



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, April 20, 2026

Day 48

The Honourable Ric McIver, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

Second Session

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Party standings:

United Conservative: 47

New Democrat: 38

Progressive Tory: 1

Independent: 1

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, April 20, 2026

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Dr. Horst A.L.C. Schmid
April 29, 1933, to April 4, 2026

The Speaker: Hon. members, please remain standing as we recognize a former member who recently passed away. Horst Schmid was first elected as the Progressive Conservative Member for Edmonton-Avonmore in 1971 and served in this Assembly for four Legislatures until 1986. During his parliamentary career he held several cabinet positions including minister of culture, youth and recreation from 1971 to 1975, minister of culture and minister of government services from 1975 to 1979, minister of state for economic development – international trade from 1979 to 1982, minister of international trade from 1982 to 1986, and minister of tourism in 1986.

Immigrating to Canada from Bavaria in 1952, Dr. Schmid worked as a gold miner in Yellowknife before settling in Edmonton in 1956. Here he built a career in business and international export and contributed extensively to the city's cultural and ethnocultural life. He became increasingly engaged in public affairs, serving as an adviser on ethnocultural heritage to Peter Lougheed prior to his election in 1971.

In his maiden speech Dr. Schmid spoke of people as the greatest resource our province has. He reflected on the “royal welcome” he received upon arriving in what he calls his “princess province” at age 19, a boy who spoke German, some French and Italian, but not English. He expressed gratitude for being the first post Second World War immigrant elected to the Alberta Legislature and the first appointed to a cabinet in Canada.

Speaking to the Alberta Heritage Day Act, which he sponsored, Dr. Schmid said, “Each . . . of us has a responsibility, each must have respect for the rights of . . . others. Each must see in his neighbour the dignity and worth he wants in [his own] life for his own.” He returned to these words on other occasions, reflecting on the values that guided his public life. Dr. Schmid was renowned for his strong work ethic and his long-standing support for the arts and culture.

In recognition of his contributions to cultural and economic life in the province, he received an honorary doctor of laws from the University of Alberta in 1987. He was further recognized as honorary Chief Flying Eagle by the Samson Cree Nation in 1977, received the Alberta centennial medal in 2005 and the Queen Elizabeth II golden jubilee medal in 2012. Horst Schmid passed away on April 4, 2026 at the age of 92. In a moment of silent prayer I ask each of you to remember Horst Schmid as you may have known him.

Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him. Amen.

Hon. members, it being the first sitting day of the week, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Sidney

Manning. 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.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
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 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 exists within treaties 4, 7, 8, and 10 territories and the Métis Nation of Alberta.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Today we are deeply honoured to have the family of Horst Schmid seated in the Speaker's gallery. I ask that you please rise if you are able, including his daughter Jeannine Schmid, his son-in-law Jeff Bell, his daughter Carla Belozzer. I would also like to acknowledge Horst's son Vernon Schmid, who could not be with us in person today. Thank you all for being here. Please receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

School groups today, starting with the Minister of Tourism and Sport.

Mr. Boitchenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you the grade 6 class from H.W. Pickup school in Drayton Valley. Last Friday I had the opportunity to visit their school, and now they're visiting my workplace. I hope today inspires them to shape the future of our province. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Nally: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce members of the Canadian Hydrogen Association, who are joining us in the gallery. These industry leaders represent the full hydrogen value chain, driving innovation and investment and job creation. If I could ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Shaw. No? Okay. Edmonton-Ellerslie. Go ahead, please.

Mr. Gurtej Brar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce 60 grade 6 students, Jan Reimer school, along with their four teachers. They are here to learn about democracy and how this Assembly works. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Members' Statements

Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the importance of protecting and restoring Alberta's cultural

heritage sites. These sites are central to our province's identity. They tell stories of who we are, where we came from, and the communities that helped build Alberta. Last spring one of these stories was interrupted. A devastating fire destroyed the visitor's centre at the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village. This issue resonates deeply with me, as the threat of fire had also placed my own family historic home at risk, the Pylypow House.

1:40

For Alberta's Ukrainian community and for all Albertans who cherish our shared history, this was a profound loss. The Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village is more than a historic site; it's a living classroom that brings language, tradition, and memory together. In the months following the fire, the focus was not on speeches or headlines. It was on recovery and rebuilding and on ensuring this treasured site could continue to serve students, families, and visitors.

After a year of careful and dedicated restoration efforts, strong progress has been made. On Saturday, May 16, 2026, the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village will safely welcome the public back. While reconstruction of the visitor centre will continue throughout the year, reopening of the village is an important step. It allows Albertans to once again learn about and engage with and celebrate Ukrainian culture and history.

Importantly, this site never stopped being a place of learning. Fall and winter school programs resumed in November 2025. Nearly 1,500 students have already returned to the village to learn firsthand about Alberta's rich and diverse heritage. Mr. Speaker, this is what stewardship of our cultural heritage looks like: resilient, thoughtful, and committed to the long term.

I want to thank the staff and partners and contractors who have worked tirelessly to restore the site and support its future. I also want to remind this Assembly that investing in heritage is not about the past alone; it's about education, community, and ensuring future generations understand the stories that shaped our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Electoral Boundaries

Ms Ganley: Gerrymandering. It's a fancy word for cheating, a specific type of cheating where politicians draw electoral boundaries so that some people, people they like, get more of a say than others. Doesn't sound fair, does it? That's because it isn't. Normally the redrawing of electoral divisions in Alberta is a pretty boring process. The commission is established. They spend almost a year consulting with Albertans. We get a report. The report goes into the House. There's a motion to concur. It gets drawn into an act. And voila, a new set of boundaries by Albertans for Albertans. Boring. But not this time. This time the UCP decided the commission got a little too independent, so they want MLAs on a UCP-dominated committee to redraw the boundaries, with no input from Albertans.

To cut through the noise, here are the facts. The majority of the commission recommended maps that they drew based on fairness, the UCP's 89-seat direction, and input from people, the ones we're supposed to serve. This is the report of the commission. It's like a court decision. Anything other than the majority report is cheating. The majority of the commission did not recommend that MLAs draw the boundaries.

This leaves the UCP in a bit of a pickle. They might have to run on a level playing field. They might have to run on their record: you know, the one with ballooning ER wait times, sketchy bloated contracts, Saudi private jets, and gifted golden cats. So instead of boundaries, we get creative retelling. Somehow they turn a single

statement by a single person – "My majority colleagues do not agree with me on this point. That is why I am alone in making this recommendation." – into a recommendation of the majority. Complete nonsense.

Albertans know nonsense when they see it, and they know cheating when they see it. This particular UCP nonsense reeks of desperation.

The Speaker: The Member for Red Deer-South.

Cybercrime Task Force

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a good day in Alberta. Have you ever got a phone call from a stranger who tried to trick you into providing personal information or fake texts impersonating family members in trouble? Have you ever received a fake e-mail from the CRA threatening to freeze your accounts or an e-mail from a bank that you do not bank with alerting you of a fake security breach? How about a very big unclaimed inheritance from another country?

Albertans are experiencing this a lot. With artificial intelligence there will be more cybercrime, and it will be harder to detect counterfeits. Judging what is true and what is false is getting more difficult. Some are extorting and threatening harm if victims seek help from authorities. Cybercrime is often conducted from other countries, making it more difficult to identify the source of these crimes and to hold them to account.

It is good to be a member of Alberta's Cybercrime Task Force. It is seeking to reduce risk to Albertans from cybercriminals impersonating, deceiving, threatening, obtaining personal and financial information, or making payments under false pretenses. This task force is multidisciplinary, including experts in law, technology, telecommunications, consumer protection, and law enforcement. This task force will provide recommendations on legislative policy and advocacy responses to reduce cybercrime in Alberta.

Thank you to each individual and their respective organizations for supporting the work of this task force serving Albertans.

Electoral Boundaries

Ms Sweet: Over the past year Albertans from every corner of this province participated in the Electoral Boundaries Commission review. They attended hearings, submitted written feedback, and spoke openly about what representation means to them. They did this because they believed their voices mattered. They believed an independent, nonpartisan process that included Albertans was the right way to draw up Alberta's electoral boundaries. The commission listened carefully, weighed the evidence, and produced a report that reflected what Albertans said. The work was thoughtful, transparent, and grounded in public input.

That is why the government's decision to throw out the commission's final report is so concerning. When a government asks for feedback and then disregards it when they don't like it, it sends a message that public consultation is optional. It tells Albertans that their time and their voices will be pushed aside when they become inconvenient. This raises a deeper question about trust. The government has promoted referendums as a way to strengthen democracy, telling Albertans that the major decisions should be put directly in the hands of the people, but how can Albertans trust a government-led referendum when the same government ignores the results of an independent process on electoral boundaries?

If public input can be dismissed here, people should be questioning if a referendum would be respected when they don't

align with the government's preferred outcomes. This is not just about boundaries and lines on a map; it's about trust: trust in democracy, trust in independent oversight, and trust in the idea that citizens have a crucial role in shaping the decisions affecting them.

The question we are left with is simple. If the UCP government ignores the voices of Albertans on electoral boundaries, how can people trust that their voices will matter in other democratic processes? The commission did its job. Albertans did theirs. The UCP government chose not to listen. Albertans are now left asking how they can even trust this UCP government, or are they just going to throw away every Albertan's voice?

Locally Owned Restaurants

Mr. Bouchard: Mr. Speaker, a recent forecast from Dalhousie University food expert Sylvain Charlebois states that Canada could lose up to 4,000 restaurants in 2026. Every city changes in ways that are easy to miss at first. A familiar corner shifts, a routine disappears, and before long something that once felt essential is simply gone.

These are not just statistics; they're signals. Rising costs, higher wages, and increased rent are forcing businesses to shut their doors. We've all seen it, Mr. Speaker. It starts subtly. One day your go-to lunch spot is closed for renovations. A few months later the space reopens as a daycare or something else entirely, or even worse, remains vacant. When they disappear, it's not just commerce that's lost; it's personality, the unofficial landmarks that never made it onto a map but most certainly defined a neighbourhood.

Mr. Speaker, supporting independent restaurants and local businesses isn't solely about commerce. It's about choosing environments where things are a little messy, unscripted, and more human. It's about choosing places where the outcome isn't always guaranteed, where a new dish might fail or succeed wildly. Independent restaurants operate on a kind of irrational optimism. The margins are thin, the hours are long, and the factors of unpredictability – weather, foot traffic, delivery apps, rising costs, government lockdowns – are almost comically stacked against them.

Choosing an independent restaurant over a large chain may seem like a small decision, but it has a real impact and keeps our neighbourhoods vibrant and distinct. Mr. Speaker, when we support our local businesses, we're not just buying a product. We're backing our neighbours, keeping people employed, and making sure our communities stay vibrant and independent.

Thank you.

Electoral Boundaries

Dr. Elmeligi: My favourite fable is when the North Wind and the Sun fight over which is strongest. They make a bet: the first to make a passing traveller remove his coat wins. The Wind goes first and blows and blows, trying to force the coat off the man. He blusters and bullies, and with every move the traveller grips his coat closer to his body. Then the Sun shines, and the traveller is overcome with warmth and removes his coat. The moral is that persuasion is better than force.

1:50

The UCP is like the North Wind. They're trying to bluster and bully their way to a majority government by rigging the election and forcing different communities together in new electoral boundaries. The input Albertans already shared in this process doesn't matter to the UCP. The public isn't even going to be involved in the new boundaries panel.

Alberta's mountain towns together generate billions for the provincial coffers each year and share in how they welcome and manage tourism. Extensive partnerships between our mountain communities already exist from tourism marketing to public transit and waste management. They need an MLA that supports existing partnerships and collaboration across jurisdictions.

The majority report from the boundaries commission recognized that when it created the Canmore-Banff riding, linking those communities with fellow mountain and foothill towns in the MD of Bighorn and Kananaskis. The minority report creates Canmore-Kananaskis, which leaves the MD of Bighorn and half of Banff national park behind to include Nanton and Diamond Valley. Nanton, while lovely, doesn't have very much in common with Canmore and Banff. Including it in the same riding weakens the vote of rural Albertans in that area.

The UCP want to bluster their way to a permanent majority government. They're not concerned about fair representation for the people of Nanton and Diamond Valley. Rather than just do better to persuade more Albertans to vote for them, they want to cheat.

The NDP shines the sun on the UCP's gerrymandering. We work with persuasion rather than force.

Statement by the Speaker

Decorum and Parliamentary Behaviour

The Speaker: Hon. members, before question period today I'd like to comment on last week's proceedings, particularly the question period from last Thursday. We are almost three years into the 31st Legislature. As such, all members know the rules and really can't claim that they don't understand the rules of the Assembly.

In addition, as members know, I've been around this place for some time and I've seen and heard quite a bit, but I must say that the conduct from both sides of the Assembly on Thursday was disappointing and unacceptable. This sort of behaviour is not what is expected of us from Albertans as their elected representatives. It was embarrassing for us and an embarrassment to the institution of this Legislature.

Albertans expect more from us, and in my role as Speaker it is my job to maintain order and decorum in this Chamber. I will be working hard to fulfill my duty even if that now means I must intervene at times during a member's question or response in question period to call out statements that are egregious.

Hon. members, let's just remember why we are here. We are here to represent the interests of our constituents, to ask meaningful questions, to engage in informed debate, and to legislate in the interests of all Albertans to make this great province an even better place for all Albertans. Let's just work hard at achieving this goal.

Oral Question Period

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

Electoral Boundaries

Mr. Nenshi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Politicians should be focused on the health care crisis, on the faltering economy, on the extraordinary cost-of-living crisis families are facing, but we know this government would rather distract us with gerrymandering and separatism.

This weekend the Premier was furiously backpedaling on the attempt to draw electoral maps in the UCP's favour. She was claiming, although it's not true, that she was just accepting the majority report, only with two additional seats added. If that were

the case, why not just send this map back to the same commission and ask them to bring us a scenario with two more seats?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's for a very simple reason in law. Once the commission has reported, it ceases to exist, so there is no commission to send it back to. What we would have to do is what is being proposed by this Legislature, and all members will have a chance to vote and debate on it, which is that it will go to a special committee, at which point it will go out again to a commission so that they can look at the recommendation that was put in the addendum by Justice Miller and add two seats so that we have 91.

Mr. Nenshi: Why not just reappoint the same members again? This weekend when the Premier was asked that question, she said: oh, they're tired; they're exhausted. Of course they're tired. They're tired of this government denigrating their work, casting aspersions on them, and attempting to apply political pressure to a supposedly independent process. But here's the thing. Those five commissioners know this better than anyone else, and we simply don't have enough time to bring other people up to speed. Did the Premier, before saying that they were tired, personally speak with Justice Miller and the other commissioners, thank them for their work, and ask them to stay on?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, I think everybody knew the circumstances when the commission came to an end. No one is disparaging any of the work of the commission. We've accepted the majority report with the addendum of Justice Miller. Justice Miller was trying to find a way to bridge the gap between the majority and the minority members. I think he came up with an elegant solution, indicating that if they'd had 91 seats, they would have been able to complete their work. That was his recommendation, and that's what this Legislature is going to consider.

Mr. Nenshi: Of course, Justice Miller also asked that the majority report be recommended in its entirety, in its totality. It's very clear that the UCP thought they had this commission in the bag. The minister said over and over again that he will accept the independent results of the independent commission, until that independent commission got a little, well, independent. Despite the Premier's spin on this, what's happened is that the UCP doesn't like the results and they're looking for a do-over. What will the government do this time to ensure that this new process will cave to their pressure and help them rig the election?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The legislation foresees from time to time that all commission members may not agree. It actually says, "If there is more than one report submitted under section 6 or 8, the report of a majority of the members of the Commission is the report . . . but if there is no majority, the report of the chair is the report of the Commission." The chair has a very unique and special role, so that, in his opinion, in trying to see if there was a way to bridge the gap between the two different reports, he offered his addendum. That is what we're proposing passing. All members will have a chance to vote on it.

The Speaker: The second question goes to the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Nenshi: Of course, there was a majority report. The only reason for that addendum was because Justice Miller was facing

enormous pressure from this government, trying to exert pressure on an independent process.

Now, the Premier said over and over again that she's just trying to get more fair representation for rural Alberta, and I'd like to unpack that a little bit. The government set the 89 ridings themselves just a year ago, after the population growth had already happened, after population started cratering, as the Premier was transitioning to her anti-immigrant stance. So now why does the Premier feel this need for this change?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was lamented by not only the justice but also his fellow commissioners that they reduced two seats in rural Alberta. It was mentioned many times throughout the report that if they'd had the latitude to increase the number of seats, they would have. The legislation didn't foresee that. One of the recommendations proposes giving a future commission that latitude. I think we have to be respectful that the chair, once again, in legislation has a very unique and special status, and his addendum is the one that we'll be debating.

Mr. Nenshi: Of course, Albertans lament this government every single day, and the government rarely steps back unless it benefits them personally.

Now, let's be clear. The government wasn't shy about saying that the reason they were limiting this to 89 seats is because population growth across the province is not uniform. The vast majority of the population growth has happened in the cities of Calgary and Edmonton. The UCP didn't want more seats in Calgary and Edmonton. They were scared of that. So now that we've added two more seats, those seats should actually go to Calgary and Edmonton, where the population growth is. Is that the Premier's intent here? How does that help rural Alberta?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, yes, Calgary and Edmonton do need additional seats, but it shouldn't come at the expense of rural Alberta. That was what the judge was saying, that, yes, Calgary and Edmonton should get the appropriate representation with new seats, but the way to be able to resolve this without making the rural ridings unreasonably geographically large and ensuring that we have effective representation was to go up two additional seats so that those two could be restored. The judge is very clear to maintain the bulk of the majority report, with a few addendums, and that's what the Legislature will vote on.

Mr. Nenshi: This commission worked really hard at trying to balance a difficult mathematical problem with these rural and urban seats, keeping in mind fairness but also the law and the Constitution. Now, there are already multiple ridings in the report where the population threshold in rural ridings falls far below what the Supreme Court says is acceptable. Adding two more rural ridings will make that even worse. Is the Premier comfortable with that? Is she comfortable with passing a likely unconstitutional map where the vote of someone who's living in Calgary or Edmonton will count for less than half of those elsewhere?

2:00

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the law does allow for a certain number of seats to be either over or under the average. In fact, one of the recommendations that came through the report is to expand the number where they would have that latitude. Instead of four, I believe they suggested going up to eight. That's not what we're debating today. They did end up giving some good recommendations about some of the challenges that they face, but I respect that the commission had hard

work to do in trying to make sure that there was effective representation in rural ridings. They lamented they couldn't do that with 89, but they suggested it could be done with 91.

The Speaker: The third set of questions belongs to the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Nenshi: It's amazing that the government is pretending that they were surprised by this report. The government wants us to believe that they have rejected the minority report, that with a new process we'll not just end up with the same minority report and gerrymandered maps, but the Premier has never explained how it is that her government authored the maps of the minority report. They have a government-identifying document identifier on them. The minister of transportation was sharing them with his constituents. Will the Premier admit today that the minority report was actually authored by the government and is, in fact, the UCP report?

Ms Smith: No, government does not have a role in drafting any maps. No government nor the Justice minister has any role in making this decision. It was put to an independent commission. There was a difference of opinion on that commission: a majority report, a minority report, and an addendum. The judge came up with, I think, an elegant solution to try to make sure that rural ridings were not removed from the report, and that is what this Legislature is going to be able to vote on when it comes forward later this week.

Mr. Nenshi: Mr. Speaker, the Premier employs in her office a gentleman who is a multiple-failed political candidate. He's called Happy Mann. He's previously been fined three times by Elections Alberta for unscrupulous behaviour. On March 20, days before this Legislature received that report, Happy Mann was wandering around with a map, looking for support for his own personal nomination for a riding that does not in fact exist, a map that was identical to what is in the minority report. So if the Premier wasn't interfering, how'd he get those maps?

The Speaker: I'm sure there's a way to ask that question, but naming people who aren't in the House and aren't here to defend themselves is generally frowned upon. The other issue that I have is that questions are about government policy. They should be in question period. Party nominations are not part of government policy.

Hon. Premier, if you want to respond, you're able.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every Member of this Legislative Assembly had an opportunity to participate in the Electoral Boundaries Commission process, going to the events and talking about how the ridings should be changed. No one should be surprised that there were lots of proposals that were floating out there by private members. That's the job of private members, to advocate on their behalf. The member opposite keeps on implying the government had something to do with the outcome of this report. We did not. This is an independent process. Members have an opportunity to participate in it, and they'll have an opportunity to vote later this week.

Mr. Nenshi: What an exceptionally strange coincidence that all of these people acting completely independently happen to have the exact same maps in the same font in the same style as the ones the UCP-appointed members of the commission put forward.

It's clear what's happened here. They thought they could get away with passing the minority map, but it was so egregious, it was so wrong that it was too shameless even for the UCP to do that.

Instead of admitting they were wrong, they set up this fake process to try and get there in slow motion. How can Albertans believe that it'll be fair this time when it wasn't fair last time?

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, he answered his own question. We rejected the minority report. We accepted the majority report with the addendum of the judge. He has said that the rest of the province as we proposed must be maintained to the extent possible. That is what the motion is that is going forward. That is what the members on this side will be able to debate in a couple of days, and then looking at the ability to go up to the 91 seats, as the judge has proposed, to make sure that we have proper rural representation. That's something everyone will be able to vote on.

The Speaker: The next set of questions belongs to the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Ten times in the past three weeks the Premier and the Minister of Justice said in this House that all members of this Assembly would get to vote on the independent boundary commission's report, including the majority maps, but that's not what's happening, and the Premier and the minister knew that. The UCP's motion to gerrymander Alberta's ridings does not allow MLAs to vote on the maps presented by the independent commission. The motion is to allow the UCP to draw the electoral maps without public consultation. So why did the Premier and the Minister of Justice stand in this House and repeatedly make statements that were not a reflection of the facts?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier has said, and I will echo those comments, the commission put forth a report that admittedly had some problems with it in terms of removing rural constituencies particularly. Now, we rewind back to 2019 when the election happened, and members of the opposition would recall that at that time rural constituencies were also removed. We are actually making sure that Calgary and Alberta have the maps that reflect their population growth while also not reducing the vote and the importance of rural Alberta.

Ms Pancholi: It sounds like the Government House Leader has just acknowledged that the UCP is going to redraw all the electoral maps according to what they think is fair. "Every single MLA in this Chamber deserves the opportunity to be able to debate and discuss and review the recommendations and the report in its entirety. The government does not draw electoral [maps]. It does not draw [boundaries]." That was the Minister of Justice just one week ago, Mr. Speaker, but the UCP is not giving MLAs the chance to vote on the report. The UCP is drawing electoral boundaries. It is drawing the map. So when exactly did the UCP decide to cheat to win the next election? Was it before or after the minister said it wouldn't?

The Speaker: Hon. member, cheating in an election is breaking the law. I will caution. I'm looking at you, hon. member. Accusing somebody of cheating in an election is accusing them of breaking the law. We won't have it. If I hear that anymore, we'll ask for an apology.

Go ahead, hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do find it interesting that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud thinks she knows what's going on in my head when only it's clear that I live rent free in hers. Now, what I can say is that on this side of the House we will be

adopting a process that moves to 91 seats to ensure that Calgary and Alberta have ridings and constituencies that reflect population growth while also not taking away the value and the importance of rural Alberta. Rural Alberta continuously punches well above its weight to ensure that they are economic contributors to this province, and they do one heck of a job.

The Speaker: Well, let's not start with assuming we know what's in somebody else's head on either side of the House. Government House Leader, this is especially for you, this one. The last one was for the member who has the next question now.

Ms Pancholi: Over and over this government repeats that they know best. They know better than an independent boundary commission. They know better than Alberta parents. They know better than everybody. That's always the position of this government. The Premier said that this Assembly is going to have an opportunity to vote for or against the report as it comes forward. The Minister of Justice said that every single individual in this Chamber will have the opportunity to discuss, debate, and go forward with the report. In reality, the UCP has thrown out the report and its maps by the independent commission after months of public consultation. They want to replace it with maps that they draw while prohibiting public consultation. In a democracy political parties should never draw electoral maps, so why is the UCP?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. On a couple of matters we do agree with the member opposite. Governments do not draw maps. Members will get an opportunity to vote on these electoral boundaries, and that is exactly part of the process. As I had mentioned – and I will correct myself as I think I had made an error earlier – Calgary and Edmonton do have population growths that need to be addressed through constituency maps. But that cannot happen – that cannot happen – at the expense of rural Alberta, where many members of this constituency and members of the opposition are from. My question is: what do they have against rural Alberta, and why have they failed them?

The Speaker: Okay. We're on question 4, where there are no preambles on the supplementaries.

2:10

Ms Renaud: Mid-sized cities like St. Albert punch above their weight in our economy and are home to a million Albertans. Voters in places like St. Albert, Airdrie, Lethbridge, and Red Deer deserve fair representation in our Legislature. They deserve the right to elect their own MLAs, and they deserve better than being cracked and packed to rig the next election for the UCP. Will the UCP commit to ruling out a ridiculous gerrymandered map that would silence voters from St. Albert, or is cheating the point?

The Speaker: You're awfully close to accusing somebody of cheating in an election, which is a road that we ought not go down, Member.

The Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that caution. I believe we dealt with this nearly 20 times last week in points of order: accusing a member or a government of cheating, of course, all of which is illegal. But there is a process that we are following. We're also following the recommendations from the justice in the boundaries commission to ensure that Alberta province-wide has fair representation and all citizens get to have an equal vote, which means looking at 91 seats, which is a motion that

I have put on the Order Paper and will be debated tomorrow. All members of the Assembly will get to debate on the boundaries. It's the members' decision.

Ms Renaud: Given that countless Albertans participated in the boundary commission to tell the government to reject gerrymandering and given that voters in Red Deer and Lethbridge have the same Charter-protected rights to vote as the voters in Grande Prairie and given that the unconstitutional minority map suggested by the UCP commissioners picks some small cities to rig apart and not others, is the UCP really so afraid of losing that they're ready to rig the next election? Is cheating the point?

The Speaker: Well, you were cautioned. You just lost your third question.

If the government wants to answer that, you can go ahead.

Mr. Schow: Well, Mr. Speaker, actions have consequences, and I appreciate you maintaining the decorum of this Chamber. What I can say is that all Albertans will have an equal say in the election in 2027 because boundaries will be drawn based on the report from an independent commission, which will recommend 91 seats. This is also a recommendation that came from the original commission, who said that their report to the majority had shortcomings, not the least of which was rural ridings being reduced by two seats. That's unacceptable. We have to protect rural and the seats.

Point of Clarification

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under 13(2) I would like some clarification on the previous ruling. The reason I'm asking is that no point of order was raised. Yes, you cautioned, but we were not accusing any individual members, and, as far as I know, cheating is not a crime as such. Not playing fairly: we will call it cheating. I don't think this ruling is particularly helpful, and it may interfere with people's right to speak freely in this House.

The Speaker: Thank you. The answer to your question is that I cautioned the hon. member. The hon. member ignored the caution, and we're moving on.

Livingstone-Macleod.

Alberta Liquor Market

Mrs. Petrovic: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is focused on breaking down interprovincial trade barriers and making it easier for businesses across Canada to grow. That means helping our local liquor producers reach new customers across the country. We've heard from businesses that they want a simpler, more open system for buying and selling liquor between provinces, without unnecessary red tape. To the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction: can you update this House on the steps our government is taking to expand liquor trade with other provinces?

Mr. Nally: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that we have renewed an agreement with British Columbia to expand direct-to-consumer wine sales between our provinces. This gives Albertans and businesses more access to B.C. wine while opening new markets for Alberta producers. We're cutting red tape. We're making it simpler. Alberta will continue to lead the way in open and free markets.

Mrs. Petrovic: Well, given that this is excellent news for myself and given that Alberta already has the most open and free liquor markets in Canada and given that it is so much easier to bring new

liquor products into Alberta than in any other province and further given this is being done with fewer barriers and more straightforward, business-friendly systems that support growth, can the minister outline just how open and free our liquor market is and the opportunity it creates for businesses?

Mr. Nally: Mr. Speaker, Alberta has the most open and free market for liquor in Canada. We have over 1,600 retailers. We have over 30,000 SKUs. In fact, we've got the best selection and the lowest prices. Mr. Speaker, you would be forgiven for saying that our liquor system is the jewel in the crown of privatization.

Mrs. Petrovic: Given that Alberta is leading the country when it comes to opening up trade while other provinces continue to shelter their markets and given that our approach is focused on competition, choice, and cutting red tape for businesses large and small across every part of the industry, can the minister explain why Alberta continues to be the best place in Canada to do business in the liquor industry and how this work builds on that leadership?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to point out that we have the lowest corporate taxes in Canada. In fact, we're cheaper than 44 U.S. states. We have reduced red tape, and we have created a business-friendly environment. Industry is responding. In fact, I am proud to say that if you're outside of Alberta and you want to put a bottle of liquor for sale in Alberta, it'll take you about two weeks to do so. To send a bottle of Alberta liquor on the shelves out of province, if you're lucky, it'll take two years. If you're lucky. Most don't make it. We're going to do what we can to help change that.

Electoral Boundaries

(continued)

Member Batten: Mr. Speaker, the independent Electoral Boundaries Commission drew up fair maps, not maps that allowed a party to change the rules if they didn't like them. The commission rejected the proposed Spruce Grove-Edmonton hybrid riding because it would not meet the criteria of effective representation. Supporting a motion to have politicians redraw the maps would allow the Spruce Grove-Stoney Plain MLA to override a map that his own community helped shape. So why is the Minister of Children and Family Services supporting a plan to undermine Albertans' fair electoral maps?

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, in this instance it would appear that the member opposite and the truth are unfamiliar with each other at the moment. What I can say is that it is completely false that members of this Legislature are going to redraw the map. The motion currently on the Order Paper clearly states that we'll form a select special committee that will then appoint an independent commission that will recommend 91 seats for the province, which is the recommendation of the majority of the commission that we put together not so long ago. The process is clear, and the member is not being forthright with Albertans.

Mr. Shepherd: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:17.

Member Batten: Given that the commission rejected combining Spruce Grove with Edmonton because they do not share a community of interest and given that Edmonton is built around dense urban systems while Spruce Grove is a fast-growing city with

different needs and given that the Premier promised Albertans that MLAs would vote on the final report, but that's not a motion on our Order Paper, Mr. Speaker, why is the minister abandoning the constituents of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain and instead backing a scheme that bundles them in with the city of Edmonton?

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, it sure sounds a lot like the member opposite is trying to redraw the map right now to the public. Members of this Chamber will have an opportunity to debate the maps when the time comes, when 91 seats are proposed by an independent commission. That is the reason that we have formulated the select special committee that is on the motion, that will be debated tomorrow. I look forward to hearing the comments from the members opposite and to see the new commission's report when that time comes. But until then, it would not be prudent for the member opposite to start publicly redrawing maps here in the Chamber.

Member Batten: Given that MLAs and ministers must defend the interests of the people who elected them, not take a second run at decisions after failing to secure the results they wanted and given that this process was completed through independent review and broad public participation and given that the motion before the House would ditch the constituents of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain and erode their voices in this Legislature, will the minister stand up for children and families he's tasked to serve and vote against the motion, or would he like gerrymandering to continue for his constituency?

Mr. Schow: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I do and do not like is not something that the member opposite should be presupposing, and gerrymandering is, of course, also making an accusation. That would be against the law. What I can say is that the member is correct. There was an independent review done by the previous commission. As such, that commission submitted the report and said that much of the objection to our interim report was based on the loss of two rural seats. I lament this, as do my fellow commissioners. We are taking the recommendations of the commission and moving to 91 seats.

2:20

Ms Hoffman: The Electoral Boundaries Commission held public hearings. Between the first and second rounds the Justice minister shamed an independent MLA for not bothering to present to the commission and then complaining about the maps after they were drawn. It was an independent process, he said, that ought to be guided by data, past precedent, the law, the hearings. The MLA for Red Deer-North isn't on the record having presented. Surely she had confidence in the process, but now the government wants to completely subvert that process and draw up gerrymandered maps. So does that minister really support having no urban Red Deer ridings?

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The only ones trying to subvert the process are the members opposite as they publicly try to redraw maps here in the Chamber and gain public support to influence what will be the new commission to give a recommendation on 91 seats. On this side of the House we take the recommendations of the commission very seriously, which lamented the loss of two rural seats. That member is from rural Alberta. I will put the question back to the member: what does that

member have against rural Alberta and why is that member disregarding rural Alberta's concerns about fair representation?

Ms Hoffman: Given that the commission submitted one set of maps as a recommendation and given that this member is refusing to actually bring that forward and instead he's trying to create a new process, the mayor of Red Deer, Cindy Jefferies, has spoken up very publicly saying that the majority recommendation map should go forward, and given that Red Deer's mayor says that the maps proposed by the actual commission benefit Red Deer, saying that she sees more downfall in splitting the city up into four different ridings, does the minister from Red Deer-North really think her government knows better than the independent Electoral Boundaries Commission and the mayor of Red Deer?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, a lot of civic leaders also lamented the loss of two rural constituencies, and they made those points very clear in the second round of consultations with the commission. That is why the commission aggregated all those responses from the public, from members of this Assembly, civic leaders, to put forth a majority report which recommended that if we were to move forward and have proper representation, they would recommend 91 seats for the entire province. That's what the motion on the Order Paper is for. That's what the new commission is for. We're taking the recommendations of the commission. [interjection]

The Speaker: I don't think I called your name, Lethbridge-West, but we did call Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Given that the government actually brought forward the bill of 89 seats and given that the Premier can clearly tell that her support in urban communities is slipping, and given that the UCP's government-proposed motion will significantly diminish the principle of keeping communities together, just like Red Deer's mayor has said, and given that the Premier didn't like the independent report, so her government is trying to change the rules to change the outcome of the election, is the minister from Red Deer-North really so scared of facing her voters that she won't speak out when it's clear that her Premier is trying to paint all of the MLAs with her brush of entitlement?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are actually only doing on this side of the House what the Leader of the Opposition recommended we do at the very beginning, which is put it back to a commission. However, the previous commission's work is done, and the commission's report is final. That commission cannot be reinstated, so we are creating a motion on the Order Paper which will create a new select special committee that will then create a new commission that will recommend 91 seats, which was the recommendation from the commission saying that they should restore two electoral divisions when the commission . . .

The Speaker: The next question belongs to the hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Addiction, Mental Health, and Homeless Supports

Mr. Dyck: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Homelessness is a growing concern for my constituents in Grande Prairie and our downtown businesses. It is increasingly becoming more visible across small and mid-sized municipalities like Grande Prairie.

Unfortunately, for these vulnerable Albertans this can be attributed to a variety of social and economic factors such as severe addiction, personal mental health crises, and financial loss. To the Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services: what actions are being taken in Grande Prairie to ensure that we are supporting society's most vulnerable?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of social services.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for his tireless advocacy for his community. Grande Prairie is actually one of the first cities outside of Edmonton and Calgary where we will begin to be able to take 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week homeless shelters and put them in place in Grande Prairie. We're investing in that inside the community, all part of our quarter billion dollar investment in homeless emergency services all across the province. Grande Prairie is also a community that we're working very closely with when it comes to transitional housing, to be able to make sure that individuals who find themselves in emergency housing have opportunities to be able to find housing. It's all part of our \$9 billion investment as a government in housing.

The Speaker: The member.

Mr. Dyck: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we have seen over and over again that the failed policies of the NDP don't help Albertans overcome addiction and given that recovery should be the goal, not keeping people in the deadly disease of addiction, recovery plays an important role in addressing homelessness and supports vulnerable Albertans to be able to be free from addiction. Further given that the battle against addiction is one that cannot simply be won overnight but can take many years for individuals to overcome, can the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction elaborate on how the recovery model we have started across Alberta helps residents overcome addiction and how this will help my community of Grande Prairie?

The Speaker: The minister of addictions.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the great question. The Alberta recovery model is a recovery-oriented system of mental health and addiction care that is focused on supporting individuals through every stage of their recovery journey. In Grande Prairie this is taking shape through our expanded treatment capacity and recovery-focused services. Projects like the upcoming recovery community will provide needed treatment beds, stability, structure, and long-term supports that help people rebuild their lives. This work is ongoing but staying focused on recovery. We are giving the best chance to lead healthy, contributing lives.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Dyck: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that the residents of Grande Prairie see the outcomes of the deadly disease of addiction every single day, including myself, and we want to see these people receive help and not remain on the streets and given that our government supports are for recovery and a way back to participate in family, healthy community, and local involvement, not just giving people more drugs, like the NDP, can the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction please explain the recovery community plan in Grande Prairie and when it is to be acted upon?

The Speaker: The minister of . . .

Mr. Sabir: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:27.

The hon. Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you for the question. There is no single or quick solution to mental health and addiction challenges, but as part of the Alberta recovery model we're opening 11 recovery communities across the province, including one in Grande Prairie. We just opened one on our Indigenous communities down in the Kainai First Nation. Recovery communities provide long-term holistic supports, not just a place to stay but a place to heal. They connect clients to treatment, peer support, life skills, and pathways back into the family to work in their communities.

Electoral Boundaries

(continued)

Ms Chapman: Voters should pick their politicians, not the other way around. It's a rule every politician should agree with except, it appears, for the UCP. Now, the minister of education might want a hybrid riding in Calgary-Bow, but in the boundaries commission's public consultations, voters from Calgary-Bow were loud and clear that they did not want that. Will the minister of education set an example, respect an outcome he doesn't like, and support the Calgary-Bow boundaries his constituents want?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's a bit ridiculous that the member thinks or knows what the hon. minister of education knows, likes, or doesn't like, but I'm happy to refer back to the actual motion itself, which states that

The majority report states that the majority of the commission believes that it would have been able to provide Albertans with more effective representation had the Legislature [approved] an additional two seats [that] indicates that, had the commission . . . given the power to do so, it may have proposed a map of . . . 91 electoral [seats].

Mr. Speaker, this motion is very clear. We're moving forward in response to the commission's recommendations of 91 seats.

Ms Chapman: Given that the constituents of Calgary-Bow reject turning the riding into a hybrid seat and support the majority report's proposed boundaries, given that the UCP are rejecting the independent boundaries commission's map and giving themselves the power to draw maps the way they like them with zero public consultation and given the UCP knows that Calgary voters will not support a government that engineered a teacher strike and continues to fail parents and students, will the minister listen to Calgary-Bow and tell his colleagues to get their hands off the maps?

2:30

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do agree with the members opposite. Voters should be the ones picking their politicians. In 2023 voters picked the hon. Minister of Education over the disastrous candidate Druh Farrell for the NDP. Now, what I can say is that the members opposite are clearly trying to redraw the maps and use public opinion to do so in this Chamber. I think they should allow the process to play out. My question to them is: what are they afraid of?

The Speaker: Well, first of all, I'll encourage the Government House Leader to be cautious when using people's names who aren't here to defend themselves.

Ms Chapman: Given that more than 6,000 Calgary-Bow voters signed a petition in the dead of winter to remove the Minister of Education from his seat, given that that same minister won his seat by a mere 600 votes and given that this minister has championed some of the government's most damaging decisions to education funding and school safety, is the Minister of Education so scared to lose his seat that he will let a UCP committee hand-pick his constituents instead of simply working to earn the support of his voters?

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't tend to speak on behalf of other members in this Chamber, but I can tell that that member continues to represent his constituents with honour and dignity, and he continues to earn their respect and their vote, and that is why the petition the member opposite referenced was such an epic failure, as were all the other distraction petitions that were put forth by the members opposite trying to distract the government. I can tell you that on this side of the House we continue to be focused on the things that matter most, which is, first, making sure that this province has proper representation and continues to attract investment, create jobs, and support Albertans in their daily lives. [interjections]

The Speaker: You'll get your turn, right?

Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Film Production and Tourism Promotion

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The FIFA World Cup is coming to North America this summer, and there'll be an influx of visitors from all around the world coming to Canada for the first time. Located on the strong and free side of the Rockies, our province is just a short flight away from the host cities of Vancouver and Seattle. To the Minister of Tourism and Sport: with the World Cup coming to the west coast – some call it the left coast – what is the government doing to encourage these visitors to come to Alberta?

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

Mr. Boitchenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for a good question. As the FIFA World Cup gets closer, Alberta is getting ready to welcome sport fans from around the world. Just last week we welcomed the FIFA trophy cup tour in Calgary, and in Edmonton, we'll host the international friendly match between the Canada national men's team and Uzbekistan on June 1, just six weeks from now. I would encourage everyone to please come and enjoy the game.

The Speaker: Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that when I was on a trade mission to India earlier this year I was able to meet with lots of folks and tell them all about Alberta and further given that to my surprise, their ideas of Canada, they'd never really heard of our province – they mainly familiarized themselves with Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver – to the same minister: what is the government doing to promote our brand across the world and as such encourage tourism from untapped markets such as India?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Boitchenko: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for another good question. Our government knows that Alberta is the best place to live, work, visit, and play, and we are promoting that to visitors across the world. That is why Budget 2026 invests \$75 million into Travel Alberta to support marketing, promotion, and improving access from key international markets such as Mexico, Korea, Japan, and India.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister. Given that Bollywood is one of the largest production centres in the world, if not bigger than anything else – in fact, it produces three and a half times more than what Hollywood does – and further given that Alberta is already known as a premier location for filming and producing high-quality movies, to the Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women: what is the government doing to attract Bollywood productions to our province, and what incentives are available for those foreign filmmakers? [interjections]

The Speaker: The minister . . .

Mr. Sabir: Point of order.

The Speaker: Oh, okay. A point of order at 2:35. I actually wasn't asking for a point of order, but you do have the right to call one.

The Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our investments in the Alberta Film Commission and film and television tax credit deliver strong supports and incentives, making Alberta one of the most competitive jurisdictions in North America, with growing interest from markets like Bollywood. Since 2020 we have attracted nearly 230 international projects and \$1.6 billion in production spending from the U.S., India, U.K., and the Netherlands. By investing in local talent, crews, venues, and promoting Alberta globally, we ensure producers around the world continue choosing Alberta first.

Electoral Boundaries (continued)

Member Boparai: Mr. Speaker, the unconstitutional, gerrymandered maps proposed by the UCP would disenfranchise voters in north Calgary. Politicians should not be drawing the maps. If they do this, voters in north Calgary would be packed into overpopulated ridings. This is unfair. It means voters in north Calgary would count less than voters in south Calgary. Will the Member for Calgary-North support the majority report that respects his constituents' votes, or will he support the unfair plan for politicians to draw their own maps?

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, from what I can gather from the member opposite's question, he's talking about effective representation, which we would agree on, but it's not just an issue of population. It's about ability to access your constituents and their ability to access you. That includes time and distance. As a rural MLA, I can tell you that, if I went back, I've spent countless hours in my vehicle driving to my constituents. You've got to make sure that every Albertan has reasonable access and effective representation from their MLA, and I can tell you that we're going to continue to support that endeavour. [interjections]

The Speaker: Are we all done? Because we should only hear from Calgary-Falconridge right now.

Member Boparai: Given that all voters in Alberta have the same right to vote and given that voters in north Calgary matter just as much and deserve just as much of a say in their province's future as voters in south Calgary or rural Alberta, will the Member for Calgary-North stand up for his constituents and commit today to accept the independent boundary commission's 89-seat majority report map and protect their right to vote?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that every member on the government benches stands up every single day for their constituents and what is best for them. I wish the members opposite would actually stand up and defend rural Alberta, despite it not being anywhere that they represent. Now, on this side of the House we understand that effective representation is more than just about population base. It's about access to the MLAs, making sure your MLA knows your concerns and that they represent them here on the floor of the Chamber. Having 800,000 new citizens in this province makes it difficult in the last five years. That's why we're going to move to 91 seats.

Member Boparai: Given that Justice Miller and the independent boundary commission clearly stated that the minority report's map is unconstitutional and given that the only outcome endorsed by the commission is to accept the independent commission's maps, no ifs, ands, or buts, and given that any step towards the UCP's unconstitutional minority report would disenfranchise my constituents in north Calgary, will the Member for Calgary-North really let his party draw a map that silences his constituents, or will he stand up and commit to accepting the only map supported by the commission?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The only members of this Chamber talking about the minority report are the ones opposite. We made it very clear that we are adopting the recommendations of the commission, which also laments the loss of two rural Alberta constituencies. I wish the members opposite would also lament the loss of two rural Alberta constituencies, because it is rural Alberta in this province that punches well above its weight and makes sure it's a meaningful economic contributor from manufacturing to agriculture and everything in between. But the members opposite want to silence the rural voice. I have a question for them: what do you have against rural Alberta?

2:40

Mr. Ip: Mr. Speaker, the majority report of the independent Electoral Boundaries Commission respects Sherwood Park and surrounding communities, but the UCP's proposed map would have half of Sherwood Park thrown in with Tofield 50 kilometres away in a different county. Sherwood Park residents made it clear that they want their community respected, and the commission heard them. They do not want politicians drawing the maps to create an unfair advantage. Will the Minister of Technology and Innovation explain to his constituents why he isn't supporting the independent commission's recommendations to keep Sherwood Park intact? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is commonplace in this Chamber to not presuppose the outcome of a vote. I'm not sure why the members opposite are presupposing the outcome of a report

from a commission that hasn't even been formulated yet. They're throwing wild accusations across the floor, but what they're really doing is using this as an opportunity to lobby the public for their own boundaries, ones that favour them. We favour an independent report that will recommend 91 seats as a result of the recommendations coming from the commission that we just got the report from recently.

Mr. Ip: Mr. Speaker, given that the UCP's plans to have politicians draw up the maps deliberately dilutes the voices of urban and rural voters and given that this means mid-sized cities like Sherwood Park, Red Deer, and Lethbridge will be carved up in ways that would be unrecognizable and does not honour the commission's mandate for effective representation, will the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park explain why his government thinks it needs to resort to unfair tactics in order to win the next election?

Mr. Schow: What about Sherwood Park, Mr. Speaker? What about Cardston? What about Magrath? What about Drumheller? What about Drayton Valley? What about all the rural constituencies around this province that deserve effective representation, something the members opposite would try to rob them of? On this side of the House we are taking the recommendations from the electoral commission that suggested we change the law to make sure there are 91 seats. This is what the commission recommended. This is what they got feedback from across the entire province in their consultations. We're taking their recommendation, and we await their report.

Mr. Ip: Mr. Speaker, given that what the UCP is doing by effectively discarding the voices of thousands of Albertans is unprecedented, given that no government in Alberta has failed to adopt the final report by the Electoral Boundaries Commission in its entirety and this new sham process proposed by the UCP amounts to nothing more than gerrymandering and trickery and given that this is a critical moment beyond partisanship and is about the very future of democracy in Alberta, will the minister commit today to doing the right thing, stand up for his constituents, and vote against Government Motion 37?

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to assure that member that the hon. minister continues to advocate and stand up for his constituency every single day, just as the Premier does and every other member of the government benches. What's most concerning is that the members opposite fail to recognize the value of rural Alberta and what it has to contribute to this province. As I mentioned, from agriculture to manufacturing, hard-working Albertans deserve to have a voice in this Legislature, one that can be effectively represented by them. That's what they're going to get, and that's why we're moving to 91 seats.

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

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 39, sponsored by myself, which reads as follows.

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Government Motion 37 is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to

further consideration of the motion, and upon the expiry of the time allotted, every question necessary for the disposal of the motion shall be put forthwith.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Are there tablings? Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table two of the hundreds of e-mails that folks on our side of the House and in the entire Chamber have received regarding the independent electoral boundaries process. Constituents Alexander and Dianne, thank you for writing and for speaking out.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Haji: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table an article from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives titled The Alberta Government Legislates Two-tier Health Care, Again.

The Speaker: Any more tablings? Seeing none.

Okay. That brings us to points of order, starting with 2:17 p.m. by the hon. Opposition Deputy House Leader.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. At 2:17 we did call a point of order under 23(h), (i), and (j), specifically making allegations against another member and imputing false or unavowed motives to another member. Of course, it is a long-standing rule of this House that it is unparliamentary and inappropriate and not allowed to accuse another member of lying, but at that time in response to the Member for Calgary-Acadia the Government House Leader used language to the effect: the member opposite and the truth are not familiar.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I recognize that we do use colourful euphemisms. We find creative ways to suggest when we feel that what a member across the aisle is saying is not, in fact, accurate. However, in this case I would say that this rises to a point of order for two key reasons. First of all, it unequivocally targeted an individual member, so there's no question of this being ascribed to a caucus or a collective; secondly, the use of the word "truth."

Now, in this case the Government House Leader said: the member and the truth are not familiar. The opposite of the truth, Mr. Speaker, is a lie. It's falsehood. So to say that the member is not familiar with the truth is to effectively say that the member is lying, and we are not allowed to do indirectly what we cannot do directly.

To be clear on this, Mr. Speaker, my last point to clarify, now, we have the example of one of the health ministers, the Member for Red Deer-North, who often uses the phrase: nothing could be further from the truth. That does not rise to a point of order because it does not target an individual member. Saying that nothing could be further from the truth refers to perhaps the words that were spoken, the ideas, the concepts. It does not suggest that an individual member is not telling the truth.

In this case, Mr. Speaker, I believe this is a point of order, and I await your ruling.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I disagree with the member opposite. I do not believe that this is a point of order. It would appear that the member casually left out some important lines of part of my answer preceding what he said. I said, "It would appear," emphasis on "it would appear," which is an opinion, "that the member opposite and the truth are unfamiliar with each other."

Now, even without that line I'd argue this is not a point of order. I also think the members opposite, as I noted last week, need to find a way to develop some callus in this Chamber as it would appear that they're the ones who continue to call points of order on frivolous matters. In this instance, Mr. Speaker, I did say "it would appear." I did make a point of singling out the member whose riding at the moment eludes me, but I don't think this is a point of order. I think it's a matter of debate and should continue to be a matter of debate as I eloquently take your direction in being creative in suggesting the member is not being forthright with the voters.

2:50

The Speaker: Well, I think both sides were fairly accurate with their characterization of what was actually said, but I'll read to you what I have here.

Mr. Speaker, in this instance it would appear that the member opposite and the truth are unfamiliar with each other at the moment. What I can say is that it is completely false that members of [the] Legislature are going to redraw the map.

While it's true you can't do indirectly what you can't do directly and there are examples here that my excellent staff have pulled out from the past where someone accused someone of saying "out of whole cloth," which is a fancy way of saying liar, this is a case where they said, "In this instance it would appear that the member opposite and the truth are unfamiliar with each other at the moment." It's certainly skirting the rule. Like, it's right on the edge. I'm going to call it a point of order today, but let me say this, and the Government House Leader is not wrong that I might regret giving this advice. That's kind of the advice that I have given in this House a few times, that you need to find a way to not directly call somebody a liar while suggesting that what they say may not be accurate.

No, it's not a point of order. Pardon me. I misspoke. Point of order on me. It's a matter of debate.

The next point of order is at 2:27 p.m.

Point of Order Allegations against Members

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to this particular point of order. Again, just give me one moment here. I'm just pulling up the phrasing that was used in this particular instance, just to be sure that I'm accurate in what I'm bringing forward.

We rose to call a point of order at 2:27 when the Member for Grande Prairie was in fact speaking. Ah, here we are. The member at the time said, "Given that our government supports . . . recovery and a way back to participate in family, [in] healthy community, and local [investment], not just giving people . . . drugs, like the NDP."

Again under 23(h), (i), and (j), making allegations against another member and imputing false or unavowed motives to another member. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, acknowledging that you made a robust and forceful ruling today regarding not ascribing anything that is illegal in terms of actions to either a member or I believe your words were "also a government," both in the individual and collective you have ruled that it is unparliamentary to ascribe illegal actions on either side of this House.

What the Member for Grande Prairie is alleging, handing out drugs, would in fact be illegal in the province of Alberta, which is why, Mr. Speaker, no member on this side of the House has engaged in such activity or put forward such policy. That was not activity that took place during our time in government, and we have not put forward any private members' bills or anything that would

suggest this because, again, it is an illegal activity. Now, certainly, I think it's possible for the Member for Grande Prairie and other members of the government to differentiate on their views on how we handle things like the opioid crisis and the issues that we have around substance use and addiction in the province of Alberta, but using unparliamentary language and ascribing illegal activities to our side of the House is perhaps not the best way to do that. I would suggest that this is a point of order.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I could not disagree more, and I'm happy to rise because what's interesting about this instance is that not only did the member not specify which NDP he was referring to, because he could obviously be referring to the British Columbia NDP, who have advocated for and taken part in the not-so-safe supply, but also the members opposite and their overlords in Ottawa, the federal NDP and Avi Lewis, have advocated multiple times for the distribution of hard drugs, including opioids and cocaine.

The member opposite either can stand up now and completely distance himself and say that they completely disavow the federal NDP and the British Columbia NDP or must stay clumped together in that dysfunctional group they call the national NDP caucus and recognize that the Member for Grande Prairie did not say the provincial NDP here in Alberta. What he did say is that the NDP have advocated for giving drugs to people as opposed to the Alberta model, the model of recovery, one that has shown tremendous results in reducing opioid overdoses and deaths, Mr. Speaker.

I would suggest that this is not a point of order – it's a matter of debate – and we all move on. Again, it might be time to grow a little thicker skin.

The Speaker: The advice to the other side during a point of order is never helpful.

Let me just say this. This is what was said today in the question. I think both sides more or less accurately characterized what was said, but I'll read it to you because, as you know, in this place the words matter.

Now, given that the residents of Grande Prairie see the outcomes of the deadly disease of addiction every single day, including myself, and we want to see these people receive help and not remain on the streets . . .

Now here's the probably important part.

. . . and given that our government supports are for recovery and a way back to participate in family, healthy community, and local [government], not just giving people more drugs, like the NDP.

In my view – sorry, Government House Leader – the context matters, but to me, they're definitely talking about the Alberta NDP. But sorry, Opposition House Leader, given it was also, in my view, a reference to consumption sites, which are not against the law . . .

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, if I may. Supervised consumption sites do not hand out drugs. That is quite incorrect.

The Speaker: So there's a matter . . . [interjection] Sorry. Anyway, this is a matter of debate. You might be right in what you just said, but in my view the context matters, and to me it was a point of argument between how each side – I get that both sides want to help people and there are different views. This is a point of debate between recovery centres and safe consumption sites or supervised consumption. I think I've heard both terms. I guess you don't know the argument is . . .

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, 13(2).

The Speaker: Not till I'm done. Then you can 13(2) all day. Not all day; you can do it once.

In this context it didn't sound to me like he was making a comment to breaking the law but, rather, to opposing ways of dealing with people with addictions.

And now, because of my almost nonexistent but I think in this case accurate sense of knowing what's in the future, I expect to hear a 13(2).

Point of Clarification

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just ask you to clarify your decision because, to be clear, it is absolutely illegal to hand out drugs to anyone without a federal exemption in place. There is no federal exemption in place in the province of Alberta. Therefore, to accuse anyone of handing out drugs right now is to accuse them of committing an illegal act. So I just want to clarify at which point, then, you are going to judge that we can or cannot accuse folks of illegality.

The Speaker: The rules of this House: all you get to say when you stand up under 13(2) is, "I'd like you to explain your previous ruling," and you said quite a bit more than that. I'm going to explain my previous ruling. I think I did earlier, but you do have the right to ask once why. I'm certainly not a lawyer. In my view, this is a point of argument between two different ways of helping people that are addicted to drugs or using drugs. This matter is now dealt with.

There was a point of order at 2:35 that was withdrawn. Don't hear anybody arguing with that, including the person that made it.

Orders of the Day

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 207

Primary Provincial Industries Recognition Statutes Amendment Act, 2026

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Sure. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Great day today. Not only is it a great day today, but the Oilers are also starting their playoff run today, which I'm very excited for. I have the honour to rise and talk about Bill 207. This legislation formally recognizes Alberta's primary provincial industries of energy, agriculture, forestry, and construction.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Now, just at the beginning of this as well I do want to just do a couple of thank yous. There has been significant help on our side helping put this together. I do want to thank Andrew Koning for that as well. He's done a great job. I want to thank our parliamentary staff as well for helping write the bill. They've done a great job of this, and I'm deeply thankful for that. As well, the many speakers on both sides for the debate: thank you, all, for the rigorous time of debating this bill. Just really appreciative.

3:00

Carrying on, this legislation formally recognizes Alberta's primary provincial industries of energy, agriculture, forestry, and construction, as I mentioned. It ensures students learn in an age-appropriate way how these sectors contribute to our economy, our communities, and the career opportunities available right here in

our province of Alberta. This bill also recognizes that Alberta becomes a prosperous province through rich deposits of fossil fuels placed here in Alberta as Canada's economic driver.

I do want to thank the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright, Member Rowswell, for his great idea and his willingness to partner with me in this. It was a great idea. Thank you very much for bringing it forward. It was fantastic, and I'm very thankful you were willing to lend that idea to this bill.

Now, we have spoken prior about what this bill does and how it will help young Albertans, so today I want to touch on a couple of different projects and the career streams attached to them to highlight what types of jobs this bill could present to students across Alberta. One, the Pathways Alliance carbon capture project represents one of the largest emissions reduction initiatives in the world, involving multiple oil sand producers and billions of dollars in investment. This project requires chemical engineers, geologists, construction trades, monitoring technicians, data analysts, and environmental science professionals. Bill 207 ensures that students learn that modern energy development is technologically complex and environmentally responsible and that careers and energy today look very different than stereotypes from decades past.

Carrying on, with increased capacity through the Trans Mountain expansion, Alberta energy is reaching new markets, particularly in Asia, and oil exports to the port of Vancouver have surged, strengthening Canada's energy security and Alberta's economic position. Bill 207 supports this growth by helping students understand how energy moves from extraction to global markets – I think those are really important parts – and these include careers in engineering, logistics, environmental monitoring, metal fabrication, project management, marine navigation, all highly skilled and high-opportunity careers that require early awareness and preparation in order to enter in. Without educational alignment we risk gaps in employment, leading to possible growth stagnation. So important parts of this bill.

Also, modern pipeline projects now include advanced monitoring systems, leak detection technology, automation, and real-time data analysis. It is an incredible orchestra of technology that runs a modern pipeline project these days and moves energy from place to place. Safety and environmental protections are essential as part of this as well. Bill 207 supports these realities by ensuring students understand how energy infrastructure is regulated, monitored, and improved by creating pathways into instrumentation, cybersecurity, remote sensing, and environmental compliance careers.

As well, across Alberta and up in my neck of the woods renewable natural gas facilities are being developed that convert – sorry; this is more, actually, southern Alberta – agricultural waste into clean, usable energy. These projects bring farms, engineers, and energy producers together in ways that create new income streams for agriculture while reducing emissions. Bill 207 highlights precisely this kind of cross-sector innovation, and students exposed early to these examples see how agriculture and energy intersect and how a career in agritech, bioenergy, and environmental management emerge from that intersection.

It's also important in rural Alberta to show students alternate employment streams that they may have not been exposed to. New tech is emerging right across our province, and we need to open doors for our youth to fill these opportunities as well.

We also see across southern Alberta that they continue to see major investments in irrigation infrastructure, expanding food production capacity, and improving water management as well. Operating and expanding these systems requires agronomists, heavy equipment operators, technicians, construction trades, surveyors, and water management specialists.

By recognizing agriculture as a primary provincial industry within education standards, this bill helps ensure that students can understand that modern farming is technical, scientific, and deeply connected to stewardship as well. Now, Alberta farmers and ranchers are global leaders in using technology upgrades to help reduce emissions and also improve their farms as well.

I do want to talk about the forestry sector here, too. Alberta's forestry sector is evolving rapidly, particularly through mass forestry and then timber manufacturing facilities. These things support housing and commercial construction using advanced wood products, and these products rely on sustainable forest management, automated manufacturing, and precision construction. As well, Bill 207 helps students learn that forestry today is not just harvesting but also reforestation, engineering, manufacturing, animal conservation efforts as well, and building solutions. Introducing these things into schools helps fill talent pipelines in forestry, construction, and manufacturing as well.

Now, you can't have a construction sector without lumber, and across Alberta, from Grande Prairie all the way down to Calgary and southern Alberta, between residential, commercial, and industrial construction projects, we continue to see these flourish and grow with our population. This also requires electricians and plumbers and welders and carpenters and equipment operators, site supervisors, estimators, project managers, and so on for many other careers.

Bill 207 – I've just mentioned a few throughout this time – ensures students are introduced to the full breadth of careers within construction as well, not just university-track professions but highly skilled trades that require people that build our communities. There are also significant opportunities in construction across roads, across farming, agriculture, and then also in municipalities, that also all require various welders, electricians, pipefitters, instrumentation techs as well.

Just a quick plug in for Northwestern Polytechnic. They're training many of these trades here as well, which leads to young people staying in our communities. That's an important part for us.

An Hon. Member: A great president there.

Mr. Dyck: As was whispered in my ear, we have a great president, I would say the best president of any postsecondary across Alberta. I've heard good things from the Member for Leduc-Beaumont as well supporting that president.

There's lots more I could say, but I do want to thank everyone in this Chamber for the support on this bill. Thank you very much for the time and the opportunity to debate this here today.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, can I just ask that you move third reading?

Mr. Dyck: Sorry. I move third reading.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much.

Are there others that would like to join debate on Bill 207 in third reading?

Mr. Rowswell: Madam Speaker, it is my honour to rise today to speak in favour of Bill 207 as proposed by my colleague from Grande Prairie, a piece of legislation that is about recognition, the story of our province, and about what we choose to honour. In Alberta we recognize many of our natural resources. We have Alberta Forest Week, celebrating the trees that cover more than half of our land and the workers who steward them. We observe Solar Appreciation Day and Energy Efficiency Day, that highlight

renewable energy. We also celebrate Parks Day, taking time to appreciate the protected lands that remind us why this province is worth fighting for. We also celebrate various agricultural days throughout the year to recognize its foundational role in our province.

Yet, Madam Speaker, there is one foundational resource, one industry that helped build Alberta into what it is today, that employs tens of thousands of families and funds our hospitals, schools, and roads but has no formal day of recognition. That resource is fossil fuels – oil, natural gas, and coal – not an abstract idea or a political slogan but energy produced by real people working long shifts with calloused hands in every corner of this province.

Alberta did not become the great place it is today by coincidence. First, natural gas was found in Turner Valley in 1914. Then we found oil in Leduc in 1947. But before all this, we found coal in southern Alberta. The Galt mines were built along the Oldman River in 1882 and had a major impact. The mines triggered the growth that turned the area from a small encampment into the thriving city we now know as Lethbridge. I want to congratulate the city of Lethbridge for celebrating the coal industry through the development of the Galt historical park, which highlights the massive impact coal mining had in the region.

3:10

Of course, coal mines did not only benefit southern Alberta. Revenue from fossil fuels has paid for rural hospitals, that made it possible for people to raise their families away from the city. It built highways that connected small towns and markets. It funded postsecondary institutions that trained generations of tradespeople, engineers, nurses, and teachers. Fossil fuels helped turn Alberta into a destination for opportunity and for investment. People came here, stayed here, started families here and businesses, too, because this province offered them a chance to build a life, a really good life.

The legacy of fossil fuels in Alberta doesn't just disappear because the politics around energy have become complicated, yet over the last decade that has begun to happen. Madam Speaker, unlike our Premier, who has worked towards an MOU that continues to honour and acknowledge fossil fuels, the previous NDP government adopted a strategy that tied pipeline development to climate credibility. Pipelines are supported but conditionally. They had to fit within a broader political bargain involving carbon taxes and emission caps. By making pipeline approval contingent on political alignment beyond Alberta's borders, pipeline projects stopped being infrastructure projects and instead became national unity tests.

When the Trans Mountain pipeline faced legal challenges and political resistance, specifically from British Columbia, the private proponent looked at the uncertainty and decided it was no longer worth the risk. At that moment the project failed. It became politically unbankable and nationalized. Ottawa stepped in because private capital walked away. The federal government became the only actor willing to absorb the risk, not because Albertans demanded it, not because markets failed but because bad policy made private investment impossible. That decision reshaped how energy infrastructure is viewed in this country. It told investors that energy projects in Canada come with unpredictability, and it told energy workers that their livelihoods could be shuffled into the hands of the federal government without their consent.

Here's why that matters in today's discussion of fossil fuel recognition. When we shy away from openly acknowledging fossil fuels and their benefits, when we treat energy as something to quietly manage, we reinforce the same discomfort that changed infrastructure into controversy. We send the message that this sector is something to be tolerated, not named. That is why

recognition matters. For those who oppose the oil, gas, and coal industry, it is important to know that recognition doesn't need to mean endorsement. The reality is that whether opponents like it or not, fossil fuels built this province. Recognition grounds us in reality. It says this industry mattered and still matters, and real people built real lives around it. For ridings like mine, where energy is not an abstract concept but a payroll, honesty is overdue.

Bill 207, at its core, is about recognition and about making sure the foundational contributions that built this province are acknowledged openly and without hesitation. A key part of that recognition is education. By ensuring that Alberta's primary industries are meaningfully reflected in what students learn, we give young people the tools to understand why these sectors matter and the opportunities they provide. This is not about steering students towards a particular path. It's about awareness, knowledge, and removing assumptions that shape career conversations before students have all the facts. Madam Speaker, this distinction matters. This is not advertising or politics. It's about presenting a fuller picture of Alberta to the next generation.

The need is urgent. Hands-on industries across the province face serious labour shortages. Skilled workers are needed in energy, agriculture, construction, and forestry; sectors essential to our economy. Too often success is framed through a narrow academic lens, overlooking equally valuable options. No one is saying that every student should pursue these careers. We are saying that students deserve to know they exist, are purposeful, well paid, respected, and vital to Alberta's strength. We have an opportunity to reshape how these occupations are viewed, to affirm that work done with skill, effort, and practical expertise is just as meaningful as work performed behind a desk.

To make it clear that Alberta's competitiveness, resilience, and prosperity depend on people who build, maintain, grow, and power this province, an annual fossil fuel recognition day would reinforce that understanding. It would not be about messaging or ideology; it would be about acknowledging reality. Fossil fuels are a not a footnote in Alberta's story. They are a central chapter. For well over a century fossil fuels development has fuelled economic growth, supported communities, and enabled the public services that Albertans rely on every day.

Madam Speaker, when we acknowledge where we came from, it strengthens our ability to decide where we're going. I've consistently supported the idea of fossil fuel recognition because it provides context. It gives Albertans, especially young people, a chance to learn about how the energy sector emerged, how it shaped communities, and how it continues to influence our province's identity as a place of opportunity and hard work.

Our economy did not materialize by chance. It was built deliberately through investment, expertise, and the determination of people willing to put in the long hours and tough work. Bill 207 recognizes that effort. It reflects the lived reality of thousands of Albertans whose livelihoods are connected to fossil fuels, forestry, agriculture, and construction, industries that have carried this province through good times and hard times alike. For a province founded on energy, enterprise, and effort, acknowledging the contributions of fossil fuels is not controversial; it's appropriate, it's fair, and it's long overdue. That is why I continue to support Bill 207 and the establishment of a fossil fuel recognition day.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others to join this debate? Seeing none, would the hon. member like to close the debate?

Mr. Dyck: Waived.

[Motion carried; Bill 207 read a third time]

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 208 Tobacco, Smoking and Vaping Reduction Amendment Act, 2026

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

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move pursuant to Standing Order 74.1(1) that Bill 208, Tobacco, Smoking and Vaping Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2026, be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future for further consideration and review.

This is not a symbolic issue and it deserves serious consideration; the serious consideration that you get by having a committee of the Legislature review and investigate it because the issue Bill 208 deals with is not hypothetical and it's not isolated to a small number of young people. The data tells us that youth vaping has become a serious and escalating public health challenge that demands attention of this Assembly.

According to national data cited by Heart and Stroke, vaping is significantly more common among adolescents and young adults than among older age groups. The evidence is particularly troubling when we look at progression. Youth who vape are three times more likely to go on to smoking cigarettes. This means that vaping is not merely a short-term trend; it's a pathway to deeper and lasting harm. Nicotine is a powerful and highly addictive substance.

Having Alberta's Economic Future committee review the bill is the best way to proceed because it will provide an opportunity to hear from stakeholders like Heart and Stroke. Heart and Stroke and other medical organizations have been clear that nicotine exposure during adolescence . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but given that we are making a motion to move this to committee, it's not necessarily time for debate on the bill. It's only brief remarks as to why it is going to the committee.

Mrs. Petrovic: Madam Speaker, I was debating on why it should continue to go to committee. Would you like me to . . .

The Deputy Speaker: I actually don't need any more words from you at this point.

[Motion carried]

Motions Other than Government Motions

Attainable Housing

511. Member Irwin moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to

- (a) implement an Alberta-wide attainable housing program that would make the path to home ownership more affordable for and accessible to all Albertans,
- (b) collaborate with municipal governments to expand existing municipal programs such as Attainable Homes Calgary and the city of Edmonton's first place home ownership program, and
- (c) improve financial housing supports for Albertans who are at immediate risk of losing their homes.

3:20

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

Member Irwin: Wow. Yeah. I'll clap for myself. We sure are cooking with gas today, aren't we? Natural gas.

This is actually really wonderful to be able to rise in this Legislature on a motion. As many folks in this Chamber will know, I mean, I've only actually ever had the opportunity to have one private member's bill, and now I'm going to move a motion.

Madam Speaker, do you need me to read the entire motion?

The Deputy Speaker: Is it long?

Member Irwin: It's not that long.

The Deputy Speaker: You should read it. Give us a read.

Member Irwin: Okay. I propose the following motion:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to

- (a) implement an Alberta-wide attainable housing program that would make the path to home ownership more affordable for and accessible to all Albertans,
- (b) collaborate with municipal governments to expand existing municipal programs such as Attainable Homes Calgary and the city of Edmonton's first place home ownership program, and
- (c) improve financial housing supports for Albertans who are at immediate risk of losing their homes.

With that, I see no other action from the Speaker, so I will continue my discussion here. Thank you. Really, this is a lovely opportunity to be able to do so because I have been an MLA for seven years. A shout-out to anybody else who was elected in 2019, which I know a few of the members opposite were because we just hit our seven-year anniversary. Yeah.

What an honour to be able to speak to something I'm passionate about, and that's housing. I've been the shadow minister of housing for the past few years. I want to just point out, you know, the only other opportunity I've had to do a private member's bill. In that bill, Bill 205, I had a chance to speak to supports for renters. In this role I've had the chance to speak to so many renters and to speak on the issue of supports, the lack of tenant supports here in Alberta and just how we could make some moves to better support renters, like caps on rent, looking at vacancy control, and, of course, looking at building more affordable housing so that renters aren't squeezed out. As we all know, that bill was killed swiftly in this Chamber, just like every single other private member's bill has been killed on our side of the House by those members since I've been elected in 2019. However, always the optimist here, with my motion today I'm actually quite hopeful that that pattern is going to end and that I'm going to have support from all members in this House on this motion.

Let me explain to you why I think all members will want to support this motion. This motion speaks to a different group of Albertans than I've spoken to previously in private members' motions and bills. This one speaks to homeowners. You know, home ownership is an issue that, I would venture to guess, all members in this Chamber hear about from their constituents. It's something that is so out of reach for Albertans and in particular for young Albertans.

I mean, the data is clear that nearly half of Albertans are \$200 or less away from financial insolvency each month. That comes from data last year from the MNP Consumer Debt Index. Here in Edmonton this is an issue that I actually hear a lot about as the MLA for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I'm just so honoured and so

lucky to be able to represent Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. But I will tell you that my office team deals with so many folks every single day who are struggling to meet their housing needs, and what I mean by that is folks who are facing eviction, folks who feel like they're never going to have a chance to own a home. That's incredibly troubling. I think this poses, actually, a really important opportunity for all members of this House to look at that area of home ownership and how we might support Albertans, like some of the constituents we hear from every day who are struggling to stay in their homes, whether they rent those homes or whether they own those homes.

In Edmonton alone, in fact, there are 46,000 folks who are in core housing need. For those who don't know, core housing need is defined as spending more than 30 per cent of your income on housing. That's a pretty shocking number of folks who are living in core housing need. In Calgary we've got around 84,000. Again, that number is a little bit outdated, so I would guess that it's actually increased since then. You know, we talked earlier in question period about some of the smaller cities. Lethbridge is another example with nearly 10 per cent of the city in core housing need.

I introduced the motion to you a little bit, but I want to talk a little bit more about just why this is so essential. The motion speaks to attainable housing and programs that have seemed to be successful in Alberta's two largest cities, but I do have to point out that the incredible Member for Banff-Kananaskis really wanted me to get on the record today that the need for affordable and attainable housing isn't just in Alberta's two largest cities, and she knows that quite well representing Banff-Kananaskis because those are great examples. The communities that she represents are great examples where there is such a lack of affordable, attainable homes. You know, she talked about the fact that, listen, if we want folks to support our tourist economies, if we want folks working in that incredibly valuable sector for all Albertans, then we need to ensure that there is housing in place for them. [interjection] Yeah. Thank you. Our Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs is saying "hear, hear" because I know she understands the tourism sector quite dearly. You want workers who can keep those communities going, you need housing.

Let's talk a little bit about Attainable Homes Calgary, which has had a whole lot of success. They are a nonprofit, wholly owned subsidiary of the city of Calgary. Essentially how it works is that you can purchase a below market priced home in exchange for eventually selling the home back to us at the same price you bought it for. The program essentially works as a bit of a trade-off. It's viewed as a win-win. You as the potential homeowner can earn equity as you pay down a mortgage, while the program reacquires an affordable home to sell to a new moderate-income family.

You should look this up. For folks who don't know the success of Attainable Homes Calgary: take a look at some of the success that they've had recently. There are a few news articles that talk about the fact that they were able to create 84 studio homes that rented well below market, and they were able to do so in a very quick pace. So that's an example of seeing that, you know, when there's a will, there's a way. They did so using prefabricated modular construction. Again, that's something that I think there are some key learnings there. I would love to get more into the specifics, but again urging folks watching at home – and I know there are at least six watching at home right now. I urge them to take a look at some of the opportunities around prefab homes and just how quickly and efficiently you can do that.

If Attainable Homes Calgary was able to do so so quickly – you know, I think about during COVID, when a lot of governments around Canada and around the world were able to kind of pivot very quickly to build homes to ensure that unhoused folks were being

supported during COVID. If you're able to do so in an emergency, why are you not able to do so when there's another emergency happening? That emergency is happening on the streets of particularly our large cities, Edmonton and Calgary, where we have thousands of folks who are unhoused. So there is a will. There is a way. We just need the will from this government.

Edmonton. I'm not going to talk as much about Edmonton because I know some of my colleagues are planning to speak about that as well. They have had some success with the program in Edmonton. That is now shifting. The first home – I always get the name wrong. The first home ownership program: again, one of my colleagues is going to get into the nitty gritty here, because I want to have the chance in the remaining time that I have to just talk a little bit about the other part of the motion, which is asking for this government to explore additional financial supports for homeowners.

We actually know that there are some great examples of nonprofits that are offering financial supports. The fabulous Bissell Centre in my constituency is a great example. If you don't know the Bissell Centre, they're a wonderful organization. They actually house the navigation centre now, which I had the opportunity to tour with some of my colleagues. I can thank the minister on that side of the House for helping to co-ordinate that, so there you go. Some collaboration there between both sides of the Chamber. Bissell Centre has the community bridge, which is a rapid response intervention support to stop evictions or foreclosure. This is funding that is in place not just for renters but also for folks who might be at risk of not being able to make a mortgage payment.

So I look at that example from Bissell Centre, and there are actually a number of other nonprofits around Canada that offer a similar kind of bridge funding. What an opportunity this government could have to potentially partner better with some of those nonprofits, because we do know that there is – and, again, I'll give credit to this government for not cutting this support... [Member Irwin's speaking time expired] Oh, gosh.

3:30

The Deputy Speaker: Time goes quickly.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak against Motion 511. Motion 511 looks nice on paper, but that's about it. It doesn't do anything new. It doesn't fix the problem it claims to care about. The members opposite are asking the Assembly to implement an attainable housing program. We've already done that. They're asking us to work with municipalities. We already do. They're asking us to improve supports for people at risk of losing their homes. We already are.

So what exactly is this motion adding? Nothing. I can't say I'm surprised, though. We've seen this pattern over and over again from the NDP. They make loud, bold statements over and over again and drum up outrage over a made-up problem that either doesn't exist or that's already being addressed. Worst of all, Madam Speaker, they offer no real solutions. There's nothing in this motion about how many homes they'd like to see built, nothing about how to pay for them, nothing on how they would change the measures already in place. You just can't say, "Do more" without explaining it.

This government is committed to removing barriers, speeding up approvals, and making it easier to build, and the proof is in the numbers. Rents in Alberta have dropped more than anywhere else in the country, nearly twice the national average decline. On average Albertans are paying hundreds of dollars less per month compared to other provinces. Alberta has led the country in housing starts per capita for two years now. Nearly a quarter of all housing

starts in Canada are happening right here in this province despite us being a smaller share of the population.

While the members opposite table cursory motions like this one, this government has actually been getting more homes built. Instead of supporting policies that have results to back them up, the NDP wants rent control. They're pushing for policies that would have reduced supply, discouraged construction, and made the housing shortage worse. Perhaps the members opposite should take their own advice and move to B.C. to see what the no-development party housing policies do to home prices.

Luckily for Albertans, this government is driving \$9 billion in housing investments to support 25,000 additional affordable households by 2031. We've already invested billions to build affordable housing, senior housing, and continuing care spaces. We're expanding rent assistance for people who need help right now while more homes are being built. We're also working with municipalities, nonprofits, and private sectors to deliver housing that actually fits the needs of the communities across Alberta.

Madam Speaker, the work is already under way, so what is this motion adding? From where I'm sitting, it doesn't add any clarity. It doesn't add any funding. It doesn't put forward any type of plan whatsoever, and I think that's what's frustrating people the most. Albertans are dealing with real costs, real bills, real pressures every single month. They don't have the luxury of vague ideas and empty promises. They want to know what's actually going on, what's actually going to change, what's actually going to get built and when. This motion doesn't answer any of that. It pretends that the work already being done doesn't exist and hopes no one will notice.

Homes don't get more affordable because you pass a motion in this Chamber. They get more affordable when you actually get more homes built. That takes time, co-ordination, and policies that encourage investment, not scare it away. You don't get there by layering on more uncertainty or by signalling out to builders that the rules could change at any moment without laying out what those changes might be. That uncertainty matters more than members opposite seem to understand. Builders make decisions months, sometimes years in advance. If they think rules are going to shift based on vague political motions like this one, they pause, pull back, or go somewhere else entirely. That means fewer projects started, fewer homes completed, and higher prices for the very people this motion claims to help.

This doesn't just affect big developers. It affects small builders, local contractors, and families trying to enter the market as well. When the system becomes unpredictable, it's not the biggest players who feel it first; it's the smaller ones who simply can't take the risk. That would result in fewer home starts, fewer affordable options, and fewer chances for young Albertans trying to get their foot in the door.

Madam Speaker, Albertans have already lived through an NDP government. They showed them the door for a good reason. That's why this government's approach is to focus on results, not vague, empty promises. Albertans don't need more motions that sound good in a news release. They need more homes. They need them to be cheaper. They need a government that understands that supply and investment matters and that you can't just regulate your way out of a shortage. Apparently, the members opposite haven't learned that lesson. They're still stuck in the same old ways – more control, restrictions, and failed Marxist policies – that don't work in the real world and now a motion pretending that none of the results from this government's policies exist.

Madam Speaker, that's not a serious policy. This government is going to keep doing what works. We'll continue to remove barriers, increase supply, and support those who need help by making sure Alberta remains one of the most affordable places to live in the

country. This motion does nothing to help us do that, which is why we will not be supporting this motion.

I encourage all members in this Assembly to join me in voting against Motion 511. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Member Arcand-Paul: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, that was some interesting note reading from the other side, and what it really showed me was that the UCP is so out of touch with everyday Albertans, especially lower income Albertans or young people wishing to break into the home ownership market.

I support this motion from my wonderful friend from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood because it is a good motion. It does actually address what people are asking for on the streets of Alberta. In particular, we look at the statistics. I know the member opposite threw out some really wonderful treatises on conversations about political theory and ideology, but let's look at the numbers. BILD Edmonton: there is a new identification in 2026 for the market here in Edmonton. New unsold inventory is up to a number that we have not seen in about six years. There are about 2,566 units of unsold new homes that are not moving. Also, we're seeing an older resale market soften, which means that it's still a seller's market.

Madam Speaker, I'm not just talking about this from statistics. I'm actually talking about it from personal experience because right now I'm in the process of trying to break into that market, but it's quite difficult, and I'll explain the reasons why. Right now here in Edmonton we are seeing a new house average price of \$662,372. That's as of February 2026 and the BILD Edmonton report. The existing home market or older homes are around \$419,000 to \$600,000. The Canadian Real Estate Association has some numbers that are a bit higher for the entire province. If we're looking at the average selling price, it's about \$470,819, with a detached home being about \$590,162 and semidetached \$436,997. Then it goes down from row home to apartments, both being at \$307,666 and \$212,054, respectively.

I think what we're seeing here is that the numbers for home ownership are pretty high. The reason I bring up these numbers is because we want to talk about making sure that Albertans can enter into the home ownership market. Home ownership is an accomplishment for so many young people, but when it comes to lower income folks, there are no safeguards in place.

3:40

We look at the fall report by Zoocasa from 2025, that Edmonton and Alberta are a millennial hot spot for home ownership. But when we look at the ground and we look at how those homes are moving – just a few weeks ago I was looking at a house. There were three offers on it within the first 24 hours for that one house that was in that price range, and that's about the average price range for the existing home market, the older homes that we have. On that same day there were 10 viewings on that one detached home. That's a really quick turnaround. It leaves folks like me to have to go and look at the realtor.ca website every single day for those homes that are well within our price range.

If we look at the Canadian realtor association average price of \$470,819, let's break down what those costs are and why this motion is so important, particularly (c), where we talk about “[improving] financial housing supports for Albertans who are at immediate risk of losing their homes.” We're not the only jurisdiction to be having this conversation. There are jurisdictions across North America, including the United States, where there is actual relief for potential loss of homes. Just in our own backyard the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood talked about the

Bissell one-time provincial assistance to keep Albertans in their homes during unforeseen financial challenges. In California we have the emergency mortgage fund. Also, during COVID we saw the federal government step in and try to assist with potential losses of homes for loss of wage and salary.

Why I bring this up is because buying a home is a big financial liability. If we're looking only at just a bit below the CREA average on realtor.ca, a \$470,000 house here in Edmonton with the minimum 5 per cent down requires CMHC insurance. That means your down payment is only \$23,500 with the CMHC insurance being \$17,860, and with a 3.5 per cent mortgage rate, which many people might not access – that's a pretty good mortgage rate – it's about \$2,318 a month for your mortgage. On the inverse, with a 20 per cent down payment you won't have to get CMHC insurance, and that's about a \$94,000 down payment.

Madam Speaker, that is a lot of money for young people, especially if you're low income. If you don't have familial support or if you don't have any kind of windfall gains, you are left to the market to try to make amends with that need for the down payment. I hate to see this as anything but a punishment for low-income folks under the guise of home ownership, which everyone needs. That \$470,000 home with that \$23,000 down payment ends up having a real cost of \$487,860. That's that \$17,000 CMHC insurance. It's not to be against CMHC or accessing home ownership for folks that might need it for the 5 per cent minimum. It's hard for me to not see that this is not connected to this affordability crisis because it is. It's so deeply connected to the affordability crisis. If someone does not have more than \$25,000, it's hard to see them having any savings, any emergency savings above that \$25,000 for emergencies.

The program that the Bissell Centre operates or the ones like in California or during COVID that the federal government implemented: this motion attempts to address that. There are a lot of folks that at that 5 per cent rate aren't going to have the thousands of dollars to support themselves in the event of an emergency, which is why this article (c) is so necessary and programs like Edmonton's first place home ownership program are so necessary to get folks into homes that they actually own. They deserve to have that equity, that lifestyle, that ability to live in their home, to raise their families in a secure home.

Sadly, we just saw last week, city council here in Edmonton, that “the City has shifted its focus from market housing aimed at first time home buyers to developing affordable housing on surplus school sites,” so effectively that first place home ownership program is no longer accessible to those thousands of Albertans that absolutely need this type of support. It now turns to us as the province to have this conversation to support Albertans to access the home ownership market. They deserve to have good homes and to be able to buy it. There's a sense of pride and a sense of strength that comes from being able to have your young ones grow up in that house that they could call their family home. This program that Edmonton is unfortunately shifting away from is equally important, now more than ever, with this affordability crisis because it's affecting Albertans across the province. What happens when you aren't in that area, aren't living in Edmonton or Calgary where these programs exist? That is where the province should step in. This is where rural Albertans can get assistance from a province that is truly focused on supporting rural Albertans.

This program here in Edmonton: if you had an income of under \$117,000, you would qualify for home ownership, to participate in this program. This one in Edmonton created 900 affordable homes in the process of its lifetime since it was put in place, and I believe that was in 2006. In that time we had the opportunity to house and provide stability and true home ownership and pride in your home. That's what home ownership does. Yes, we do have the dream of

home ownership here in this province for many folks and for millennials, but what happens whenever we don't have programs in place to support them when they do enter into those homes?

Madam Speaker, I have to go against what the member opposite said about this motion adding nothing. It doesn't. It actually provides that kind of relief. Might I add, private members' motions can't provide any kind of requirement to put money there. We can't do that. That's just not how this operates. Even in that notion, it's a misguided statement. I do think that we recognize that we are limited in what we can do, but we want to provide real solutions for Albertans because they so deserve it.

It's for all of these reasons that I support this motion. It is so necessary. As someone going through it right now, trying to secure a mortgage, someone that does not come from a high-income family, I have a single mother who taught me the value of living in your own home. I want to make sure that those same Albertans have access to the same dreams that all Albertans deserve to live, because home ownership should be accessible for all.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister of community and social services.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's great to have an opportunity to respond to this private member's motion. I did listen intently to some of the speeches that were already taking place, including from my colleague, you know, from Grande Prairie. I do appreciate his comments.

I have to start off by, first of all, agreeing with him. Well, in and of portions of this motion, the nature of it is not a problem. The challenge is it's already all happening, so to call for a vote for something that's been happening for years is, I think, kind of counterproductive and certainly not really worth the time of the Chamber. But I'm happy to talk about some of the things that are already taking place that this motion calls for.

Right off the bat the motion calls for a plan to be developed for affordable housing inside our province. Madam Speaker, it's quite shocking to finally hear the NDP actually say that we have to deal with a plan for affordable housing when their core plan was to do nothing. In fact, during their time in power we saw wait-lists for affordable housing units go up by 75 per cent. No increase, no net new increase to affordable housing units anywhere in the province of Alberta under the leadership of the NDP between 2015 and 2019.

Now, in 2019 the United Conservative Party came into power and rightly began to try to fix some of the challenges that we're already seeing in housing. We had no idea how big the housing crisis would get just a few short years after that; but we're already seeing some challenges as a result of the Official Opposition's, the NDP's, when they were in power, decisions and on behalf of the current Official Opposition Leader when he was mayor in Calgary, where we saw some of the most dramatic losses of housing inside the city of Calgary. That's not to be a surprise to anybody here. When a mayor raises the taxes by 81 per cent, Madam Speaker, you're going to see some challenges, obviously, for those who are trying to create housing. A large focus on things like art projects, that were popping up all over the city, but not making sure the downtown, that was in deep trouble in the city of Calgary, was going to be able to survive.

Don't worry. The people of Calgary now have high taxes, pipes that don't work, and when they drive to the airport, they can see the blue circle, which is the legacy of that member when he was the mayor of the city. Instead, we actually came forward at the time, Madam Speaker, with a stronger foundations plan, 2021, which laid out a concrete plan to be able to increase 82,000 more affordable households across Alberta over the next decade.

3:50

I'm happy to report that we're halfway through that timeline and we're halfway done all of that construction to date, Madam Speaker, creating thousands more units of housing, investing \$9 billion in affordable housing, together with our partnership, including with the federal government and with municipalities, to make sure that we could take on that challenge going forward. That's the plan, so there's no need to call for a new plan. I don't think we want to go ahead with a new plan. We have a plan that's working, and we certainly don't want to go with the NDP's plan, which was to do nothing, see wait-lists go up, not build anything, tell homeless individuals that they don't need emergency shelters and instead can sleep outside and continue not to have those important investments that we have now seen as a result of the United Conservative Party, that unfortunately the NDP were against.

Now, at its core, though, to maintain affordability – this is very important – you have to make sure that there's supply, so we rejected the Official Opposition, including the hon. member who's bringing forward this motion, who were calling for things like rent control, which are extremely damaging. Every jurisdiction in the country that has tried it – Ontario and Vancouver being the biggest at the moment – have devastated their housing markets.

Member Arcand-Paul: Home ownership.

Mr. Nixon: An absolute crisis that is taking place inside that community. I hear the hon. member heckling "home ownership". This is what he's missing, so this is what I want you to understand. If you want to create affordable home ownership, you have to build homes. When the NDP came forward with their plan of rent control, it would stop building homes. Now, this side of the House said: "No. We don't believe in your socialist nonsense. We've seen things like this take place in New York, which have been devastating to the very people that individuals were trying to help." Instead, we went the opposite way, which is to create a way where – Madam Speaker, I don't want to upset them; I'm going to say a word I know they don't like – businesses could succeed in doing their jobs to be able to create homes in our province.

I'm proud to report that under the leadership of this government, while being responsible for 12 per cent of the population, we're responsible this year for 25 per cent of all new home builds in the country, 80 per cent of houses that are built on the prairies. Every other province in the country is seeing net loss in housing. Alberta's seeing an increase. In fact, under my time as the minister responsible for housing, I have not had a quarter yet that did not have a record broken, Madam Speaker, because we rejected the NDP's philosophy of stifling business. That's why now we let industry do our job, which has now created more homes for people to be able to live in, levelled off the price of housing across the country.

Just go and look at Vancouver or Toronto, and then you'll know why Alberta is the most affordable jurisdiction in the province. We have the two largest, most affordable cities anywhere in North America, in Calgary and Edmonton, because we said no to the NDP, and we have six of the 10 most affordable small jurisdictions when it comes to housing. Here's the good news: rent is going down and housing continues to be more stable for people to be able to have access to it.

The second thing they said was to work with municipalities. Well, we have. In fact, not only did we work with municipalities, we also worked with the federal government to be able to make sure that we can make the investments that we have seen. I will refer the hon. member to the outgoing mayor who complimented this government's

significant investment in housing and increasing, in that hon. member's city, affordable housing by 30 per cent. They saw wait-lists go up by 75 per cent. The United Conservative Party saw more capacity increase by 30 per cent inside the city. Because we did what?

Member Arcand-Paul: Table it.

Mr. Nixon: We listen to what the – well, I'm happy to table it. I've tabled it many times. In fact, I'll be happy to table it tomorrow. I will table it, for sure. We are happy to brag about the incredible investment that Albertans have made to be able to make sure that we're the most affordable jurisdiction anywhere in the country.

It's so simple. I have other housing ministers ask me: "How do you do it? We wish we could get numbers like what's taking place in Alberta." I say: "It's simple. You listen to what the NDP want to do. You do the exact opposite. You see the success." The NDP want to bet against Albertans. They want to step in the way and stop those who can create homes and jobs and opportunities in Alberta because they don't like it. They want to do the opposite. They want to stifle things, make it too hard to build, bring in more regulations, and create a situation where you cannot be able to make sure that there are enough homes for everyone.

Now, the last thing I'd like to talk about is some of the comments about rural Alberta. I do find it interesting to finally hear maybe a nice comment about rural Alberta from the Official Opposition. I don't think they have any clue about what life is like in rural Alberta. They challenge, they get stuck on their urban privilege, and they don't understand anything about rural Alberta. I've never seen any of them come hanging around in places like Bergen or any of those types of communities that I represent.

Member Irwin: I've been in Caroline.

Mr. Nixon: I could only guess, Madam Speaker, as I hear them heckling away with their anger against rural Alberta, that they just don't like it, but they are right about one thing in their statements today. We have to make sure that our investments aren't just taking place inside our largest cities, which is also something that this government has chosen to do, to be able to make sure that our investments are laid out all across the province when it comes to housing, to be able to make sure that we lay out clear, long-term plans so that all our communities can benefit from it.

Unfortunately, the NDP didn't do that when they were in power. One of the biggest areas where you have to see a drastic increase that needs to be created in housing is when it comes to continuing care housing, by far, because of our fast-paced seniors rates in our province. You know what they did, though? Not once in Alberta Health Services did they even invest the money that came from Treasury Board to build new continuing care facilities anywhere in rural Alberta, Madam Speaker. In fact, they struggled to build them in urban Alberta, too, but they certainly didn't do it anywhere in rural Alberta. At the end of the day, if you want to bring motions to fix things inside the Chamber, you need to come and bring new ideas, not come forward and ask us to restart all the things that we have already been able to accomplish.

I know they don't want to celebrate Albertans, but I love celebrating this great province. It doesn't matter how much the NDP get up here and heckle about their anger – the party that told people to leave the province, to go get jobs, and to get out of here, the party that oversaw the largest house decline in the history of the province, the party, Madam Speaker, who didn't build any new continuing care homes or affordable homes or any homes. In fact, all they did was oversee the destruction of this province, and because this side of the House rejected their ridiculous plans, Alberta continues to lead the way.

I encourage everybody in this House to always vote against what the NDP have to say, because it's never good for this province. Let's, instead, stand up and continue to make sure our province can be the most successful place in this country.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others on the motion? The hon. Member for Calgary-Acadia.

Member Batten: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to join debate on Motion 511. First, I want to comment to whatever it was we just heard from the minister responsible. This is a very serious motion that this government apparently refuses to actually take seriously. Instead of entering into debate about this very good motion, I will speak to the lovely member here who brought it forward, our Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, and all the amazing work that they have done in housing and supporting folks. Instead, I am going to use my time inside this House to do my job, which is to speak for [interjections] and to bring forward the voices of the constituents I represent, while I try to ignore the government that is trying very hard to derail any serious debate in this House this afternoon.

The motion brought forward is not only timely, but it is incredibly important because the time to act on housing was yesterday. Housing, Madam Speaker, is not a partisan issue. So why this House gets – well, apologies. Why that side of the House has gotten so heated over it is unclear. Now, Albertans right now are finding life more and more expensive. It doesn't matter whether or not they're trying to fill their gas tank, and I might add that the federal government did remove their portion of the gas tax, providing relief to Albertans today. Yet the UCP provincial gas tax is still on there. So that would be nice if they removed that for Albertans.

Now, when we're thinking about anything to do with Alberta, honestly, and anything to do with actually working for the people who elected us to be in this House, we need to think about what their households look like, their daily struggles. We need to think about: why do they choose Alberta as their home?

4:00

I think back – I mean, in my mind it's not that long ago, but apparently it was 20-odd years ago – when I was younger, when we were all younger, and thinking forward. I grew up in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. [interjection] Yeah, Saskatchewan folks. One of the most exciting things was to get in the car and drive to Calgary on spring break. Calgary is where you wanted to go. It was the big city, and it was super exciting, and that's where everyone wanted to go. I remember at the time, Madam Speaker, thinking: "Gee, Calgary now has, like, a mini-Saskatoon in it. That's kind of cool. Kind of." Calgary at the time had a massive – massive – drop. You wanted to come here because you could afford to live downtown and have that fun life. You could afford because the wages that were offered and the housing that was available, well, worked together, unlike what we're seeing now. Wages in this province have not kept up with housing costs.

Mr. Nally: We have the highest wages, low taxes.

Member Batten: When we think about the cost of living in Alberta, we need to talk about the fact that we also have incredibly high unemployment for our youth. When we look at young Albertans even considering moving to our wonderful province, we know that, you know, until they turn 18 or their kids turn 18, their work will be devalued by this government and their terrible youth – what is it, minimum wage minus \$2? Of course, I bring that up because we've got beaking from the other side saying that we have the lowest taxes. Well, great. The lowest taxes brings us so far. If

folks can't afford to live, then it doesn't matter what our tax rate is, Madam Speaker.

When we talk about housing, what we're really talking about is health care. [interjection] Apparently, that's funny to the other side. When I talk about health care, when I talk about housing, when I talk about what Albertans need, they cannot seem to compose themselves. Let's see if they'll just maybe pay attention to a small little lesson here.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

Something that the other side seems to be missing is that housing is not a luxury. It's not something that at the end of the month you're like: oh, maybe I'll have it; maybe I won't. No. It is fundamental, and I would argue that it is health care, because if you don't have a safe space to lay your head at night or a safe space to put your things, you can't focus on anything else. Now, we've talked about this particular theory inside this House before, which is Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which actually, well, joins nicely in with the Blackfoot understanding of how people live and what's important. It's a triangle, and at the bottom of that triangle are basic needs, including housing. Housing is health care. This government has made so many claims of what they've done for health care. Solve it in 90 days: no, not even close.

This motion demonstrates good governance. It demonstrates an ability to move past whatever chip might be on your shoulder so that you can look at ideas, pull your emotions away, and say, "Hey, this is a really good idea; I don't care who brought it forward because it's going to help me do my job," which is to support, for me, the constituents of Calgary-Acadia. But that's not what we're seeing with this government. We're seeing them stand up and waste debate time with falsehoods, with a made-up narrative for the years that we were government.

Now, housing removes barriers to almost everything. It allows you to secure employment. It allows you to secure, well, your stuff, your family. This motion is simply a tool in the tool box. If this government took Albertans seriously, if they actually cared about what it is that Albertans need, these are the solutions we'd be seeing them bring forward: support. That is, of course, Mr. Speaker, if they actually had Albertans at the front of mind. I think it's very clear from what we've heard today that they have no interest in being a serious government or representing Albertans. I'll say it to the House. I hope that every person in this House does their job and votes for their constituents and votes for this motion.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: I'll recognize the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Ms Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to stand today and take part in today's debate on my colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood's motion, which is all about attainable homes. I'm just going to take a couple of seconds to sort of reframe, I suppose the word would be, what some of the government members have talked about today. The first thing that many of them have said is: it's only about affordable housing; we're building lots of affordable homes. But perhaps they might want to go and look again, in fact reread the motion itself. It talks about implementing an Alberta-wide attainable housing program to walk alongside and to work alongside the programs which presently exist in Alberta. That might help them in terms of not only their clarity in terms of the motion but also their basic understanding of the motion that we're debating today.

This motion, Motion 511, Attainable Homes, would go a long way to ensuring that Albertans, particularly those who are either of

low or moderate income, can actually have a place to call home, their own home that they have been privileged enough to purchase. As well, it'll provide a small measure of specific relief to those who are in danger of losing their homes.

I will say as the representative for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, Mr. Speaker, that compared to other parts of the city, the cost of buying a home in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview is quite reasonable. There are lots of different types of homes. It's a very mixed sort of a place. There are townhomes. There are apartments. There are some condos. There are townhomes that are free standing. Of course, there are also detached homes. Many of those homes are over \$400,000, and in fact many of the townhomes are over \$200,000, so it is still somewhat affordable. However – and I'll speak really of my own experience – despite that sort of under \$200,000, one would think that under \$200,000 a townhome in Beverly would be attainable for everyone, but the fact of the matter is that it isn't.

I'm going to talk a little bit about my own life being a single parent. When my kids and I arrived back a long, long, long time ago in the previous century, I was very, very lucky to be able to take up residency in my parents' basement, Mr. Speaker, after a marriage breakup. The fact is that our arrival meant some really increased additional costs for my parents. For the better part of that first year that we were there, they actually bore that cost themselves. During that year my only income was, I think, about \$50 or \$60 a month from Canada's what was called then family allowance. That was it. That's all I had for income. It took a few months, as I hope that everyone can understand, for me to figure out what I was going to do next.

What I decided to do next, Mr. Speaker, was to go back to school. That did of course mean student loans and grants and bursaries and those sorts of things. I was so very grateful to my parents, who worked out a scheme where I would essentially have room and board for myself and my two exceptionally young kids at that time for the grand total of \$700 a month. I will tell you that there were months when even that \$700 a month, despite those grants and those loans and the three jobs I had on occasion, when even just meeting that very basic thing was too much for me to bear, and I had to have some really difficult conversations with my mom and dad.

In addition to that, I had to count on the generosity of my children's school when I couldn't pay my daughter's kindergarten fees or I couldn't pay for my older daughter's field trip fees. I had to count on the generosity of my children's choir director when he had me do some administrative tasks in exchange for their continued presence in his choir. Also, quite frankly, I had to count on the Alberta government as well because they enabled me to have a fully subsidized daycare arrangement for my kids.

Without those things I would not have been able to survive. Despite that, though, there were absolutely times when I had less than \$3 in my bank account, Mr. Speaker, and that was despite me doing all the right things. Even when I began to teach, my first job was only part-time, not full-time. Even wanting to have a home that was my own, it was absolutely out of reach for me, and that included renting, much less actually being able to own my home.

Mr. Speaker, these sorts of programs are really, really important to folks out there because it enables us to sort of still continue that dream, you know. I think about all those folks who came back from World War II. World War II houses still abound in Beverly. They're not very big, but they're certainly enough to call home. There were government programs at that point, and this is really what we're asking this government to do, to realize that people aren't asking for the moon. They're not asking for a million-dollar home in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. They're asking for a reasonable home to call their very own, but on occasion they just need a little bit of help in order to do that.

4:10

Just to give you a bit of a sense of things, my riding actually has one of the first place Edmonton developed homes in that riding. I think it was about 41 homes in a place called Canon Ridge. People were really, really excited to finally get not a handout but a little bit of a leg up in order to get their very first home so that they had that community, so that they had that thing that their parents and grandparents had before them.

Honestly, that's all that anyone wants for their family, Mr. Speaker, to do a wee bit better than their own parents did and then hope that their kids will do better than they did. My own daughter in Victoria has taken advantage of a very similar program in a lovely place outside of Victoria called Langford which, coincidentally enough, is called an attainable home program where she and her husband were able to purchase an apartment. It isn't huge, but it's enough for them to call home. What the city of Langford enabled them to do was to forgo that really, really difficult piece of home ownership which is that saving for that down payment in exchange for simply being in that place for no less than five years. It wasn't a handout; it's simply a little bit of support when people need it.

Mr. Speaker, I don't understand why the government, particularly in their comments today, have made a mockery of something that should be at the centrepiece of all the things that we do here today. Certainly, for my constituents in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview we want lots of different types of homes. We want rental homes, but we also want homes and townhomes and apartments that people can own so that they can really feel part of the community. We want co-ops. We want mixed-market housing. We want below-market housing. We want supportive housing. We want transitional housing. That's the way our cities and our towns and our communities should look.

That at its heart is what this motion is looking for, and I urge all members of the House to support it.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Haji: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in support of Motion 511. I really, really appreciate the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for forwarding such a motion that will be so important at a critical time in terms of what we need today in our cities and for our communities. I rise in support of 511 because families, young professionals, and essential workers are telling us the same thing. Rent keeps rising. Home ownership is slipping out of reach. Saving for a down payment feels, like, impossible. These are not people looking for handouts; they are looking for a fair chance for home ownership.

The population across this province has grown significantly, and particularly major cities like Edmonton and Calgary have seen a drastic increase of our population. Demand is rising, but much of our social housing stock is aging and worsening. I have quite a number of these units in my constituency, places like Dickinsfield, places like Balwin, places like Delwood. The conditions of these units are in a very, very, very bad situation. I invite the minister responsible for housing to take a tour with me and see the conditions of the social housing stock that Albertans live in today. The minister speaks a lot around how much the budget line was allocated and less about the number of people that have been moved out of those housing conditions. The minister speaks less about the number of Albertans that are facing these challenges.

I ask all members of the House to support Motion 511. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood to close debate.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to start by thanking all of my colleagues who shared such powerful commentary on this motion. You know, thanks to the Member from Edmonton-West Henday for talking about his experience. I'm sure he won't mind me saying that he is a millennial and one of those people who is trying to get into home ownership, and I really appreciate that and, of course, the Member from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, who talked about her experience as a single mom and the very real struggles that so many of our constituents experience, and I'm grateful for her vulnerability. I wish the Member from Edmonton-Decore had had more time, because that member has extensive experience when it comes to affordable housing, and I know he's talked about his own experience of coming to Canada and getting into the housing market. So thank you to my colleagues, and of course the Member from Calgary-Acadia for her powerful words, too.

What I'm not so thankful for are the comments from the members opposite. It's very interesting that, you know, when they put forward their own motions, as we just saw earlier, actually, with a private members' bill, they were hardly able to muster any speakers, yet when we have a motion, one that came with much insight and much thought and collaboration with folks out in the field, they have to stand up and they have to denigrate and criticize. I actually made a point of being quite respectful and collaborative in my comments, yet Grande Prairie-Wapiti and Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre stood up and offered nothing but criticism of our work, including saying: well, why even bother with a motion?

Listen, we as legislators have so few opportunities to introduce any sort of legislative tool like a motion and a bill. I'll tell you, I've been an MLA for seven years, and do you know how many times this UCP government has supported one of our motions or bills?

Mr. Haji: Zero.

Member Irwin: Zero. You got it. Zero.

Do you know how many times we've supported their private members' motions and bills? Many, many times, including today. I tell you: Albertans are asking us all the time to be collaborative, to work together. They want to see that, yet we see none of that from this government. I'm not being hyperbolic. I'm not making any of this up. You can look at *Hansard*. You can look at their record: unwilling to collaborate with us, which is a good segue into talking about housing, because housing is an issue that very much demands collaboration. Housing is an issue that demands collaboration from all orders of government, municipal, provincial, and federal.

This is a UCP minister – since he's going to be unkind and unfair to me, I'm going to do the same, but I'm going to support it with facts, unlike him. This is a UCP minister who on multiple occasions has refused to work with the federal government. Would you like some evidence? Here's some evidence for you.

One example: UCP [Pushing] Back Against Federal Housing Agreements After Ottawa Pulls Plug on Funding for Red Deer. Instead of picking up the phone and working with that minister from Ottawa, this UCP minister went on the record complaining about how the funding wasn't going to be going to Red Deer, when simply what that minister said was not exactly what the federal minister said as well. That's one example.

April 2024: there's another one. The government has concerns about federal housing announcement. That was a UCP minister that was concerned about things like green agreements, trying to move towards a more environmentally friendly way of building. Right? A lack of awareness of what we're seeing globally and an inability to want to work with federal minister. I could point to multiple examples of that.

Now, when this minister talks about record-breaking housing numbers, he's not talking about affordable housing. This motion right here would have increased affordable housing metrics, the same metrics that this minister has failed to meet every single year since I've been the shadow minister for housing. Again, you can see that in the annual report.

Mr. Nally: Through the chair.

Member Irwin: They have fallen short of their own goals – fallen short of their own goals – and actually I'm speaking through the chair.

The Member from Morinville-St. Albert is heckling, as he's heckled many times today. Has he joined the debate? Has he tried to add anything of substance to the debate? No, he has not. He just continues to heckle. I could go on. The point is that this motion would have been a collaborative way in which we could build and maintain more affordable housing.

Speaking of maintaining affordable housing, the Member for Edmonton-Decore started to talk about social housing stock. This is a UCP government that has failed multiple times to maintain the existing affordable housing stock. In fact, the Auditor General found that multiple times this UCP government has failed.

Please, I urge everyone in this House to support this motion. This is one way we can support and uplift Alberta homeowners today.

Thank you very much.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 511 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:20 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Arcand-Paul	Deol	Ip
Batten	Eggen	Irwin
Brar, Gurinder	Ellingson	Sabir
Brar, Gurtej	Goehring	Wright, P.
Chapman	Haji	

4:30

Against the motion:

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

Totals:	For – 14	Against – 43
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[Motion Other than Government Motion 511 lost]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

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

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:33 p.m.]

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