this fort; it is the ethics of the people guarding this fort that matters. The king, who earlier felt invincible, now felt humbled. He looked up at the massive fort again, and for the first time he understood that its strength was not built in the quality of its construction but in the character of the people who served it.

Similarly, Madam Speaker, even though we have a strong democracy, even though our democracy has deep roots in our society, this fort of democracy depends upon the character of the people serving it every single day. The democracy will not protect itself. We cannot take it for granted. It will not protect itself. Our fort of democracy also deserves the guards that will protect it and not let people enter through the back doors. I request all the members of this House to support this bill, vote in favour of this bill, shut the back door of this UCP government, and send a clear message that Albertans deserve a government that will work for them and not just the wealthy insiders.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenmore – Glenora.

4:00

Ms Hoffman: Glenmore is a lovely place as well.

Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate it. I want to say that I'm excited to rise and speak to Bill 202, the conflicts of interest amendment act, which we're also referring to as ethical governance. I would love an ethical government act. It's not something that you can strictly ensure, that people are ethical, by passing laws to make it so. It's clear that the last round of laws that were passed in relation to this topic opened the train for all sorts of inappropriate gifts.

I will say that there are many, many things that I have been asked by my constituents and constituents of other folks across this province, as I spend a lot of time at events in various ridings and a lot of time door-knocking. There are many things that everyday Albertans have lobbied me for on a regular basis. Earlier today somebody wrote me a letter about wanting to expand the access for minors to have medical exams that have been restricted under the current government. Lots of people have talked about their human rights as they relate to collective bargaining and being able to access medical expertise that meets their health needs and being able to have the government stay out of their doctor's office when it comes to them having a medical appointment.

Nobody has said: what I really think the government needs to do is open the door for us to be able to give you more gifts. But the government, of course, did that; they opened the door. Like, it's very easy to map out why the government made that decision at the time. In 2023, I believe it was, on a radio show the Premier talked about frustration that they couldn't receive tickets to sit in a box at a specific sporting event. I will say that many Albertans were at that sporting event, one of the biggest venues that we have in the city of

Edmonton, and they were able to get lower cost tickets and sit outside like everybody else and have an opportunity to network.

I appreciate the speech that we just heard from the new Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I will say that I've gone to the Stampede most years of my life and I've never sat in a box, and that hasn't impeded my ability to connect with Albertans at the Calgary Stampede. In fact, the vast majority of connections I have are at community events that are even off the Stampede grounds, that are free to everybody, going to a pancake breakfast or going to a community function. There are so many fun things happening in Calgary during the Stampede season and so many opportunities to connect with Albertans during that specific event but also outside of that event. Where I'm at when I go to these things doesn't matter. It's the fact that I get to be a part of them, that I get to engage with Albertans of all walks of life.

It shouldn't just be in the private VIP boxes at special sporting or cultural events that people have an opportunity to engage with elected officials. In fact, it should be through their offices, through protests, through engaging in everyday life. I know that sometimes people are nervous about coming up to me or other elected officials in public places. I can count on one hand the number of times it was an uncomfortable interaction. The vast majority of the interactions are really positive and really respectful. I think that it's great for people of all walks of life to be able to engage with their government, not just those who can afford to give government members excessive gifts or VIP access to extremely expensive tickets that are out of reach for the vast majority of Albertans.

I will remind Albertans that there have been people in this Chamber in the past who have had inappropriate spending and inappropriate gift recipients that have ended their political careers, whether they followed the rules or not. We know that there was a Premier who spent most nights in Edmonton at a hotel that looks like a castle. That became a huge political liability, and that person became no longer the Premier. There have been people travelling internationally who have racked up phone bills in excess of \$10,000. That became a huge political liability, and they are no longer in this Chamber. Rules are created to help us protect one another and to make sure that the public knows that there is no gravy train, that there is no disrespect of the public purse or disrespect of the office.

I will say that using one's office to receive personal benefit, whether it be gifts of a monetary value or access to things that most Albertans can't afford, is disrespectful to that office. Proposing legislation to put guardrails on those gifts I think is totally in bounds. If members opposite think that the dollar amount is far too low, I welcome them to come back with an amended dollar amount, but simply saying that the current rules are fine – they are not fine. They are not fine at all, Madam Speaker, because we know that there have been serious allegations and investigations around the ethical practice within those rules.

Again, I want to say to the new Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that I'm grateful for the fact that we had this really respectful debate. But the legislation that was brought in place prior to her election is not adequate or sufficient for where we're at today in the political climate, and I want to make sure that she has my back and I have her back.

That's why we're proposing new rules that put respectful guardrails on this, to make sure that – I will say that there was one time where I had to return a gift. One time. It was because it had crossed – the individual gift wasn't in excess of the threshold, but I'd gotten two other gifts that same year. So I said: you know, I've already received a gift from your organization, so I'm going to return this one, but thank you so much for the offer. They were fine with that. They actually thought it was kind of cool that we had

rules and that we didn't need to receive their gift, and I continued to meet with them and engage with them.

There were other gifts that exceeded the threshold, and the Ethics Commissioner said: when you're no longer serving in this role, you will have to return the thing or give it to the government of the day, the public service, to administer. That is also fine. It doesn't mean that you cannot receive anything. The question is: what is appropriate and what is inappropriate?

I will say that we know from many, many allegations and pictures that have been shared around people being in certain environments or having certain things presumably gifted to them that it is not a good look for the government. This is being proposed as something to help protect the members who are currently sitting on the other side of the aisle. It's simply a tool to make sure that we have less opportunity for suspected corruption, suspected sweetheart deals, especially as it relates to people gifting things to government who are receiving contracts from the government.

I do want to say that there has been some interjurisdictional comparison done on this. For example, the threshold for mandatory gift disclosure in the neighbouring province of British Columbia is \$250, unlike Alberta's \$500 and \$1,000 for tickets; Saskatchewan, the other side of us, \$200; Manitoba, \$250; Ontario, \$200; Quebec, \$200; Nova Scotia, \$250; P.E.I., \$200; New Brunswick, \$250. There's a theme here, Madam Speaker, a theme between \$200 and \$250. There has been a dollar amount put in place by other jurisdictions within Canada, and Alberta has doubled – more than doubled if you look at the average – that threshold under the current legislation. That is one of the reasons why we're proposing stricter guidelines around this.

Madam Speaker, if the purpose of this is to make sure that MLAs can still be at events and engage with people, I will tell you that buying your own ticket as an individual to go to something is really respected by folks when they know that you've also ponied up your own cash to go to an event, a cultural gathering, a sporting event. And I think that that's the right thing to do.

I think that we need far better guardrails on the receipt of monetary items and tickets. That's why I think this is a worthy item for discussion today and that government would be wise to take the cautions and look at the interjurisdictional comparisons with some careful consideration and thought around how they can protect their own reputations, all members' reputations, by putting in some stricter guidelines that give the public confidence that we care about our jobs, that we're not in it for personal benefit, and that we care about the public purse and our collective accountability to one another.

4:10

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

Member Hoyle: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 202, the Conflicts of Interest (Ethical Governance) Amendment Act, 2025, which I see as a true attempt at bringing back trust, accountability, and transparency to this Legislature, all of which are key parts of having an ethical and competent government. It's clear that the UCP government has lost their way. All we see is bill after bill being rammed through to serve their personal agenda and benefit their close friends. The Premier and this UCP government are careening like a pinball from crisis to crisis instead of showing a high standard of good governance and delivering a competent government. Anything otherwise I believe is reckless, incompetent, and, most of all, gravely misleading Albertans. Albertans need a Premier and a government focused on them, not a Premier focused on her own leadership or conspiracy

theories, that have been brought forth by this government, and appears to be tightening their grip on power.

On this side of the aisle we believe that the government should be above reproach, that it's the UCP's responsibility to act in Albertans' best interests. From expensive hockey tickets to Turkish Tylenol to corrupt care this government has gravely eroded public trust, and Albertans deserve better. They deserve a government focused on rebuilding public trust in Alberta's democratic institutions. Quite frankly, it's shameful that Albertans have to deal with a government that seems more focused on hiding information and the lack of transparency than making sure that this information – in fact, any information from the government related directly to Albertans – is readily available.

Unlike the UCP, we know on this side of the House the importance of accountability and transparency and the importance of a government portraying and acting in this type of leadership manner. That's why this Bill 202 proposes targeted changes to the Conflicts of Interest Act to bring back confidence in the institutions and processes that have been degraded by this UCP government. There is no doubt that greater transparency maintains trust between a government and its citizens. One of the key components of this bill is an expanded definition of "conflict of interest" beyond direct conflicts to include situations where a member's decisions may appear to be influenced by private interests.

One of the key components of this bill, an expanded definition of "conflict of interest," is very key. This is critical given the monthslong corrupt care scandal, which, if true, shows evidence of inflated contracts for private surgeries, political interference, and whistle-blower firings. Hundreds of millions of tax dollars might have been wasted through these bloated contracts. On March 10, 2025, the Minister of Justice committed in the Alberta Legislature that Justice Wyant's interim report would be posted on alberta.ca on May 30, 2025. Since then the government has repeatedly shifted the deadline without transparency or accountability. That's why Bill 202 also expands restrictions for MLAs' influence on prohibiting members from using their position to potentially sway any decision that benefits themselves or their close associates.

After months of delays the UCP government has once again failed Albertans by not publicly releasing Justice Wyant's report into the corruption allegations within Alberta's health care system. The report found that it was widely known that two staffers were in "real or perceived conflicts of interest," but no steps were taken by senior health officials. Justice Wyant noted that many tried to tell the truth, but he was given the impression that some weren't providing, quote, complete information.

Madam Speaker, Albertans deserve answers and they deserve the truth. Instead, the Premier spent her day talking about licence plates while continuing to hide a report that deals with matters of public interest. Alberta's New Democrats have repeatedly called for a full public inquiry into corrupt care. This isn't just about politics. It's money out of Albertans' pockets, money that should have gone to their health care. It's a disgraceful display of misplaced priorities and a complete failure of leadership. This bill is about ensuring clear rules, stronger oversight, and greater public confidence in how decisions are made.

Bill 202 will also impose stricter gift rules for ministers, MLAs, and ministerial staff. Gifts to ministers and their staff from lobbyists and those with business before the Crown would be prohibited. This is in direct response to the fact that in 2023 the UCP government raised the threshold for gifts for MLAs that they can accept without the Ethics Commissioner's approval from \$200 to \$500. On top of that, they moved these thresholds into regulation, giving cabinet the power to change them at any time without needing to bring new legislation before the Assembly. Even then this UCP government

felt that allowing themselves to receive more gifts was a higher priority than addressing Albertans' concerns related to health care, cost of living, jobs, and housing.

Albertans are still dealing with the crushing weight of the cost-of-living crisis. We know groceries are more expensive. Rent is skyrocketing. Utility bills are becoming too much for families to handle. I find it hard to believe that the members opposite are unaware of this because almost every single e-mail, phone call, or constituent I talk to: this has been something that's come up. Number one, affordability. So there's no doubt in my mind that they're hearing the same concerns and actively choosing to ignore them.

We need Bill 202 to rein in the wasteful spending coming from this UCP government. This government is fostering an environment where personal gains trump public service. I've said it once before and I'll say it a hundred times again. This government is completely out of touch with Albertans' needs.

As members of this House we have a duty to serve Albertans first, not ourselves. This job is a privilege, and we owe it to those who elected us to maintain the highest standards of ethics and integrity. Time and time again we've seen this UCP government do anything but act ethically and competently. Put together, this government is constantly looking for ways to flout any requirement to be transparent and accountable to Albertans, and Alberta's New Democrats will continue to call out this government's corruption and incompetence.

I am beyond proud of my colleague for bringing forward Bill 202, and I hope it reminds the members opposite of their responsibilities to Albertans to being above reproach in positions of power. On this side of the House we will continue to put the needs of everyday Albertans first, and we will continue to advocate for full transparency from this government. Somewhere along the way the UCP seems to have forgotten that the best path forward to the challenges facing our province is through collaboration, not division, not mistrust, or deliberately stepping backwards in terms of transparency.

I do hope the members opposite think long and hard about what it means to serve Albertans and will vote in support of Bill 202. If this government truly cares about the future of our province, they will vote in favour of returning to a path of trust, good governance, accountability, integrity, and high standards that all Albertans expect from their government.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.
4:20

Mr. Ip: Thank you, Madam Speaker. First of all, I would like to thank my colleague from Sherwood Park for putting this no-more-skyboxes bill forward, Bill 202. I'm pleased to speak in strong support of it.

I have a question to all members of the House. My question is: why do they serve? Why do we all serve, for that matter? I would imagine that all members of this House would agree that we are here to represent our voters. We are all duly elected by our constituents, by our neighbours, by folks in our communities, by everyday Albertans, and it's Albertans to whom we are ultimately accountable. Earlier last week, this past weekend, actually, I was door-knocking, talking to constituents in Edmonton-South West. At one door I had knocked on a husband and wife who had real concerns about the direction of our province asked me a simple question. They asked: who is this government really working for?

It's a good question. If the government members on the other side talk to folks in their communities, they would know that so many Albertans are struggling. We have the highest youth unemployment

rate in the country. So many people, young people in particular, feel hopeless in this economy and job market. Many find that owning a house is a pipe dream and so out of reach. Many Albertans I talk to can't afford unimaginable luxuries like skyboxes. Some of them – too many, in fact – are struggling to afford groceries.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

Who is this government working for? It seems from their actions they are working for their rich and influential friends and not everyday Albertans. Instead of addressing the affordability crisis or health care or meaningfully addressing class sizes with more funding, what we've seen consistently from this government through their actions is that they care more about benefiting themselves and making their positions less accountable, not more. Here are some examples, from raising their own housing allowance to more than what an AISH recipient would live on in a month to clawing back \$200 from the same AISH recipients. It's cruel and unnecessary.

Mr. Speaker, it shows the true colours of this government. What we see is a pattern of misappropriating public funds, which at best shows incompetence but at worst a wilful attempt to enrich themselves and their friends. Let's start with the fact that they've had to pay over \$250 million to coal companies because of this government's own bungled coal policy. If that's not incompetence, I don't know what is.

Over the last few years we've watched scandal after scandal chip away at public confidence: accepting skybox invitations, the Turkish Tylenol debacle, the ever-expanding story around sweetheart health care contracts and what many Albertans now grimly call corrupt care. We learned that Sam Mraiche, whose company secured hundreds of millions of dollars in sole-source contracts, including for poor-quality PPE and unusable children's medication, was also hosting the Premier and cabinet ministers in luxury playoff suites. Mr. Speaker, when Albertans see the same names on sole-source contracts and on the guest list in the skybox, they don't need a legal expert to tell them something is wrong. I think we all see it plainly: private perks for insiders but the public takes on the risk and public cost for everyone else.

Let's not forget that there is already an established pattern of questionable behaviour by this government. In 2023 Alberta's then independent Ethics Commissioner, Madam Trussler, found that the Premier herself contravened the Conflicts of Interest Act in her attempt to influence how criminal charges were handled. Now, when the Ethics Commissioner uses language like "contravened" the act and "improper attempt to influence the independence of the legal system," that is a sobering warning from an independent officer of the Assembly about the health of our democracy.

I think any reasonable person would assume that a competent, self-aware, ethical government would have taken that as a strong hint to strengthen the conflict-of-interest rules and to change their conduct and their way of doing business to ensure more transparency and accountability. Instead, this UCP government chose to double down on their unethical practices. While Albertans struggled, the UCP loosened the rules for themselves. In the middle of a brutal affordability crisis, with families in my riding, some of them, unfortunately, choosing between rent and groceries and winter coats, this government's priority was not to strengthen ethics rules; it was in fact to weaken them.

In 2023 what we saw through Bill 8, the Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2023 – at the time the UCP removed the long-standing statutory limits on gifts and moved the details into regulation, which made it more difficult for legislative oversight. Those new rules, enacted in regulation 15/2023 just before

Christmas, did three things. First, it raised the cap on general gifts to \$500. It raised the cap on tickets and invitations so that MLAs can accept tickets worth up to \$1,000 without even telling the Ethics Commissioner, and only benefits over \$1,000 must be reported. It raised the general disclosure threshold to \$250, which means that fewer gifts will ever see the light of day. When the Premier was asked why she was changing the rules, she pointed to the NHL Heritage Classic. She said that she had declined a private suite invitation because the ethics rules would only let her stay for 20 minutes, and she didn't want to do that.

Mr. Speaker, this government changed the rules so that they and their staff could accept more expensive gifts more often with less oversight. Albertans didn't ask for this. Nobody at the doors that certainly I've talked to is saying: I really hope my MLA can get into more corporate skyboxes. I don't know about members on the other side of the House, but I doubt that that's what their constituents are telling them. Instead, what they're asking for is shorter wait-lists, access to a family doctor, affordable child care, and a break on their utility bills. As my colleague the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall said in this House when Bill 8 was introduced, quote: this looked less like ethics reform and more like the government getting itself back on the gravy train.

The fact is that Alberta is an outlier. Our gift limits are among the weakest. Under the UCP's changes Alberta now has some of the loosest gift rules in the country. If we compare that to other jurisdictions, in British Columbia MLAs must report gifts and personal benefits connected to their duties if they exceed \$250, for example. In Manitoba between \$250 to \$1,000 must be reported and anything over \$1,000 is prohibited, Mr. Speaker. In Saskatchewan, for example, their conflict of interest commissioner tells members that \$200 per year from a single source is the upper boundary for acceptable gifts. What we see across the country is that most jurisdictions cluster around \$200 to \$250 for disclosure reporting, but under the UCP's new rules it sits all the way on the other extreme, with some of the highest thresholds and weakest transparency requirements. That's why Bill 202 is needed. We need a robust framework to ensure that public trust is protected. If Bill 202 passes, which I encourage the other side of the House to vote in favour of, Alberta would move to the lowest disclosure threshold in the country; frankly, a position that we should be proud to hold.

Now, one of the things that Bill 202 does is that it updates the definition of a conflict of interest. Today the act says that it's primarily concerned with whether a member knowingly furthers a private interest. What Bill 202 does is that it adds a crucial test. If there is a reasonable perception that a member's decision-making has been influenced by private interest, that is a breach, too. That aligns with modern conflict-of-interest practices in other jurisdictions such as British Columbia and others.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the members of this House to vote in favour of this bill. Thank you.

4:30

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Any others wishing to speak? I will recognize the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Gurtej Brar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak in strong support of Bill 202, the Conflicts of Interest (Ethical Governance) Amendment Act, 2025. This bill is about one thing. It's trust. Trust in the government, trust that the decisions made in this House are for Albertans, not for insiders, not for friends of cabinet, and not for lobbyists looking to buy influence.

Albertans deserve honesty. They deserve a government that works for them. What have we seen instead? Turkish Tylenol,

corrupt care, scandals that have eroded public trust. While families were struggling to pay rent and buy groceries, this government was busy raising gift limits for themselves and their closest staff. They gave themselves the power to make more perks and hide them from Albertans. They weakened the Ethics Commissioner's oversight. They opened the door to backroom deals. Albertans did not ask for that. They did not ask for less transparency. They did not ask for more entitlement. They asked for leadership. They asked for integrity. They asked for a government that puts them first.

Let's talk about how we got here, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about what happened in 2023. The Premier said that she was disappointed she could not watch the game from the private suite for free. Days later the UCP government introduced Bill 8, which watered down ethics rules, and just before Christmas they quietly raised the gift limit from \$500 and took the disclosure to \$1,000. No cap on tickets. No real oversight. And let's not forget Turkish Tylenol, \$70 million spent on medication that sat in a warehouse, costing taxpayers millions in storage fees. Why? Because the deal was pushed through by insiders with government connections.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 202 closes those doors. It cracks down on conflicts of interest and tightens rules around gifts and political influence. Here is what it does. First, it strengthens the definition of "conflict of interest." A member will now be in breach not only if they knowingly further a private interest but also if there is a reasonable perception that their decision-making was influenced by the interest. Second, it requires a member to withdraw from meetings where there is an apparent conflict. No more sitting at the table when your own interests are at stake. Third, it broadens the rule on influence. Members will now be in breach if they use their position to influence any decision, not just a decision made by or on behalf of the Crown. That includes municipal decisions and dealing with private entities. Fourth, it imposes stricter gift rules. The disclosure threshold drops to \$100, gifts from lobbyists or anyone with business before the Crown are banned, and all gifts over \$100 must be disclosed within 15 days and approved by the Ethics Commissioner. Finally, it improves the mandatory code of conduct for the Premier's and ministers' staff. These staff wield real power, and they must meet the same ethical standard as elected officials.

It matters more than ever because right now Alberta has the weakest rules in the country. Most provinces require disclosure at \$200 or \$250; Alberta, \$500 for gifts, \$1,000 for tickets. That is unacceptable. Bill 202 sets the toughest standard in the country. Some will say these rules are inconvenient. Let me be very clear. This job is a privilege, not a perk. We are here to serve Albertans, not ourselves, not our friends, not the well-known connected few. Every time an MLA takes a luxury ticket or lavish gifts, trust breaks. When trust breaks, democracy suffers.

Let's talk about the UCP's record on ethics. The UCP raised the gift limit. They weakened oversight. They gave cabinet the power to change the rules without coming back to this House. They suspended ethics investigations during elections. They made it easier for the insider to influence decisions. While they were doing all that, Albertans were struggling with affordability, health care, and education. Families were asking for help with rent and groceries. What did the UCP deliver? Backroom deals and a government that puts perks ahead of the people.

Bill 202 makes three things very clear. First, we work for Albertans. Second, we believe in transparency, accountability, and integrity. And third, public service means serving the public, full stop. This bill restores the power of the Ethics Commissioner. It takes decision-making out of politics and puts it where it belongs, in independent oversight. It sets clear rules, it closes loopholes, and it rebuilds trust.

Mr. Speaker, this is about more than rules. It is about values. It is about whether we believe the government should serve the people who elected us or the people who can offer us perks. It is about whether we believe that democracy is built on trust or on or across an influence. Albertans are asking: who do you work for? Do you work for them or for the people in the skyboxes? Do you work for the families trying to pay their bills or for the lobbyist trying to buy your time? This bill answers the question. It says that we work for Albertans, we work for the public good, and we will hold ourselves to the highest standard.

If I may add one more point. Ethics is not an abstract concept. It is not just about rules on paper. It is about trust in action, whether Albertans see politicians taking perks while they are struggling to pay for groceries. They lose faith not just in a party.

4:40

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Any other members wishing to speak at this time? The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak about such an important issue as the Conflicts of Interest (Ethical Governance) Amendment Act, 2025, brought forward by the Member for Sherwood Park. I will speak in a moment about examples that actually occurred not too far from the member's riding of Sherwood Park, a little further north in a community that Mr. Speaker will recognize, that of Redwater and area in the 1980s.

What this bill is actually addressing, Bill 202 that we have before us – let's cut to the chase. It's addressing the issue of bribery, corruption, and graft, not just the actual commission of those offences but the public's perception of those offences being committed. Of course, as other speakers have brought forward, the absolute trust of the public, the people we serve, in our actions and our behaviours on their behalf in the Legislature and beyond is something that is a necessary element to the function of our democracy.

Now, in the 1980s I worked in the oil patch doing a few different jobs, moving service rigs, actually working on service rigs. In that period of time – Mr. Speaker, you may recall and have heard incidents like this – in the oil patch around Redwater in the 1980s a lot of service rigs were moved around quite a bit. One would have thought and maybe the public would have thought that in order to get a contract to move a rig, the various different companies would compete against each other on price and service and performance.

In actual fact, Mr. Speaker – you may be aware of this – in order to get a contract to move a service rig and, dare I say, even a drilling rig in the 1980s in Alberta, it was measured in the number of cases of cigarettes and the number of cases of whisky that you were bribing the owner of that rig with in order to get the contract to move the rig. I'm not talking about bottles of whisky or cartons of cigarettes; I'm talking about cases and cases of whisky and cases and cases of cigarettes, in fact full pickup trucks filled with cigarettes and whisky in order to bribe your way into getting a contract to move a service rig. That's how business worked in the oil patch in order to get a contract, and it left a bad taste in everybody's mouth. It wasn't necessarily the rig with the best safety record or with the best performance that got to move the rigs. It was the one who paid the highest price in the currency of the day in the oil patch, which was cases of whisky and cases of cigarettes.

It was also well known, Mr. Speaker, that the price of a class 1 driver's licence in certain areas in the constituency that involves Redwater was a case of whisky left at the back door of a driver examiner's office on a Wednesday afternoon. Thus was the

currency of the oil patch in the 1980s. That was the Alberta that was well recognized and well known back then. Thankfully, hopefully, we have a very different vision of what we want Alberta to be in 2025. Thirdly, you know, if you got stopped for a potential speeding violation, it was fairly commonly known that a \$20 bill folded behind your driver's licence often resulted in a warning rather than actually a speeding ticket.

Three examples, Mr. Speaker, that I think are well recognized by people of a certain age in this Chamber of the type of graft, bribery, corruption that existed at the street level, at the road level in business as well as in government agencies, that Albertans found reprehensible although it was the way things operated back then. What we're trying to do, Mr. Speaker, with Bill 202, Conflicts of Interest (Ethical Governance) Amendment Act, 2025, is to change the culture in this province once and for all to ensure that Albertans can have absolute faith and trust in their elected officials when it comes to knowing that their motivations are true and pure and not affected by bribery, that they're not affected by a gift that might be given in hopes of a decision being influenced by such a gift.

In order to do that, Mr. Speaker, you need to look at absolute limits on what indeed those gifts may be and limits that are very, very small. In fact, I think most Albertans would be scratching their heads to wonder why there should be any gifts at all given to government members and even to MLAs in their constituencies when they attend an event or in their duties go meet with others. I mean, certainly the public may not believe that your decision on a certain bill may be swayed by receiving a pen or a coffee mug, but indeed how much bigger does the gift have to get before a person is thinking about making a decision they otherwise wouldn't make?

It begs the question if you're thinking about limitations on drinking and driving. I often said in this House that if a person suggests that one drink should be allowed, I ask the question: how many drinks would you like your airline pilot to be allowed before they in fact get into the cockpit? A similar type of a principle guides me, Mr. Speaker, when I think about the limitations placed on receiving gifts by politicians in Alberta. Bill 202 sets some smaller limits than what the current government would have us accept as reasonable.

I know that the new member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills spoke about the reality of the job, I guess it was, that indeed she addressed when mentioning that we had to increase the limits of those types of gifts that were allowed to be received by politicians because of the new reality and the cost structures and because prices have risen. Therefore, with inflation, you should be able to receive a bigger gift from your constituents or from a lobbyist that you might be working with. That, Mr. Speaker, doesn't hold water with me in any way, shape, or form. Whether you're in business, whether you're in government, individuals in Alberta need to be able to rely upon the trustworthiness and the reputation of the politicians, the government members who are elected to serve them.

As we all know, Mr. Speaker, whether we've come from a business background or public service background or just in general, I think we raised our children to know that your reputation is your bond. Whether in business or in government a good reputation takes years to build but only moments, perhaps one act, to destroy it. That's why, in my view, the bill before us, Bill 202, is so very important because if you lose that trust, what have you got left as a politician? Hopefully, if that trust is lost, you're ending up on the outside looking in, you're ending up not getting elected again. Unfortunately, that isn't always what happens.

The bill that's been brought forward by the Member for Sherwood Park is a piece of legislation which, I think, comes much closer to what Albertans expect than what the government would

hope to remain in place with its current legislation. The government tries to decry this legislation as being a duplicate of what exists already. Well, in fact, Mr. Speaker, it's not anywhere near what a duplicate would be. It's much more strict than what the government has in place in terms of limitations on amounts that a member could receive from somebody as a gift in the course of their duties as a legislator.

Now, prior to November 2023, Mr. Speaker, gifts to members: the value of the fee or nonmonetary gift couldn't exceed \$200. Tickets and invitations to events in any calendar year: \$400. Those gifts must be . . .

4:50

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Others wishing to speak? The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Mr. Speaker, this is a matter that goes to the heart of public trust, the integrity of our institutions, and the very foundation of representative democracy. I rise in strong support of Bill 202, Conflicts of Interest (Ethical Governance) Amendment Act, 2025, introduced by my colleague the Member for Sherwood Park, and I urge all members of this Assembly to join us in fixing what is severely broken.

The problem is eroded trust and real scandals this UCP government is embroiled in and being investigated for. Bill 202 will increase transparency and accountability. As many of my colleagues have expressed, Albertans are deeply frustrated. Recent years have exposed a series of scandals that have shaken their confidence in how this UCP government operates. These are not just policy missteps but how power and influence are exerted.

Let's start with the good old skybox scandal. We all saw senior government officials, including cabinet ministers, attending playoff games in box suites, corporate luxury boxes given by companies that do business with this very government. As reported in Public Accounts, this was more than a perk. It has raised a serious question of access, favoritism, and what it means to pay off a government.

I mean, all we have to do is look at the corrupt care scandal. There are well-documented allegations of cronyism and mismanagement in procurement processes, especially in Alberta Health Services. The Wyant report makes it explicitly clear. Decisions around contracting private surgical centres were tainted by conflicts, and many of the contracts were awarded in ways that benefited political insiders. Absolutely unacceptable.

Next there is the Turkish Tylenol fiasco. This UCP government bought \$70 million worth of pediatric acetaminophen, Tylenol, from a Turkish supplier, a deal that is deeply flawed. Much of that medicine remains unused, sitting in warehouses, which is costing Albertans millions of dollars to store, incurring more storage costs, and raising very big red flags about the procurement judgment and the political patronage of this government. In this Legislature we have repeatedly asked this UCP government: how did this happen? Who benefited? Why are these decisions being made, and where is the transparency? We have asked repeatedly. These are not abstract policy debates; they are real stories with real costs to Albertans, real cost to taxpayers, real costs to health outcomes and to the public trust.

My colleague brought forward Bill 202 because it's obvious that the current ethics regime is weak, and Albertans deserve transparency and accountability from every single member of this House. Bill 202 is not a symbolic gesture. It is concrete. It lifts the gift threshold, which has been loosened. In 2023 the UCP government lifted the limit of gifts from \$200 to \$500, for event tickets from \$400 to \$1,000 before Ethics Commissioner oversight

is even required. What is even more troubling is these thresholds were moved into regulation, meaning the UCP cabinet and not this Legislature can change them unilaterally without any public consultation, without any debate in this House. What's even worse is that political staffers and powerful, unelected insiders will be able to operate under fewer rules and far less accountability and transparency.

What exists is not acceptable. It creates a system in which undue influence is normalized. Ethics becomes negotiable. When public officials accept lavish gifts, when insiders stand to profit, and when oversight is minimized, the risk of corruption or the appearance of it increases rapidly. Perception is everything when it comes to public trust, and it is our responsibility as elected officials to uphold the highest level of integrity. Quite frankly, this UCP government over the past six years has made obvious decisions to completely destroy the public trust.

However, Bill 202 offers an olive branch, if you will, to this UCP government to show Albertans that they, too, care about transparency and full accountability, that they do not care for kickbacks, that they do not take kickbacks from friends, that they do not take kickbacks from relatives, that, in fact, they will be accountable and transparent to Albertans.

This bill offers real reform in this House. It's bold, it's smart, it's strategic, and it will show Albertans exactly what this UCP government values. The bill targets the precise weaknesses in our system, and it repairs them. The bill provides stricter gift rules, which means that any gift over or worth more than \$100 must be disclosed to the Ethics Commissioner within 15 days. Gifts to ministers or to their staff from lobbyists or to those who have businesses will be prohibited altogether. This means no sweeteners and absolutely no backdoor influence.

It's time for a mandatory code of conduct for all political staff, all political appointees, anyone who works close to power. Everyone will be bound by clear, enforceable rules about gifts, disclosure, and investigations. This is vital to democracy. Far too often unelected insiders escape scrutiny even though they also hold immense power. Bill 202 expands the definition of conflict of interest. It doesn't just target actual conflicts; it targets perceived influence situations where decisions might be shaped by private interests or appear to shape a decision that is being made. Public trust is not only what is legal; it's also about what feels right to Alberta citizens. Greater restrictions on the influence of misuse of power is what feels right to all Albertans.

MLAs would be prohibited from influencing decisions for personal benefit or on behalf of a close associate. The Ethics Commissioner would be strengthened, not weakened. In fact, our province could set a new national standard. The \$100 threshold for gift disclosure would demonstrate that gifts do not influence governance. This is the very foundation of accountability, trust, and democracy, and that is what this bill offers and why it matters so very much, particularly in the time where we have scandal after scandal.

Some might argue that \$100 gifts are small; why would we make legislative changes? But, Mr. Speaker, it's not about the dollar; it is about power and how it influences the decisions and the choices that are made in this House. When politicians accept big perks, skyboxes, luxury hospitality from companies that this government does business with, it simply creates an environment that leads to scandal. When insiders reap big contracts like the ones that have been alleged with the corrupt care scandal, there is little consequence or public airing of how these deals were struck, and our democracy is completely weakened.

The Acting Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, but the time limit for consideration of this item of business has concluded.

5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act

502. Mr. Wiebe moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly

- (a) recognize that the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act serves as an important tool in ensuring transparency in government spending and public sector compensation and fosters trust among government entities and the communities they serve, and
- (b) urge the government to introduce a bill to amend the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act to require municipal authorities to disclose their employees' compensation in accordance with the thresholds for optional disclosure currently set out in the act regarding municipalities in respect of those employees.

Mr. Wiebe: Mr. Speaker, I believe that Motion 502 is incredibly important because Albertans expect and deserve the highest standards of integrity, accountability, and transparency from all levels of government. The people of this province place their trust in public institutions to act responsibly with the resources they provide through their hard-earned tax dollars. As such, it is our duty as elected officials to ensure that this trust is continually earned and maintained through open, transparent governance.

Our province already has a strong foundation for transparency in public spending, with laws and systems that uphold accountability across the public sector. One of the most significant examples is the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act, which was introduced in 2015. This legislation serves as a cornerstone of our province's commitment to openness by requiring disclosure of compensation information for publicly funded employees who exceed the defined salary threshold. By making this information accessible to all Albertans, the act reinforces confidence in how public funds are managed and ensures that compensation decisions can be scrutinized in a fair and informed manner.

While the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act does establish reporting thresholds for municipal authorities, participation in this reporting process remains optional. As a result, municipalities in Alberta are not legally required to disclose the salaries or compensation details of their employees. This exemption means that unlike many other public-sector organizations, Alberta's municipal governments, despite being publicly funded bodies responsible for collecting and allocating taxpayers' money, are not obligated to provide the same level of transparency regarding how compensation dollars are spent. This is a major problem. This lack of openness not only undermines the confidence in local governance but also weakens the broader principles of transparency and fiscal responsibility that Albertans expect from all levels of government.

Municipal government is a level of governance that's closest to the people of Alberta. Despite this close connection with residents, under this current legislative framework municipalities are not obligated to disclose information about the compensation of their highest paid employees. This means that while municipal

governments collect significant revenues from property taxes, utility fees, and local levies, which are also better known as funds contributed directly by Albertans, they are not held to the same standards of transparency and accountability as the provincial government when it comes to reporting how these public funds are allocated towards compensation.

Given that municipal authorities are established under provincial legislation and are entrusted with delivering transparent and accountable local governance, it is reasonable to question why information about the salaries of their highest paid employees is not publicly available. If municipalities operate as extensions of the provincial framework and are responsible for managing public funds collected from Albertans, then the same standards of transparency and disclosure that apply to the provincial government should logically extend to them as well. Thus, I think it's imperative that Albertans know how much of their hard-earned tax dollars go towards salaries within their municipalities, particularly for senior administrators, police, and fire services.

That's why Motion 502 calls on the government to introduce a bill that would require municipal authorities to publish a sunshine list of their employees' compensation above established thresholds. In other words, this sunshine list would shed light on the municipalities' use of collected funds so that Albertans can stop being in the dark regarding the use of their hard-earned money. When residents see the salary disclosure, it gives them a clearer picture of where their tax dollars are going in their own community. Supporting this motion represents a meaningful step towards strengthening taxpayer accountability and enhancing transparency in municipal spending.

[The Speaker in the chair]

By establishing a municipal sunshine list, the government of Alberta would provide Albertans with a clear and accessible way to see how public funds are being used to compensate employees within their own municipalities. This level of openness not only reinforces public trust in local governance but also helps ratepayers evaluate whether city managers, CAOs, and other high-ranking officials are being paid in line with other Alberta municipalities. In doing so, the motion promotes fairness, fiscal responsibility, and a higher standard of transparency that benefits both municipal leaders and the communities they serve.

In closing, I look forward to listening to the debate this evening on this important motion. I call on all members of this Chamber on both sides of the aisle to support my motion for greater transparency and accountability.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Any speakers on Motion 502? Lethbridge-West.

Member Miyashiro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I rise today to speak against Motion 502 because it's yet another example of the UCP intervening in municipal governance. We're really troubled by their continued trend of overreaching into municipal jurisdiction. The UCP have consistently imposed themselves in municipal affairs such as by forcing municipalities to hand count ballots and making them pay for it, and it's likely that each municipality will have to cover costs of their own public compensation disclosures. Most decisions that affect municipalities are best left to each individual municipality to decide, and this is one of them. The UCP is once again imposing themselves on municipalities, making unnecessary rules for them rather than fixing real problems in Alberta.

There's also this. It appears that the UCP is trying to cover up for their own lack of transparency and bad ethics by bringing in new

transparency rules for municipalities. The sponsor is the parliamentary secretary for rural health and health care, which is an area of immense corruption under this government. Why is he focusing on this and not on the corruption in his own government? I'll say this in a different way. The UCP is embroiled in a corruption scandal in health care. Why are they not holding themselves to account first? The ongoing corrupt care saga is riddled with transparency issues.

From weakening gift disclosures to weakening FOIP, the UCP is not the party of transparent and ethical governance. This government has been very secretive, blocking FOIPs, increasing gift-giving limitations, et cetera. They spent their term raising gift limits for their own ministers and reducing Ethics Commissioner oversight into things like playoff hockey tickets from their friends. If the UCP was serious about ethical governance and increasing transparency, they would eagerly support Bill 202, the ethical governance act.

I recall that the existing Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act leaves the decision to disclose to municipalities . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, it looks like you might be finding your way back to what's actually before us now. That's a good thing. Why don't you just stay there? Do the best you can to talk about what's before the House right now.

Member Miyashiro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that guidance.

Where was I here? Let me get back to this. Under the current legislation municipalities have the option to disclose public-sector compensation information. Let's be clear on this. One UCP member bringing forward legislation that increases municipal compensation transparency does not erase the UCP's own track record.

5:10

In another example of this government's inability to follow their own rules, under the UCP executive compensation has skyrocketed at provincial agencies, boards, and commissions. Mr. Speaker, as one of four members of this Assembly, three on this side, that have actually served on a municipal council, I have an understanding of the systems and processes in place to determine salaries and salary grids. Let me bore you for a minute. To simplify, each position, not person, is objectively evaluated on a number of factors and assigned a score. Positions are grouped according to the scores, and the groupings are usually assigned a grade. Salary ranges within each grade are determined based on market comparisons and the employer's desire to have their employees to be paid at the low, middle, or high end of those comparisons.

That being said, this motion is just another case of unintended consequences by this government. We believe that Motion 502 could lead to salary inflation for municipalities. First example, lateral managers within a municipality would be more likely to see how much their colleagues are making. Good or bad, it can lead to renegotiations. It can lead to people wanting to make more money because they believe that they should because they're at a lateral level.

The other thing that the UCP is failing to consider is that many municipalities deal with ongoing labour negotiations with their various bargaining units all the time. Quite often those collective agreements are reached a year after expiration, with a retroactive component to the agreement. This is critical because during the year of negotiating, collective bargaining units in other municipalities are also being settled. Those settlements are also going to be used as comparators by different municipalities.

Let me illustrate this. Let's say that the Lethbridge firefighters are in negotiation with the city of Lethbridge, and their contract

expired a year ago. Meanwhile firefighters in the Hat settled for 12 per cent over four years, Calgary settled for 10 per cent over three years, and Red Deer settled for 2.75 over four years. Typically, using those comparators to like employees, Lethbridge would likely settle somewhere in that same range. But if salaries are disclosed for so-called out-of-scope and management positions over a certain threshold, the bargaining units would likely use those published salaries in their bargaining, despite the fact that those salaries should not be used as comparators.

Additionally, most municipalities are reluctant to engage in arbitration over wages because the comparator argument wins every time. This is great for members of the bargaining unit but not so great for the municipalities because most grids for supervisory and management staff include a differential over what the bargaining unit staff are earning. So let's think of that for a second. If we disclose the salaries for higher wage staff and those are used in the bargaining for bargaining units, let's say, it just increases the wages for those people in those other levels. The higher the settlement, the higher the likelihood that supervisory and management staff will also receive a bump.

It also becomes inflationary when out-of-scope and management staff over that threshold use published salary information to move the grid ranges in their respective municipalities. It also becomes inflationary when prospective employees apply for jobs and know exactly what the top of the range is before they have an interview. If that person is a successful candidate, they have another tool to negotiate their salary. I'm not saying whether that's a good or bad thing; I'm saying it could increase costs for the municipality.

You know, Mr. Speaker, what the UCP is putting forward here is unnecessary. As I said earlier, it's just a case of overreach that they're trying to get the municipalities to do something because they think they're the boss of municipalities. They want to be the mayor of municipalities for the whole province. With all these other problems to fix in this province, as I said earlier, they always want to put their thumb on municipalities to do this work. Quite frankly, it's distasteful to anyone that's on a municipal council in this province.

Each municipality has its own unique needs and context, so comparing salaries can be a real challenge. It should be up to individual municipalities to make the decision regarding the publication of salaries of their employees. Perhaps, again, this government should focus on their own, more pressing issues, rather than telling the municipalities how they should handle their salary publications.

Mr. Speaker, municipalities should be treated as a partner with the provincial government. Municipalities should be supported in the work that they do by the provincial government. Municipalities are not part of the provincial government, as the member across just said in his opening. Municipalities are not there to be told what to do. They have elected officials whose job is to do what's best for their municipalities without Big Brother telling them what to do. Municipalities are not lesser governments; municipalities are a different order of government, and perhaps this provincial government needs to understand that. Municipalities are not there to be toyed with and played with at the discretion of this government.

Mr. Speaker, this motion should go nowhere. This motion has nothing to do with anything other than this government wanting to tell municipalities what to do once again.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very excited to rise today in support of Motion 502, the municipal sunshine list. Thank you very much to my colleague the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti. He's done an exceptional job of putting this motion together. Thank you for the hard work on this and also just for your passion on this type of thing, to be able to have true transparency at multiple levels of government.

As I rise today to speak about this, I just want to pinpoint what a wise man once told me. He told me, you know, Mr. Speaker: what's good for the goose is good for the gander. In this act we're doing the same thing. What's good for the province is good for municipalities. I do believe this is a good, common-sense policy for us. It also reflects the good values, the common-sense principles that have guided this government since the very beginning.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans expect transparency. They expect accountability. They expect integrity from all levels of government – from our level, from provincial to federal and municipal government – and this is what this bill produces.

Now, why, Mr. Speaker, should Albertans care about this issue? Simply because it directly showcases and directs how their tax dollars are being managed. It's about respecting the taxpayers and ensuring that every Albertan knows their money is being spent wisely. This is really important because every year Albertans pay property taxes, utility fees, and other local fees to their municipalities, and these funds pay for services that we deeply rely upon, which are the responsibility of the municipalities. They pay some of our policing, they pay fire protection, they pay garbage collection, parks and recreation, some of the joys that we have in our municipalities and some of the fun that we have. These things are really important for us as community members.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, our community members and our constituents have no way to see how much their municipal employees are being paid, especially senior leaders and senior bureaucrats across municipal governments. As I said before, what's good for the goose is good for the gander. The province already discloses what senior government officials make, and that's because we believe in openness and giving taxpayers the information they need. They need a clear picture of where their money goes. This is integral and transparent, and at the municipal level right now there's a gap in this. This is what my good friend the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti is looking to close.

Now, the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act already includes optional reporting thresholds for municipalities, but disclosure isn't mandatory, and this is the gap that I'm speaking about today. This means that, in our government, you can look up the salary of a deputy minister or a university president, but you can't look up your city manager or your chief administrative officer or your local police chief, any of those, for what they make for their salary, even though they're paid with tax dollars.

5:20

Albertans deserve that information, Mr. Speaker. They deserve consistency, and they deserve to know that the people spending their money are doing it wisely and with the same standard of transparency as everyone else in government. Once again, what's good for the goose is good for the gander.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we also know that the municipal government is often the closest to people. They have large interactions with people every single day. I mentioned some of those services before. It's often snow clearing, road repairs, or local bylaws, and the closer government is to people, the more transparent it should be. People should understand and know where their tax dollars are going. That's a good thing. Transparency builds trust, and trust is very foundational to effective government. This motion gives Albertans

a clear view of how their money is being spent, helping them make informed judgments about local spending and priorities. This is a very simple but a very good solution here to fix this problem.

The key point of this is that it's not optional. It is mandatory. This framework already exists under the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act, which has worked well since 2015. This just adds to it. We're not building a new system. We're just adding on. We're just having municipalities join in an existing framework that has been successful.

Mr. Speaker, by mandating that municipalities release a sunshine list for employees earning beyond set thresholds, this motion really does strengthen transparency but it also strengthens public trust, as I mentioned. This is important. It provides equal opportunity and information access for Albertans in every region, in both rural and urban areas.

It's important to note that this motion does not create extra red tape or unnecessary costs. The municipality is already collecting this information. They already know this information. They already track employee compensation. All we're asking, Mr. Speaker, is for them to make it public. It's for the taxpayer to see, and this motion will help municipal governments as well.

It allows local governments to compare their compensation levels with other municipalities. It gives councils an opportunity to see that their pay scales are fair, that their pay scales are competitive, and that they're fiscally responsible. This is an opportunity about fairness and consistency, about holding everyone to the same high standard when it comes to taxpayer dollars, Mr. Speaker.

I do believe that Motion 502 does fit perfectly within our government's values. From the very beginning our government has been committed to accountability, fiscal responsibility, and transparency, and this fits those three things. We've seen real steps in transparency. We've seen some of our steps rebuild public trust, and this will continue in those aspects as well, to be able to see that transparency and openness. Extending this to municipalities is the logical next step, and this really is an opportunity not to criticize or control municipal governments but ensure that every taxpayer in Alberta can expect the same level of openness no matter where they live.

Now, some might raise concerns about this motion. Some will say that municipalities should not have the freedom to decide whether to disclose or not, and others might argue that salary disclosure affects staff morale or makes recruitment more difficult. But, Mr. Speaker, that hasn't been the case in our level of government. First, municipalities are creatures of the province, and their authority comes from the province. So it's completely

appropriate for the province to ensure that consistency and transparency standards apply to all publicly funded bodies and everything that we are responsible for.

Secondly, we've also already seen that the sunshine list works. It's been tested and proven for the last decade at a provincial level. It hasn't deteriorated morale, it hasn't limited recruitment, and it has worked smoothly across Alberta. It has built trust between the public and the government. This transparency promise is a significant opportunity for everyone, once again.

Finally, this doesn't affect and does not interfere with how municipalities are run. It doesn't tell them how to set salaries or manage staff. It simply asks them to share information that taxpayers have a right to see. Mr. Speaker, I do believe that when people have the opportunity to see where their money is going, they can feel more confident in those decisions that council and upper leadership are making for them.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti once again for putting together just a bang-up motion. He's done a fantastic job on this, and I continue looking forward to the support of all members of this Chamber to make sure that this passes with flying colours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there any other speakers on Motion 502?

Seeing none, would the mover of the motion like to close?

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and close debate on Motion 502. I'll begin by thanking everyone for their speeches. I thoroughly enjoyed hearing from all of you. As I have said before, I believe that Motion 502 is incredibly important because Albertans expect and deserve the highest standards of integrity, accountability, and transparency from all levels of government. Supporting this motion represents a meaningful step towards strengthening taxpayer accountability and enhancing transparency in municipal spending.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I close debate.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 502 carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member. Congratulations on passing Motion 502.

I would like to move now that the Assembly be adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:27 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Prayers	261
Indigenous Land Acknowledgement	261
Introduction of Visitors	261
Introduction of Guests	261
Members' Statements	
Acute-care Action Plan.....	262
Municipal Governance	262
David Ennis Parole Application	263
Edmonton-Rutherford Constituency Concerns.....	263
Métis Week and Louis Riel Day.....	271
Vaccination Policies	271
Oral Question Period	
Election Recall Petitions.....	263
Health Services Administration.....	264
Immigrants to Alberta.....	264
Bill 2 and Charter Rights.....	265
Members' Acceptance of Gifts and Benefits	266
Acute-care Action Plan.....	266
Northwestern Polytechnic's Fairview Campus Closure.....	267
Insurance Premium Costs	267
Social Assistance Program Funding	268
Class Size and Complexity Cabinet Committee	268
Northern Alberta Utility Costs.....	269
Neonatal Intensive Care Unit Capacity.....	269
Provincial Police Agency	270
Notices of Motions	271
Introduction of Bills	
Bill 5 Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2025	271
Bill 10 Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2)	271
Tabling Returns and Reports	271
Tablings to the Clerk	272
Orders of the Day	274
Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders	
Second Reading	
Bill 201 Employment Standards (Protecting Workers' Pay) Amendment Act, 2025	274
Division	275
Bill 202 Conflicts of Interest (Ethical Governance) Amendment Act, 2025	276
Motions Other than Government Motions	
Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act.....	284

