



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning and afternoon, April 23, 2026

Day 51

The Honourable Ric McIver, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

Second Session

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United Conservative: 47

New Democrat: 38

Progressive Tory: 1

Independent: 1

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Chelsae Petrovic	Parliamentary Secretary for Health Workforce Engagement
Jason Stephan	Parliamentary Secretary for Constitutional Affairs
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**Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries**

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**Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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 Yao

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Thursday, April 23, 2026

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

### 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.

Hon. members, we will now be led in the singing of *God Save the King* by Maria McLarney, and I would invite all to participate.

### Hon. Members:

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

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** We have the minister of tourism. No, we don't. The Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

**Mr. Getson:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce Kristen Blakeman. She's my constituency manager. This lady is the heart and soul of God's country. Kristen, if you could please rise and receive the warm welcome. I personally think this lady would make a fine MLA one day. Please give her a round of applause.

**The Speaker:** Now the Minister of Tourism and Sport.

**Mr. Boitchenko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you the grade 6 students 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'd like to ask them to please stand up and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Are there more introductions? The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly Mr. Shaun Pinner. He's a former soldier of the British Army. He later made his home in Ukraine, where he married a Ukrainian woman. In February of 2022 Mr. Pinner took part in defending Ukraine in the Russian invasion. During the conflict he was captured and held as a prisoner of war by the Russian force and was later sentenced to death. In September '22 he was released as part of a prisoner exchange. He will be speaking at an event tomorrow evening at the Ukrainian Youth Unity Complex. He is accompanied today by Mr. Taras Podilsky. Gentlemen, please rise.

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and introduce to you and through you representatives from the College of Registered Nurses of Alberta, the interim CEO and registrar Andrew Douglas, the CFO Todd Schnirer, as well as their communication engagement team: Karen Kiddine, Dana Torgalson, Josh Sabandal, Anika Regis, and Danelle Boivin. Please rise.

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

**Mrs. Petrovic:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We also like to call it God's country in Livingstone-Macleod, but I'd like to rise and introduce to you and through you three of my constituents from Livingstone-Macleod. We have my best friend, Kari Lynn, who is an emergency nurse. She's here with her son Konnor and his good friend Uriah Carpenter. I ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Are there more introductions? Seeing none.

Hon. members, seated in my gallery today is Maria McLarney, who you all know, who shared that lovely rendition of the royal anthem this morning. Maria is currently in her fourth and final year serving as a page at the Alberta Legislature. She is also a first-year student in the practical nurse program at NorQuest College's Wetaskiwin campus. Singing has long been a valued part of Maria's life, cultivated through family, voice lessons, informal settings, and her participation in a church choir in Beaumont. I ask Maria to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Members, also in my gallery is the Legislative Assembly security service Officer Chris Tagg, and today is his last day with us. Chris was with the Edmonton Police Service for 25 years and joined the Legislative Assembly security service's team 13 months ago. He is now leaving us to become an RCMP officer. Chris will be sworn in as a Mountie on April 28. Chris, thank you for your service to this Assembly and all the other service that you performed for Albertans. Every one of us here in this Chamber is immensely grateful to you and your colleagues every day for what you do to keep us safe. Thank you. We wish you well. Now that you've risen, please offer the warm welcome of the Assembly.

## Members' Statements

### Alberta Separatism

**Member Boparai:** Do you know why they teach us history in school? So we learn from the mistakes of the past. But it seems to me that some people fail to remember the basic lessons our history books taught us, that when countries split, the repercussions last for generations: economic repercussions, political repercussions, emotional repercussions. This is the risk we face today. As an elected member of this Legislative Assembly, I take it as my responsibility to loudly oppose the separation referendum proposed by the UCP. If passed, this would be devastating for our economy.

Investments have already diminished and more young Albertans will have to leave the province in search of better livelihoods. We won't see job creation in new diverse sectors of industry, leaving us more reliant on oil prices that ride a roller coaster along with global events. Doesn't this remind you of Quebec's downfall in 1980 and 1995 after the sovereignty referendum? Do we want our children to suffer the same way? I do not because I understand the responsibility of this role and the power of my voice.

Today I'm using it to say this clearly: this referendum is a distraction. It is not about patriotism. It is being used to shift your focus away from real issues. I want to remind you that this is not a

patriotic agenda but is being manipulated by foreign interference that wants to disintegrate our country for their own vested interests.

Remember, we are not traitors. We will not turn our backs on a country that has given us so much. We, the Alberta NDP, will always fight for a stronger Alberta and a united Canada because no matter what, we are for Alberta and for Canada.

### Provincial Referendum

**Mr. Rowswell:** Alberta's government announced in February that Albertans will go to the polls and have a direct say on nine questions concerning our province's future. Earlier today the Premier announced the launch of a new public website dedicated to the upcoming 2026 referendum designed to give Albertans clear, accessible information as they prepare to vote this fall. These questions address immigration and the supports available to new Albertans and how our province can work alongside other provinces to amend Canada's Constitution to assert our provincial sovereignty within a strong and united Canada. Albertans have been clear that both issues matter deeply to them, and this referendum gives every Albertan the opportunity to provide direction on the path forward.

The new website will serve as a central hub where Albertans can learn what each question means, why it is being asked, and how the results will guide the government's next steps. It translates these policies and constitutional matters into straightforward explanations ensuring that everybody can understand what a yes vote means.

10:10

Mr. Speaker, Alberta will welcome newcomers for generations, and population growth has long been a part of our success story, but in recent years the pace and scale of that growth have placed real pressures on housing, health care, education, and other essential services. At the same time, many Albertans have expressed concern about federal actions in areas that fall squarely within provincial jurisdiction. These concerns were echoed through the Alberta Next Panel, where thousands of Albertans shared their views.

The referendum is an opportunity for Albertans to provide a clear mandate on how to address these challenges, and a website launched today empowers them to make that decision with confidence and clarity. I encourage all Albertans to visit [albertareferendum2026.ca](http://albertareferendum2026.ca), view the information, and take the time to consider their vote. The future direction of our province is in your hands.

### Public Health Care

**Mr. Haji:** Mr. Speaker, as if this UCP government's ongoing attacks on our democratic institutions were not enough, they have once again turned their sight on our public health care system, the system families rely on in their most frightening, vulnerable moments.

Public health care is a promise, Mr. Speaker. It is the reassurance a parent feels when their child is sick. It is the dignity a senior deserves when their body begins to fail them. It is often compared to insurance. You hope you will never need it, but when you do, you are profoundly grateful it exists. But unlike private insurance, public health care is universal. It's public, and it's based on need, not wealth. It doesn't ask for a credit card. It doesn't check your income. It simply cares for you.

That was the promise before this government started taking it away piece by piece. Instead of learning from their failure to rein in skyrocketing insurance costs, the UCP have chosen to repeat the same mistake, placing ideology and profit ahead of people. Just as they sided with the insurance companies, they are now opening the

doors for those who want to profit from sickness, from injury, and from pain. They call it reform, but Albertans know it for what it is. It is privatization. Instead of properly funding our public health care system, they are offering vouchers, treating care like a coupon instead of a right.

In Alberta and across Canada health care is a right, not a luxury. It is part of the social contract we make with one another that in our moment of need we will not be left behind. This government has a responsibility to strengthen that promise, not weaken it. Albertans expect nothing less.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Livingstone-Macleod.

### Teacher Training

**Mrs. Petrovic:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is opening the door for real experts, people with advanced degrees and real-world experience to step into our classrooms and teach what they actually know. Instead of welcoming that, the so-called gatekeepers of education are sounding the alarm. Why? Because this was never about standards. It's about control. It's my firm view that the opposition of the Association of Alberta Deans of Education is rooted in fear, fear that they are losing their grip on what teachers are taught and how they are taught to think.

Mr. Speaker, if you want to understand that fear, you only need to look at what's happening inside their own programs. At the University of Calgary's bachelor of education students are required to take courses steeped in social justice and activism. EDUC 450, diversity and learning, trains future teachers to identify key concepts in social justice education and to evaluate the implications of privilege and oppression. The readings are just as telling: rethinking Whiteness, confronting White privilege, teaching for social justice. This isn't balance. This is a single ideological lens. I've heard directly from students learning about the wheel of privilege. Meanwhile parents expect their kids to learn reading, writing, and math, not to be sorted into categories of oppression.

It goes even further. Some materials encourage teachers to use mathematics as a tool for social and political ends, pushing activism even into the most objective subjects. Yet while we are told there's no ideology in the classroom, Mr. Speaker, they're not even hiding it. Increasingly these programs promote the idea that teachers should be social activists first, educators second. That should concern every parent in this province. Meanwhile teachers are asking for practical skills, classroom management, handling aggression, delivering curriculum. There's a growing gap between what is being taught and what is actually needed.

Yes, we will bring in the experts. Yes, we will uphold standards, but we will not allow ideology to replace education. Every child in Alberta deserves a strong foundation, and that's exactly what we're going to deliver.

### Citizen Initiative Petition and Electoral Boundaries

**Member Calahoo Stonehouse:** Twice this past week this Premier and the UCP have violated the basic democratic principles that we hold dear as Albertans, as Canadians, and as First Peoples of this land. On Tuesday the UCP denied hundreds of thousands of people who signed the Forever Canadian petition from the right to be heard. UCP ministers, including the Minister of Indigenous Relations, refused to even let the petitioner speak at the committee. That is sabotage and a derailing of democratic, grassroots, and citizen-led processes.

Later that same day – imagine – the UCP used their majority to tear up a fair, ethical map drawn by the independent Electoral Boundaries Commission in consultation with thousands of Albertans, from our Rocky Mountains to our large cities, small cities, and small towns. This map gave unprecedented political recognition and voting rights to Indigenous peoples, giving them a direct say in Alberta's future and ensuring that their vote and their voice matter. But this UCP tore up that map and gave themselves a crayon to draw a new one.

Is it any wonder, Mr. Speaker, why Albertans are angry, why the chiefs from treaties 6, 7, and 8 would come to this very Chamber to tell this government that they have lost their trust in this government and to call a vote of incompetency? When the people of Fort Chipewyan are dying of cancer at higher rates than anywhere else in our province, there is a very big problem, but this government is more concerned with fighting First Nations and wasting millions of taxpayers' dollars to defend their separatist buddies.

Is it any surprise that people have lost their faith in the UCP government and this separatist Premier? Four hundred thousand Albertans sent a message to this government that they are forever Canadian, and if this government does not listen, you can bet that hundreds of thousands will show up and vote them out. Call the election.

### Electoral Boundaries

**Mr. Sabir:** This week the UCP took one of the most antidemocratic and unprecedented steps ever seen in Alberta. The UCP threw out the independent boundary commission's final report, and they're replacing that with a process designed by politicians for politicians. Mr. Speaker, politicians should never draw election maps. They should never choose their voters. That principle exists for one reason, to protect free and fair elections, but these principles of democracy do not matter to the UCP.

Instead of respecting the commission's work and the input of thousands of Albertans, they are opting out for a new process designed to give their own party a political advantage. The UCP is willing to violate Albertans' constitutional right to effective representation just to stay in power. They're planning on cheating, gerrymandering, and rigging the election, and that's utterly unacceptable. Albertans deserve free and fair elections.

Mr. Speaker, this government has also sidelined Elections Alberta, an independent, nonpartisan office of this Legislature. Even though Elections Alberta has made it clear that it requires at least 18 months' notice to implement new electoral maps, they're ignoring them. Elections Alberta needs this time to do their job of delivering a free and fair election.

The UCP's actions are putting the very integrity of the next election at risk. All Albertans need to stand up to the UCP plan to undermine their right to effective representation and rig the election. Mr. Speaker, we must resist together against the erosion of democracy in this province.

Thank you.

### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 31

#### Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2026

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 31, the Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2026.

This is our eleventh red tape reduction bill since 2019. Since then we've eliminated nearly 220,000 regulatory amendments, saving Albertans and Alberta businesses more than \$3 billion through the hundreds of initiatives we've taken over the years.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I hereby move first reading of Bill 31, the Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2026.

[Motion carried; Bill 31 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** We will continue with Introduction of Bills after question period, which it is time for now.

10:20

### Oral Question Period

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

**Mr. Nenshi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Happy anniversary to the Premier.

### Electoral Boundaries

**Mr. Nenshi:** Yesterday the Supreme Court of Canada in a 7 to 2 decision told Quebec that they could not gerrymander their political map. So now we have people on the left, on the right, across the spectrum, academics, experts, journalists, everyday people, and now the Supreme Court of Canada telling the government they can't do what they want to do. Has the government reviewed this recent Supreme Court decision and will they change their cooked-up process now that we know it is illegal and unconstitutional?

**The Speaker:** The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reasoning for that judgment is not out yet. As soon as the reasoning is out, we will absolutely look at it and see if there's anything we can learn here. I would point out that there are factual and legal differences in the framework between Alberta and Quebec when it comes to setting electoral boundaries, but if there is any guidance that we can get from the Supreme Court, we'll certainly look at that.

**Mr. Nenshi:** Mr. Speaker, even Lorne Gunter calls the government's scheme unethical and says that Albertans will lose faith in the next election. Now, the Attorney General of Alberta intervened in the Supreme Court case on Quebec's side, asking that Quebec be given the right to gerrymander its maps, spending Alberta taxpayer dollars. Of course, they lost badly. I've often said that this government's only job-creation program is to hire more government lawyers. How much did Alberta spend on this misadventure all the way to the Supreme Court?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know the answer to that. I'll get our Justice minister to follow up with the member opposite.

We know that when it's important matters of provincial jurisdiction and there are important questions of law that need to be settled, we do intervene in those cases. That's part of the reason why we were able to win on C-69, the no-more-pipelines bill. It's part of the reason why we're still challenging the government on the plastics ban. Sometimes you've got to take cases forward in order to defend provincial jurisdiction. That's why we're going to continue to monitor cases and intervene where it's appropriate.

**Mr. Nenshi:** Well, I'm glad the Justice minister now has something to do in between his meetings with Sam Mraiche.

Now, to be honest, there are only two ways this cooked-up process can go. Either the votes of people in Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer, and Lethbridge get hopelessly diluted, or we end up with a gerrymandered map with illegal constituencies. Yesterday's Supreme Court ruling shows that both of these outcomes are, in fact, illegal and unconstitutional. The Premier has got a choice. Will she backtrack now and just let the Legislature pass the majority report?

**The Speaker:** The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the factual and legal differences between Alberta and Quebec is that in Alberta legislation our Electoral Boundaries Commission has the latitude to have a riding that would either be 20 per cent higher or 20 per cent lower than the average. That is one of the things that, in fact, the committee suggested we look at increasing: rather than having four seats that could be like that, have eight seats for the reason of effective representation to make sure that large geographic areas are appropriately represented. They're very different legal frameworks.

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

**Mr. Nenshi:** The technicalities may be different, but the legal principle is the same. The Supreme Court announced that yesterday in an oral judgment because what Quebec was doing was so egregious, and it's less bad than what Alberta is attempting to do.

#### Food Prices and Affordability

**Mr. Nenshi:** Albertans are more concerned about their cost of living. They're concerned about their grocery prices. When we asked about the crushing grocery prices yesterday, instead of getting answers, we got a bizarre performance from two ministers of the Crown yelling and blustering but not giving any actual answers or taking any accountability for the fact that grocery prices have gone up 40 per cent. What's the government doing about it?

**The Speaker:** The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're meeting with members of the grocery industry. Yesterday I met with members of the dairy processing industry, and we're getting some advice from them on the things that are impacting costs. There are lots of things that are impacting costs across the supply chain: taxes on fuels, improved by the fact that the carbon tax, with our advocacy, was removed; transportation if you go a long distance; packaging; production inputs. Ultimately, families pay the price for that. We've got a number of federal policies that also impact food prices, and it'd be nice if the members opposite would work with us to advocate against some of those.

**Mr. Nenshi:** The Premier just admitted that her gas taxes are causing increases in grocery prices, the ones she refuses to remove.

Yesterday the CEO of Metro announced record dividends for that company. These are the folks they're meeting with. The only thing this government has done to address grocery prices is to put up a website that says: eat less food, and don't buy broken eggs. We have suggested real action on shrinkflation, on skimpflation, on restrictive covenants, on surveillance pricing. The government has said no every single time, and instead they're just asking the people making the record profits what they think. When will the government . . .

**The Speaker:** The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've got federal restrictions that are causing a lot of escalation in food prices. On plastic food packaging industry groups say that it increases packaging costs, reduces shelf life. It also raises prices for consumers. It's responsible for some food wastage. Forty per cent of food is wasted, and that goes into the costs that people pay. We've got to look at some of those things. Food labelling requirements increase costs. It's why we also need to look at how we're going to reduce food wastage. Fertilizer restrictions, the fact that they would not allow for strychnine to be used, and it was destroying farmers' fields: all these have an impact.

**Mr. Nenshi:** The Premier gives us a long list and blames everything on the federal government, but there are things she can do that other provinces have done that she's not doing. Mr. Speaker, grapes shouldn't only be for rich kids. Moms and dads who work hard to provide for their families shouldn't have to feel fear when they get to the grocery store till; 1 in 3 families say that they don't have enough to eat every month. All we get from this government is blaming, insults, abuse, and: the federal government did it all. The Premier talks about the Alberta advantage. Where's the Alberta advantage for these families?

**The Speaker:** Just a quick reminder. Everybody has got 35 seconds and not more.

Go ahead, Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we have the lowest gas prices in the country. We also support our food banks, which the members opposite didn't do. We also have a food program in schools, which we work with the federal government to expand, and we're going to continue looking at ways to support those families who are suffering with food security issues. It's part of the reason why we continue to fund those programs and have year after year, but we've got to look at some of the reasons that are driving the increase in these prices. That's why we're meeting with the processors. It's why we're meeting with the retailers, and we're going to be coming forward with some solutions.

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

**Mr. Nenshi:** Yet again the Premier tells families who don't have enough to eat: things aren't that bad. From her perspective perhaps they are not. You can always go to the food bank. Maybe they have cake at the food bank for people to eat.

#### Government Communications and the News Media

**Mr. Nenshi:** This government is so allergic to transparency. We all know that. They just can't clear the air on anything ever because they have so much to hide, but it's gotten worse. Now they're attacking journalists for asking questions. The Premier when she was a media personality would never have stood for this. Does the Premier condone her House leader insulting a journalist and comparing her to Jabba the Hutt? [interjections]

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

**Mr. Nenshi:** Going to apologize?

**The Speaker:** Order. You just had 35 seconds. It's all you get. That's how it works.

**Mr. Schow:** Mr. Speaker, we certainly respect the free press and the important role that they play in informing the public, definitely making sure that the public is informed of the issues that are happening or of relevance to the public. What I can say is that in the quote the member is referring to I absolutely did not insult by comparing the journalist to such an individual, to a fictitious character from the *Star Wars* trilogy. Maybe the member wants to go back and look at his own quotes because he's looking at – we can go back and compare notes all he wants. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

Now we're only going to hear from the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Nenshi:** They just can never ever apologize.

You know, the Premier often talks about students having problems with self-regulation. I think she's actually externalizing to the men on her front bench and the men who work in her office who have difficulties with self-regulation. The Premier's chief of staff, whose entire job appears to be to hang out on Twitter and make angry tweets all day, recently posted vile and defamatory comments about yet another journalist for daring to ask a question that the chief of staff and the Premier didn't like. How is the government taking lessons from Donald Trump on how to treat journalists?

10:30

**The Speaker:** The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the member opposite wants me to answer a question, he needs to be specific about what he's referring to. I have no idea what he's talking about. I do press conferences every day with my ministers. I treat the media with respect. I also talk to those members who are in the alternative media so that we can ensure that our message is getting out. We also post broadly on social media, and these are the things that you're supposed to do when you're in this position. I don't know what he's referring to.

**Mr. Nenshi:** I appreciate the Premier's admission that her staff insults Albertans so much, she doesn't know which insult we're talking about because that's all they do all day.

It's even worse than that. They also mislead journalists. The Premier's office recently tried to discredit paramedics who were worried about their workload by claiming that their overtime had dropped instead of increasing. We know this is untrue. The Investigative Journalism Foundation found it was completely made up. Now, look, politicians don't always like what journalists report, but they have a job to do, and we need to help them do their job. Why does the government mislead . . .

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Leader of the Opposition, you were warned about three times. You keep talking past when I stand up. It can't continue, or you'll lose questions. It won't be any good for anybody. I don't want you to lose questions.

The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister of hospital and surgical services along with the minister of primary and preventative care services have created a health dashboard. I'd encourage everyone to go online. Alberta health dashboard: you can look at it in Google. We're keeping track of all key measures that we have in the industry. We have seen 600,000 people come into our province in the last five years. Yes, it has put pressure on our hospitals, it has put pressure on our ability to get family doctors, and it's put pressure on paramedics. By tracking this information,

we can identify problems, we can hire more staff, and we can reduce the amount of overtime.

### Cancer Diagnosis and Treatment

**Ms Hoffman:** Like a lot of women in Alberta, I go for an annual mammogram, and I check my breast tissue regularly for any changes. Many Albertans were excited to hear the government announce self-referral options earlier for women now 40 years of age or older. But in question period yesterday the Premier said, "We're very, very hopeful that more women will take us up on paying for this option." Did the Premier tell the truth yesterday when she said that women will have to pay for their mammograms?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Women will not have to pay for their mammograms. Just to clarify, currently 45 and older can self-refer. They don't have to pay. If a doctor refers a patient even younger than 45 years of age, they do not have to pay. As of April 1, 2027, 40- to 44-year-olds can self-refer, and they don't have to pay. We want all women to get mammograms in this province.

**Ms Hoffman:** The Premier went on to say that getting diagnosed earlier means earlier treatment, but the UCP budget cut cancer research, screening, and prevention by more than 5 per cent. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to understand that a growing population and more people being eligible for screening, unless you change who pays out of pocket, means that the public budget needs to go up, but it's not. It's millions of dollars being cut. It's on page 189 of the minister's budget. How much are women who are going to get mammograms now going to have to pay, or is that going to come out later in the regulations?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We clarified that in estimates. I'm not sure why the member opposite can't read the budget line. We, in fact, have through the refocusing been able to make sure that we have all the funding we require to do that research. In fact, it was our government that introduced \$20 million for women's research, not that government – our government – because we believe in making sure that we have that research that informs the best evidence to do treatments for women.

**Ms Hoffman:** I don't know why the minister can't read her own budget. Two million dollars is being cut from prevention and screening, and since the current Premier got her job, the number of people waiting for breast cancer surgeries has gone up significantly. Seventy per cent of us used to be able to get our surgeries within a medically recommended time frame. Now it's only 43 per cent. This is a dangerous trend. Unless the UCP scrap their plan to have more surgical staff leave the public hospitals and work in private centres, it's going to get worse. Will the minister, any minister, finally admit that their government needs to scrap their plan to Americanize their health care system and restore public health care?

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

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've shared in this House before, we are investing to do record surgeries, including cancer, and I'm pleased to share that our cancer surgical volumes are up about 8 per cent year over year. We've also established the dedicated provincial health corporation Cancer Care Alberta with renewed leadership to tackle this problem. We agree. Wait times are too long.

Investments must be made to improve and really modernize cancer care and get those surgeries done for patients who need them.

Thank you.

### Homelessness and Affordable Housing

**Member Irwin:** Albertans are being absolutely slammed by soaring costs of housing. Chris, my constituent, told me recently that his rent is increasing by a whopping \$475 a month, a nearly 60 per cent rent increase. Chris can't afford this. I explained to him that we've urged this UCP government to take action, but they refuse to do anything. So to the government: what do I say to constituents like Chris facing homelessness due to shocking rent increases?

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member must be talking about the former NDP government, who saw wait-lists for affordable housing go up by 75 per cent, who never built any new continuing care homes, who never built senior homes, and saw some of the largest declines in housing anywhere in the history of our province, not this side of the House, who continues to have record quarters when it comes to building homes and is the only jurisdiction in the country where rent is going down. Again, we won't be lectured by the NDP when it comes to housing. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** One at a time. That's how it works.

**Member Irwin:** Given that that minister is entirely predictable, and he continues to dismiss the lived experiences of real Albertan renters – how out of touch can you be? – and since this minister won't support renters, let's try homeowners. Just this week I introduced a motion that would help Albertans trying to buy their first home, noting the success of municipal programs like Attainable Homes Calgary. Instead of considering my motion – you guessed it – that minister ridiculed and mocked. Why is this government not interested in supporting Alberta homeowners?

**The Speaker:** I didn't interrupt you, hon. member, but that was a textbook case of – right? – basically, a complete preamble, so I know you'll do better in your third question.

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, she's right. I am entirely predictable. I'm the housing minister in this country that breaks records every quarter building housing. As even the CBC said this morning, Renter's Market in Edmonton as Building Boom Meets Drop in Demand . . . seeing 2 per cent reductions in rent alone just this month on average. That's because of the work this side of the House is doing. It's because we rejected the NDP's socialist ideas of rent control, that would have made more people homeless. It's because we stood up to their plans to keep homeless people on the streets and instead invested in shelter and housing.

**Member Irwin:** That's a great segue because given that the Salvation Army Centre of Hope, a shelter in Calgary, is regularly over capacity and turning away people and given that the Calgary Drop-In Centre reports that they, too, are nearing capacity – they describe addressing homelessness in Calgary as trying to dam a flooding river, that for every 50 people housed, 150 newly enter homelessness – given that housing workers are clear that we need more affordable housing and a continuum of housing options, will the minister outline what specific steps he's taking in Calgary to address homelessness? What he's doing isn't working.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the NDP continues to struggle with facts. The average occupancy in both the Calgary Drop-In Centre

and in the Salvation Army is below 90 per cent. We watch it very, very closely. In fact, in all of our shelters it averages between about 85 per cent and about 88 per cent, so the member is just plain wrong. Now, what we are doing to be able to help Albertans is building more houses than anywhere else. We're building more affordable housing units, we're building more continuing care units, and as a result of that Edmonton and Calgary are the most affordable large cities anywhere on this continent. [interjections]

10:40

**The Speaker:** Order. Hand signals are largely, on both sides, not considered to be a good idea in here.

Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

### Nuclear Energy Development

**Mr. van Dijken:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's government released the Nuclear Energy Engagement and Advisory Panel's report, which will guide next steps on enabling nuclear energy in the province. The report reflects months of province-wide engagement by the panel to learn what Albertans, Indigenous communities, municipalities, and industry think about adding nuclear energy to Alberta's energy mix. To the Minister of Affordability and Utilities. Alberta has long been an energy leader. What excites you most about the potential role nuclear energy could play in supporting Alberta's growing power needs and economy?

**Ms Pitt:** Hooray.

**The Speaker:** Order. We need to keep our excitement to ourselves, at least verbally.

The minister.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. I'm pretty excited about the reliable and clean energy that nuclear could provide as well as the economic diversification and development that our province could see in that. We'd see development and investment right from resource extraction all the way through the supply chain to massive job creation at the site, not just for construction but for operation. There's the opportunity to explore medical isotopes, which are treating cancers around the world with tremendous success. Alberta is always a leader of energy in Canada. This could be our next great future.

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

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that during the engagement Albertans expressed an interest in the potential for nuclear power to provide reliable, emissions-free energy and given that, based on this feedback, the report provides recommendations and advice to government on how best to advance a nuclear energy industry in the province, to the same minister. The advisory panel heard from thousands of Albertans, municipalities, and Indigenous communities. What did they hear most often during these conversations that will help shape the province's next steps?

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

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. You know what I heard? I heard a lot of interest and a lot of hope. Albertans are hoping that they have a government that sees a direction for a better future for them, for their children, and their grandchildren, and this is exactly what we're going to work on. You know what we also heard? We heard reasonable questions. What do we do about safety, what do we do with waste, and what do we do with our water?

These are precious resources that we need to handle carefully. They asked for more information. They asked for more education. They asked for us to work co-operatively with the federal government and federal regulators, which are world class and world leaders, to do what's best for Albertans.

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

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for his work on this file. Given that the panel's recommendations lay out a long-term vision for how Alberta could responsibly explore nuclear energy that would balance affordability, reliability, and public confidence and further given that this report talks about building a clear road map for nuclear energy within Alberta, once again to the same minister: what are the next steps, and what can Albertans expect to see moving forward?

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

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for all the great work that he does representing his constituents in north rural Alberta, where there's a lot of interest in what's next for nuclear within the province of Alberta. In fact, that's why we're going to proceed with the information that we have, continue to gather, and create a nuclear energy road map for Albertans so they know exactly what's going to happen, when it's going to happen, and how it's going to happen. It will likely lead to legislation and regulation so that we can set up a framework for private investment to lead Alberta, lead Canada in nuclear development and growth, and provide jobs for the future.

### Provincial Fuel Tax

**Member Kayande:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans are struggling with the cost of living, and this government has no sympathy for them. We're the only province in Canada where the average salary has not kept up with inflation. Nobody thinks they are better off than they were in 2019. In this affordability crisis the government raised property taxes on Calgarians by \$340 and is clipping an extra \$7 every time we fill up our tanks. Why won't this government relieve Albertans of the provincial gas tax?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, we've been through this many times in this House. I think everyone in the House understands that we have a defensible, proactive program for fuel tax relief that monitors the price of oil over a quarter and then provides that relief for the whole quarter no matter what happens to the price of oil. I think that's very defensible.

Also important to make sure the House understands that we have the cheapest fuel in the country and in many cases by a large margin. Over the last 60 days: 26 cents cheaper than B.C.; 4 cents cheaper than Saskatchewan; 3 cents than Manitoba; 10 cents than Ontario; and 21 cents cheaper than Quebec.

**Member Kayande:** Given this government is only willing to give raises to themselves while spending lavishly on anything but giving Albertans relief, given this government doesn't think Albertans deserve to save \$7 every time they fill up their gas tank, which could save families \$300 per year, given that Calgarians also have to pay an extra \$340 in property taxes annually, money that is sure valuable when people can't afford rent or food, will this government commit

to reversing all of their awful tax hikes until the Turkish Tylenol guy returns the \$50 million of taxpayer money burning a hole in his jeans?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, this is the side of the House that appreciates the Alberta advantage that we have and fights hard to maintain it. A \$16.9 billion tax advantage over the next closest province, no sales tax, a government that decreased personal income taxes within this term, saving families \$1,500, a single individual \$750. As I said, we have a program in place on fuel. When we bring in more in royalties in a consistent way, that relief will be provided automatically. It makes a lot of sense for Albertans and for the finances of the province.

**Member Kayande:** Given that the Turkish Tylenol guy got a deal of \$49 million of taxpayer money while Albertans received nothing to show for it, courtesy of this government, and given that the government chooses to empty Albertans' pockets instead of getting their out-of-control spending on Turkish Tylenol under control, given that Canadian leaders, including Premier Ford and Prime Minister Carney have all made moves to give Canadians relief at the pumps, why won't this government do the right thing for once; relieve drivers at the pumps and cut the provincial gas tax?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, the good news is that if prices stay elevated, it will happen automatically. It's in the legislation. And then if oil drops the next day, it will continue to stay off. I would ask the members opposite that some days pretend to care about the finances of this province, that some days pretended to care that we ran a deficit. There's a billion and a half in the budget on fuel tax revenue. Let's look at a quarter: \$400 million, maybe \$430 million for a summer quarter. Where would you like it? Would you like it to go right on top of the deficit, or would you like it to be less transportation maintenance? [interjection]

**The Speaker:** Opposition leader, wait for your turn.

Finance minister, make sure your remarks are directed through the chair, please.

### Tourism Industry Support

**Ms Goehring:** The recent attacks by the UCP on Alberta's tourism sector will hurt investments into this vital component of our economy. A new survey by the Tourism Industry Association of Alberta stated that 43 per cent of respondents expect reduction in investments because of the new tax increases brought in by this UCP's disastrous budget. Those same industry leaders expect a negative impact to their businesses. Will the minister admit that these tax increases are hurting the investment climate for our tourism sector?

**Mr. Horner:** Yeah. I'm sure that the minister of tourism is going to stand and list all the great things we're doing to invest in the tourism space across the province.

I just wanted to take a moment to speak about the levy increase. A \$9.4 billion deficit. A lot of work done on the expense side of this budget while having to prioritize into health and education. A 7.2 per cent increase in education, largest ever, 6 per cent across the healths, a population wave without an economic cause, and we still want to do things like invest in the World Cup and others, and we're looking for a place where we can do that with the least impact.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that TIAA's survey also asked about separatism and found that 60 per cent of respondents expect a future referendum on separation to hurt investments in tourism and given that they reported that this has already led to investments being

postponed or scaled back due to political uncertainty and given the majority of respondents do not expect these investments to return before the next election, does the minister understand that even talk of separation is hurting Alberta's vital tourism sector right now?

10:50

**Mr. Schow:** Mr. Speaker, if you were to draw a word map of this session of the Legislature, you would find the only people using the term "separation" are the members opposite, and I would encourage them to cease from using that word. I can tell you that on this side of the House what we're focused on is attracting more investment. That's why we created the All-season Resorts Act, what we're seeing, to bring in more tourism, more tourists from around the entire world who love Alberta and the advantage we have. The members opposite are trying to drive away investment today by using the word, just as they drove away investment when they were in government.

**Ms Goehring:** Given how vital tourism is to diversify our economy and create jobs and given how bad policy and talks of separatism are killing investment, delaying projects, and scuttling job-creation opportunities in tourism and given that Alberta tourism operators know it's bad decisions by this UCP government that hurt their industry, will the UCP admit their mistakes, roll back their tax changes that hurt the tourism industry, and stop with the separatism rhetoric before widespread job losses hit Alberta's tourism economy?

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

**Mr. Boitchenko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is the most affordable province to live nation-wide. Full stop right there. We are leading the country in tourism growth two times the national average. In 2024 we were leading four times the national average. This year alone, the first two months, we're on track to actually lead the country three or four times the national average. We're having big games coming to Alberta: the Grey Cup in 2026, World Junior Championship in 2027, World Cup . . . [interjections]

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

### Recovery Community Contracts

**Mr. Guthrie:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans expect that when government issues tens of millions in grants, there are controls, oversight, and accountability, as there is with any major financial transaction. But in the case of recovery centres government allowed sole-source contracts, inserted intermediaries, and now claims no responsibility. When projects are stalled, Alberta contractors go unpaid and liens are issued. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: how did you justify committing millions in public funds without proper safeguards? And if government is not accountable, who is?

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we're all about saving lives, and we're out there doing it right now. We're opening recovery communities across the province. We're working with our First Nations. We just opened our first one on our First Nation down in Kainai country. They're so happy. They've already got 20 people in there in recovery. It's amazing. Yeah. We're doing it all across the province. We're going to be opening another one down in Siksika very shortly. We're doing another one in Tsuut'ina, another one at Métis Crossing, another one in Enoch, all over. We're going to have over 375 more beds for recovery across this province, and we let the Indigenous people do it themselves.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Given that for decades grant funding flowed directly to First Nations, with authority remaining at the community level and given that this government changed that process, inserting a lawyer to control tens of millions in public funds and given that that decision removed oversight from the nations, added costs, and created clear conflicts of interest, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: why was monetary control removed from First Nations and handed to lawyers connected to insiders now under RCMP investigation?

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, just the opposite. What we've done is that we let the Indigenous people be in control of their own destiny. They were given cash to build these recovery communities. They appointed their own lawyer to oversee it, to make sure that the money was given out at proper times as the project proceeds. If there are some shortfalls, the money is held in trust, and they will be taken care of. This is the way we're doing it. It's worked very well. They're doing it on time and on budget.

**Mr. Guthrie:** Given that these decisions led to court disputes over millions in missing public funds and given that those disputes involved insiders who received hundreds of millions in government contracts and given that the minister claims he investigated and found no connection and given that this points to either gross incompetence or something more serious, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: were you ever directed to alter your course of action or served a cease-and-desist letter to halt investigations? If so, by who?

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, as I said before, Mr. Speaker, we've let the Indigenous people be in control of their own destiny. The money was given to them to build these recovery communities. Not only are they building them, they are built. Within a couple of months they're all going to be opened up. They're doing an amazing job. I don't know why they don't want to let the Indigenous people feel that they are trusted. They are trusted. We trust them. They're doing a great job. They've got controls in place to make sure people are being paid. It's going to be a great thing for all. It's not just for Indigenous people. Anybody can use these recovery communities. It's amazing what they're doing out there.

### Alberta Energy Regulator

**Ms Al-Guneid:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans watched the AER CEO dodge simple questions, failing to explain how the AER approved the transfer of hundreds of licences to Maga Energy despite the company owing \$200,000 in unpaid municipal taxes. Then we watched the energy minister twist himself into knots trying to explain why the AER is breaking his own ministerial order. I'm feeling generous today, so here's another chance. Why is the minister allowing the AER to ignore his own rules?

**Mr. Jean:** First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to apologize to the members opposite that asked a question last week. I got a little hot under the collar, in fact so hot that my collar was starting to flinch a bit.

The AER does a great job. It's a world-class regulator. The CEO of the AER is doing a great job, Mr. Speaker. His experience speaks for itself. He is an industry expert. What we do know is that when the opposition was in control, when the NDP was government, they actually set up or allowed to set up a Ponzi scheme in the AER, taking advantage of the people of Alberta. We're not doing this. We're appointing the best people to make the best decisions for Alberta.

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

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 10:57.

**Ms Al-Guneid:** Given that the Shell-Cavvy deal exposes another AER failure, this time under the Oil and Gas Conservation Act where the licence holder and the asset owner must be the same, given that Shell sold these assets seven years ago, yet still holds the licences while Cavvy owns and operates them, if something goes wrong at these sour gas sites, who's actually responsible? Who pays for the environmental cleanups, and why hasn't the AER stepped up to suspend these licences and protect Albertans?

**Mr. Jean:** Well, Mr. Speaker, industry stands up and pays for it. In fact, the AER is funded by industry and the orphan well fund is funded by industry. In fact, industry is making great strides with the orphan well fund. We've taken great strides forward. We've actually tripled that fund over the last few years and actually taken real stances to clean up the mess the NDP left. The world is faced with this reality. We are the government that is being the most responsive to it and making sure we get the job done right. Nothing is more important than our water, our air, and our environment.

**Ms Al-Guneid:** Given that this minister is a minister of the Crown, given that the AER is breaking the minister's own rules, and the minister is okay with it, given that the AER is breaking the Oil and Gas Conservation Act and has not kept the public informed on these very sour gas facilities since 2019, and the minister is okay with it and given that the AER CEO ignored basic questions about how the AER is failing Albertans and landowners, and the minister and the Premier are okay with it, why is the UCP ignoring their own rules? Who is this government working for, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Jean:** We are working for the people of Alberta, Mr. Speaker. They actually own the resource and we're managing it, so well in fact that there was a new report out this morning about the confidence in our energy sector, in our oil and gas sector. We've stepped up with the federal government on an MOU. Fortunately, we have a Premier that's very active in making sure that Albertans are stood up for. We are doing the job necessary and the AER through Rob Morgan is doing an amazing job. His credentials speak for themselves. He is a captain of industry that is actually here at the bequest of Alberta to make sure that he does the best job for Albertans, and he's doing just that.

#### 11:00 Technology Innovations in Agriculture

**Mrs. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta's agriculture sector has long been a leader in innovation, embracing technologies that improve productivity while protecting our environment. One of the most promising advancements is green-on-green selective spraying, which uses artificial intelligence and real-time sensors to distinguish between crops and weeds, eliminating weeds with remarkable precision. To the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation: how is the government of Alberta supporting the adoption and development of these advanced agricultural tools to ensure our province remains a global leader in sustainable farming?

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this government is taking real action to accelerate innovation. Through Results Driven Agriculture Research, or RDAR, we've committed \$370 million over 10 years to producer-led research that drives productivity and competitiveness. We're also supporting digital agriculture through programs at the Simpson Centre at the University of Calgary, helping producers adopt data-driven tools that improve efficiency,

reduce waste, and strengthen Alberta's position as a global ag leader.

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

**Mrs. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister for that great answer. Given that these systems have been shown to reduce herbicide use up to 90 per cent in certain crops, helping farmers improve their bottom line to be more productive and efficient and further given the rapid evolution of precision agriculture, including AI-driven weed detection and digital crop assessment tools, to the minister: what steps is the government taking to encourage further innovation and the integration of these technologies into Alberta's agricultural practices?

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Well, Mr. Speaker, Alberta farmers and ranchers are already the best innovators in the world, and our job is to ensure they have the support they need. We're supporting the adoption of new technologies by investing in research, strengthening collaboration through new opportunities at crop development centre south and Western Crop Innovations. We're even working with AFSC to pilot drones and technology. This is creating the conditions for agritech to grow right here in Alberta. This will help producers stay efficient, competitive, and continue to meet the growing global demand.

**The Speaker:** Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mrs. Johnson:** Again, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to the minister for that answer. Given the need for collaboration between farmers, researchers, and agritech developers to scale these innovations and further given the desire for businesses to settle here in Alberta to support these developments, like companies like John Deere in Ponoka and Pentagon in Lacombe, to the minister: how will we ensure that these technologies are accessible to producers of all sizes, allowing them to continue supporting Alberta's economic viability and environmental stewardship?

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the member is right. Accessibility is the key, and through programs like the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership we're helping producers of all sizes adopt new technologies. As we are currently negotiating the next framework of the SCAP agreement with the federal government, we hope to create new programs that will support farmers and ranchers to adopt new technologies quicker and faster. This will result in a stronger, more resilient sector that supports economic growth and environmental stewardship. This is important as we continue to feed families here and around the globe.

#### Alberta Separatism

**Mr. Deol:** My constituents are proud Albertans and proud Canadians. They do not take their country for granted. They know how hard people have fought for our freedoms, our quality public services, and our way of life. They do not support separatism, and they resent any notion of the UCP taking their pensions and their public health care. Mr. Speaker, my constituents deserve to know: why would the UCP support a separatism referendum that will take away the CPP of Albertans?

**Mr. Schow:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we've done nothing of the sort. We've created a process that allows Albertans to have their say on important matters, matters like Alberta's place in this country as being a sovereign part of Canada. Why is it the members opposite have a problem with getting respect from the federal government?

Now, thanks to the leadership of our Premier, we've signed an MOU to help us get our world-class products to market, and of course the members opposite want to see that fail. But on this side of the House, what's good for Alberta is good for Canada, and that's where we're fighting for our best interests.

**Mr. Deol:** Given that breaking apart our province from Canada would also mean the end of affordable and universal public health care and given my constituency knows that if they visit family and friends in other provinces right now, any emergency health care in those other places would be covered and given a separate Alberta would leave my constituents scrambling to pay for expensive two-tier, American-style private care, why would the UCP support separatism that breaks apart our universal public Canadian health care system?

**Mr. Schow:** Mr. Speaker, the only people taking lessons from the Americans and American-style anything is the opposition members, with the American-style politics, bringing in the same organization and company that did Mamdani's campaign, a socialist campaign, I might add. On this side of the House we know that the rest of the world continues to see Alberta as the best place to live, to play. That is why we just saw record numbers in tourism visitation spent right here. While the rest of the country is seeing declines or status quo, we continue to break records, and we're going to do that for many years to come.

**Mr. Deol:** Given that being an Albertan means being Canadian, with a Canadian passport, Canadian public health care, and the Canada pension plan that my constituents have worked their whole lives to see and given all of this would be lost if Alberta left Canada and given that none of my constituents want to lose the public services they receive as proud Canadians, why won't the UCP denounce separatism, defend democracy, and stand up for Alberta and stand up for Canada?

**Mr. Schow:** While the members opposite continue to stoke the flames of separation and have that conversation, on this side of the House we continue to stoke the flames of investment, and that investment is driving job growth. That's why over the last year we've created 101,000 new jobs in this province, the majority of which are in the private sector, Mr. Speaker. That is success, success of good leadership that tells the rest of the country and the rest of the world that Alberta is open for business and it's a great place to work and a great place to raise a family.

### Highway 3 Twinning

**Mr. Dach:** More than 100 farmers and ranchers have petitioned the minister about the highway 3 twinning project and how he's riding roughshod over their concerns. Can he confirm whether Alberta transportation conducted any documented site-specific safety or operational analysis, including collision history, quantified risk assessment, or operational conflict analysis to justify freeway-level access removals on the highway 3 segment between Whittla and Medicine Hat, where traffic volumes are only 3,700 vehicles per day and the corridor runs through the most heavily irrigated agricultural regions in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a little rich, the NDP actually faking interest in agriculture and highway 3 because it is this government that made an incredible investment in irrigation,

\$800 million, to actually expand irrigation by 200,000 acres in southern Alberta as well as the government that's actually twinning highway 3. If the member actually wants to travel down to southern Alberta, he can go on April 27 to Medicine Hat, where they're actually going to have an open house to discuss the highway 3 twinning project, so we can have local input from people in the area that will actually benefit.

**Mr. Dach:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that the member for Cypress-Medicine Hat cancelled a meeting with the coalition who was complaining about the way the government is going about highway 3 development, given that no site-specific safety analysis was completed, how does the minister justify applying freeway-level access control on highway 3 through Alberta's most heavily irrigated agricultural region, when Alberta routinely maintained direct agricultural access and controlled median crossings on much larger, busier highways such as highway 1 and highway 2, given that the rural function and agricultural operations remain a stated provincial priority.

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If he doesn't want to come down on April 27, he can come down on April 28 to Seven Persons, where there'll be another open house where we'll actually have local feedback from individuals and farmers in the area, and they'll have their say on how the design of highway 3 twinning will actually happen.

We like to say on this side of the House that twinning is winning, Mr. Speaker, and here we have a highway 3 twinning project. It's well under way. There'll be eight sections. We've already had one section completed, but we want to make sure we get the remaining seven sections done right.

**Mr. Dach:** Given the absence of any demonstrated site-specific safety deficiencies, will the minister commit that the interim access decisions on highway 3 will be governed strictly by rural arterial design standards, divided standards, including evaluation of agricultural median crossings or equivalent mitigation rather than undefined, quote, stage one expressway assumptions that permanently disrupt and sever viable irrigated agricultural lands during an interim project? Mr. Speaker, those people who signed the petition are listening and deserve respectful answers from the minister.

11:10

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Dreeshen:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I hope they are listening, because in previous budgets that this UCP government passed to make sure that we could get highway 3 from Taber to Burdett actually twinned – there's actually \$152 million in this budget that that member voted against, but we're going to make sure that we get this project done right. We always will be investing in rural Alberta because we on this side of the House know the importance of agriculture, and we'll make sure that we can invest in the infrastructure that helps agriculture, oil and gas, and all the important sectors of our economy.

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

### Introduction of Bills

(continued)

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

**Bill 32  
Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2026**

**Mr. Amery:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and move first reading for Bill 32, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2026.

Now, as Alberta's population continues to grow, we must ensure that Albertans have effective representation across our province. The amendments in Bill 32 would add two electoral divisions to the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, 2026, and align with the report that was tabled by you, Mr. Speaker, in this Assembly.

With that, I move first reading of Bill 32.

[Motion carried; Bill 32 read a first time]

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

**Bill 209  
Consumer Protection (Affordability Measures)  
Amendment Act, 2026**

**Member Eremenko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am thrilled to rise today to request leave to introduce Bill 209, the Consumer Protection (Affordability Measures) Amendment Act, 2026.

If passed, Bill 209 will bring in common-sense measures to make life a little bit more affordable for everyone in this province. Bill 209 will see that the prices advertised are the prices you pay, with no hidden fees or charges at the checkout. It will ban white-label ATMs from overcharging you for taking out your money, and it will make cancelling a subscription as easy as one click.

With that, I move first reading of Private Member's Bill 209.

[Motion carried; Bill 209 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** [An electronic device sounded] Somebody owes the food bank \$50. I'm not sure who it is, but I'm sure that they will honour that.

**Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

**Mr. Lundy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In accordance with section 20(2) of the Auditor General Act it is my pleasure as chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices to table the following reports from the office of the Auditor General: Report on Post-secondary Institutions 2025: Advanced Education; Systems to Manage Grazing Leases, Assessment of Implementation Report: Forestry and Parks; and Reporting on the Oil Sands Monitoring Program, Assessment of Implementation Report: Environment and Protected Areas. Electronic copies of these reports will also be provided to members.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there any other tablings today? Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of the e-mail from the constituent that I referenced earlier in question period, who is experiencing shocking rent increases.

**Mr. Cyr:** I've got the five requisite copies of a tabling of my pet Lexa, who I'll be talking about on Bill 22 this afternoon.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Varsity.

**Dr. Metz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of a paper published in *Healthy Debate* by doctors Gabriel Fabreau and

Annalee Coakley called Alberta Can't Rely on Immigrant Workers while Denying Them Health Care.

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the five requisite copies of the beautifully eloquent handwritten letter that I picked up from my constituent Virginia Koziak, who writes about the hardships as a disabled senior for housing, for food, and for other costs.

**Member Eremenko:** I stand to table a release from the Canadian Society of Addiction Medicine raising concerns about the closure of supervised consumption services based on flawed data without alternatives to public health or public safety.

**The Speaker:** Okay. That takes us to points of order. The point of order that was called today was called at or near 10:57 a.m.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to withdraw the point of order.

**The Speaker:** Well, on a Thursday. Thank you.

**An Hon. Member:** Now we get the coffee back.

**The Speaker:** You want coffee? It's now Orders of the Day. You can have a coffee. Your wish is granted.

**Orders of the Day  
Government Motions**

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

**Evening Sittings**

40. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) and for the duration of the 2026 spring sitting of the second session of the 31st Legislature the Assembly shall meet on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings for consideration of government business unless the Government House Leader notifies the Assembly that there shall be no evening sitting that day by providing notice under Notices of Motions in the daily Routine or at any time prior to 6 p.m.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's giddy-up time.

**The Speaker:** Okay. Hon. members, my understanding is that this is not a debatable motion.

[Government Motion 40 carried]

**Lobbyists Act Review**

38. Mr. Schow moved:  
Be it resolved that
- (a) The Lobbyists Act be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future, and the committee shall be deemed to be the special committee of the Assembly for the purpose of conducting a comprehensive review pursuant to section 21 of that act;
  - (b) The committee may, without leave of the Assembly, sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
  - (c) In accordance with section 21 of the Lobbyists Act the committee must submit its report to the Assembly

within one year after beginning its review, and that report is to include any amendments recommended by the committee.

**The Speaker:** This is a debatable motion, Government Motion 38, moved by the hon. Government House Leader. Are there any speakers? Seeing none.

[Government Motion 38 carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 28 Municipal Affairs and Housing Statutes Amendment Act, 2026

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

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the Minister of Municipal Affairs to move second reading of Bill 28, the Municipal Affairs and Housing Statutes Amendment Act, 2026.

Mr. Speaker, our government came to office with a clear commitment to cut red tape, support growth, protect Albertans' hard-earned dollars, and ensure our kids are safe. Bill 28 delivers on every one of those promises. Let's start with housing because Albertans need homes, and they need them now. Right now development approvals in some communities are slow, unpredictable, and loaded with unnecessary requirements. That drives up costs for builders, and those costs get passed down to families buying those homes.

11:20

Bill 28 fixes that. We're enabling an automatic yes framework for low-risk permits, supporting modern, automated tools, and requiring municipalities over 15,000 to publicly report their permitting timelines. We're also clarifying off-site levy rules so developers aren't being charged for costs that have nothing to do with their project. We're ensuring charter and independent schools can access municipal reserve land on the same basis as other publicly funded schools, supporting real parental choice as our communities continue to grow.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Madam Speaker, as said by the minister, we are building houses at a record pace. The members opposite have chosen to disregard the numbers, but the numbers don't lie. We're getting the job done.

Now, our government also believes that Albertans should be taxed fairly and predictably no matter where they live. That's why Bill 28 prohibits municipalities from creating vacancy-style taxes that would penalize Albertans based on how they use their homes. A home is a home, Madam Speaker. Similar properties should be taxed the same way.

We're also modernizing industrial property assessment rules that haven't been meaningfully updated since 2005. Clearer rules mean fewer disputes, more consistency in a system that actually reflects how things are built today.

Albertans expect their elected officials to act with integrity, and they deserve a system that holds them accountable when they don't. Under the previous code of conduct system courts in Rocky View county, Wheatland county, and Medicine Hat all struck down investigation outcomes. The system wasn't working. Bill 28 replaces the patchwork approach with a consistent province-wide councillor accountability framework covering everything from financial interest

to threatening behaviour, with independent third-party investigators, a formal appeals process, and transparency built in from the start right all the way to the finish. This is about restoring public confidence in local democracy.

Albertans deserve to know how their tax dollars are also spent. Bill 28 expands salary disclosure requirements for senior municipal staff, aligns them with provincial standards, and gives smaller communities the option to show policing costs as a separate line on their property tax notices so residents can see exactly what they're paying for. Transparency, Madam Speaker: members opposite should take notice.

Now, I want to speak for a moment on what is one of the most important parts of this bill, which is protecting our children from explicit pornographic books in public libraries. I will repeat that. This bill protects our children from explicit pornographic books in public libraries, Madam Speaker.

**Member Irwin:** What about the Internet?

**Mr. Schow:** Now I hear the members opposite talking about accessing pornography on the Internet. That is their prerogative if they choose to do so.

I know the members disagree with this because they have made that very clear on social media many times and even right here in the Chamber. It's on the record. It's in *Hansard*. Now, they intend to vote against this bill, and by doing so, it means they intend to support or at least they don't disagree that children should have access to explicit images.

Now, I'm not sure what polling or engagement they're doing to believe parents want their children to have access in libraries to sexually explicit material, but on this side of the House it is unacceptable. This bill ensures that materials with explicit sexual visual content are not freely accessible to children without parental consent. That's a reasonable expectation, and we are going to deliver on it. Future regulation will set out the specific requirements developed in partnership with the library sector. The goal is practical, workable guidance that keeps kids safe and respects community values across Alberta.

Now, in closing, Madam Speaker, the rules that govern our municipalities haven't kept pace with our growing province. Bill 28 changes that in a co-ordinated, practical way that supports growth, protects Albertans, and strengthens accountability at every level. Our government is proud to bring the legislation forward, and we urge all members to support it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. With that, I move second reading of Bill 28, the Municipal Affairs and Housing Statutes Amendment Act, 2026.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Member Miyashiro:** Yeah. Madam Speaker, when I was serving on Lethbridge city council, I got to do this really cool thing where groups toured through council offices in our upstairs boardroom, and then we would do a mock council downstairs in the horseshoe. One of the things we used to do was so far out. One of the arguments we'd always use was that councillors should get a free house and a couple of cars, and we would get the free house out of the seized property list, so to speak. Then we'd go through a debate with kids, with people with disabilities, with newcomers, with adults that just wanted to know about how this worked. There are only two times when we did this process where the groups actually voted for councillors to get this giant raise and a free house and two cars. The lesson that we discussed afterwards is really quite simple. Just because you can do something doesn't mean that you should.

Bill 28 reminds me of that cautionary tale. Just because you do something doesn't mean you should. I was recently admonished in this Assembly for referring to the minister as the mayor of Alberta. I now clearly see the error of my ways because there is no mayor in Alberta that would ever attempt such a naked power grab as we're witnessing with this bill. There has never been a piece of legislation in our province whose main purpose is to diminish the role and responsibility of municipal councils by concentrating power with the provincial government. It appears that minimal, if any, consultations were undertaken with municipalities prior to Bill 28 appearing on our Order Paper.

Once again, the overreaching UCP nanny state is claiming another sector. Remember how bills 25 and 51 reduced authority of school boards? Well, this bill, the direct descendant of bills 20 and 50, which we characterized as the Premier trying to control everything everywhere all at once, goes even further. This omnibus legislation tramples on the authority of local governments at the whim of the minister and/or cabinet. There are more than a dozen pieces to this bill. I won't have time to speak to each of them, but I will speak to some to give Albertans some context for my comments.

Now, Alberta Municipalities, which is the overriding group for municipalities in Alberta, the umbrella group – really, the only clause in Bill 28 that that group fully supports is the councillor code of conduct, and that's only because the UCP took away existing municipal codes of conduct in the previous legislation. Alberta Municipalities and municipalities in general wanted a code of conduct in place, so of course they're going to say, "This sounds okay to us" even though there are some things in there that are questionable. AB Munis also has concerns with further erosion of local autonomy and added cost pressures, that Bill 28 continues to raise significant and persistent concerns related to municipal autonomy. The proposed legislation introduced several provisions that risk eroding the independence and self-governance of local councils.

Let's start with something pretty straightforward, but it's also something that no one asked for. There's a clause in here about lodge accommodations. Managed housing bodies are bodies that are given permission to exist as lodge providers, and they also have municipal requisition authority, so they can ask for property tax payers to help support them. They've always been able to transfer operating surpluses to maintenance reserves and capital reserves, and now the minister gets to decide how much.

The Alberta Housing Act has a minimum disposable income threshold for lodge residents – right now it's, like, \$365 – meaning that the lodge operator cannot take the entirety of a senior's income to cover lodge rates – this is mostly room and board – that the senior must be able to keep a set amount. That's for personal sundry items throughout the month. Well, that amount will no longer be static. It's going to change from year to year, and the minister is in control of this. This adds a whole new layer of complexity to the operator's budgeting process because there's going to be a month's lag where they're unsure about what that amount is going to be.

The difference between what a resident pays less the disposable income threshold amount often leaves operators in a deficit. The operator is able to requisition property tax dollars from the municipality to cover the subsidized amount. It seems that Bill 28 – anyways, let me go back to that for a second just so everyone is really clear. The lodge operator subsidizes the room and board for lower income seniors, and they can ask for money from the municipality to help cover that. What's interesting in Bill 28 is that it allows social housing bodies, social housing, which is a provincial responsibility, to requisition funds from municipalities, which puts even more financial stress on municipal taxpayers.

11:30

I'm going to talk a little bit about libraries. I know the member opposite just railed about libraries and how, you know, this act is going to protect children, et cetera. Much has already been written about this section of Bill 28. Library inspectors? Really? The Coalition of Alberta Public Libraries reports that they serve 99 per cent of Albertans and 37 million items are borrowed each year. Formal complaints about inappropriate materials in Alberta's public libraries have been extremely rare since – I don't know – forever. I think there's been one complaint about content in a library that's been documented in the last, like, 15 or 20 years.

The UCP whisperer was really active on this one. Like a talented illusionist, an issue was created out of thin air, and the government was convinced to solve a nonexistent problem. Libraries already separate their collection for age appropriateness, and if they find an item that's been miscatalogued, they move it to the appropriate section. It's already being done, Madam Speaker.

The new requirements in this bill also raise unanswered questions about privacy protections, acceptable forms of identification, and how people without government-issued ID, including people without fixed addresses and newcomers, would be able to access libraries fully and lawfully. These changes shift decision-making away from locally appointed library boards and professional staff and move all that responsibility towards provincial officials, threatening local autonomy.

The government is not providing any new funding for this, by the way, but the proposed amendments would require libraries to physically separate materials, retrain staff as age verifiers, administer parental consent processes, redesign service points, modify digital platforms, and prepare for provincial inspections. Oh, and by the way, digital platforms, movies, music that libraries have in their collections – what about that one scene in *Titanic* when they're in the carriage in the bottom hold? Would we now have to get rid of *Titanic*, an Academy award-winning movie, because it doesn't meet this standard? Just something to think about. Again, this is creating increased financial stress on municipalities to maintain current levels of service.

I'm going to talk a bit about some things that I think will have the most negative long-term impact on municipalities, and these are community design, off-site levies, and utilities. Bill 28 says that the minister can create rules around architectural styles, districting, frontage standards and heights, historical architectural styles, landscaping, parks, open spaces, parking, and street design. Well, notwithstanding the fact that no one in Lethbridge or any other municipality wants the minister to determine community design for them, the hidden gem for the government in this list is districting.

"Why is that?" you ask. Districting is land-use zoning. Think of low-, medium-, high-density residential. Think of different types of commercial, industrial land uses that municipal councils decide where they should be located. The most localized decision-making can be illustrated by a council's decision on zoning of a single lot. That decision is only made after a public hearing where proponents and opponents are allowed to speak. I sat on my community's municipal planning commission and was also the chair. Our decision might seem mundane to most people, but those decisions affected people's lives positively or negatively.

Let me give you a couple of examples of this. People wanted to add on to their garage in the back, and they also wanted to extend their kitchen and put a window in. The window actually faced the yards of the people across the alley. Now, that development across the alley all had chain-link fences because when that development was made, they didn't allow for six-foot-high wooden fences. They all had four-foot-high chain-link fences. When this came for

discussion about land use, all the neighbours in the street where they have the chain-link fences came, and they complained heavily about invasion of privacy and how they didn't want people looking out of that window and staring at them in the backyard notwithstanding the fact, again, that you could see from one end to the block because of four-foot chain-link fences. Anyway, when that was voted on, that application was actually denied. This is the kind of thing that we will be missing in this bill.

There was a daycare that applied for a permit on the west side of Lethbridge in my constituency. The neighbours that protested this actually had the gall to come and say that they didn't want a daycare in their neighbourhood because they were retired, and they were too noisy during the day. They didn't want kids to make noise, again, not realizing that there's no one there at night and no one there on weekends. However, their argument fell on deaf ears, and that daycare was allowed to pass. Sorry; the other thing they had to worry about was traffic. The city compensated for that by putting in a three-way stop sign. Now there's not a problem.

Are these the things that you think the minister is concerned about? I don't think so. Not at all. The minister wants control over things like special crosswalks and bike lanes. The minister wants control over bigger picture things like entire developments and pieces of developments blocking or advancing projects of interest to this government or their supporters. This government can and will zone and approve projects and developments without current public scrutiny that is necessary for decisions that reflect the best interests of a community. Just think about that for a minute.

You know, it's interesting. A member opposite said this week: why should Ottawa tell us what to do with our land? And Bill 28 will lead municipalities to say: why should the UCP government tell us what to do with our land?

Let's get back to off-site levies, which are fees paid by developers to help fund infrastructure like roads, water, waste-water systems needed to support new developments. New communities can cost municipalities a lot of money. The projected infrastructure costs for the new community of Providence in Calgary will probably cost about \$582 million. Under existing rules about 42 per cent of that would be eligible for off-site levies, but under the proposed amendments under Bill 28 there will be no new exemptions for off-site levies on vehicles like buses and fire trucks as well as on enhanced architectural or energy-efficient features that go beyond building code and infrastructure needs. Interesting. Hmm.

Municipalities are expected to provide the same level of service to that new community such as public transportation and adequate fire response. Municipalities buy the buses and fire trucks and rescue vehicles, but they cannot use, under this new legislation, off-site levies to purchase them. Once again this bill creates additional financial stresses on municipalities.

This bill also authorizes the use of the automated system for low-risk permits. This is the automatic yes for development that this government drools over.

Then land use ties into these off-site levies in two ways. Number one, the private and charter schools now have access to municipal reserve and school reserve lands. These are lands that are set aside in municipalities, in developments for – you guessed it – schools when a school has been designated for that development. Municipal reserve lands are lands that the municipality hasn't designated for use yet but probably will in the future for whatever that may be. But now private and charter schools will have access to that land. Not only that, but private and charter schools will not have to pay off-site levies to develop that property. You heard that right. Not only will the private and charter schools have access to that land; they will not have to pay for the development of that land and help cover the municipality's costs.

**Mr. Dach:** How is that fair?

**Member Miyashiro:** It is not.

This part of the bill compels a municipality to subsidize the development of a private or charter school and has to give them access to lands typically held for public schools or public uses.

**11:40**

You know, Madam Speaker, the biggest item that probably slipped through under the distraction of controlling libraries and what people should see is utilities transfers, and because I'm kind of a municipal geek, this one really struck me as the most problematic of all. Bill 28 allows cabinet to transfer ownership or control of a municipal utility to a public utility. A municipal utility to a public utility. What's the reason for this? No one asked for it. Oh, yes. You know what it is? Calgary is bad. They don't know how to do water mains, and it's the Leader of the Opposition's fault. That just proves that the UCP government doesn't understand that mayors have a single vote on council. One. They don't have any superpower on municipal councils.

Regardless of that reason, the minister seems to lack an understanding of the regional nature of water and waste-water services across the province, which are utilities. Calgary serves Airdrie, serves Chestermere, serves a wide area of people. Edmonton also, around the doughnut. Red Deer serves a large area around central Alberta. Lethbridge provides fresh water and waste-water services to a number of communities around Lethbridge. In fact, Madam Speaker, there are 38 regional water and waste-water partnerships across the province.

Now, I'm not sure if, when they developed this clause in the legislation, they understood water and waste-water utilities, how integrated those services are across our province. What is the point to wanting to take those over? That's the question. You know what it's not? It's not about water and waste water unless, of course, you go back to what I said about the cabinet and the minister being able to approve developments. Guess what? Now you can approve water and waste water for different projects even if there's not enough available.

I think that what it comes down to is electric utilities. Municipally owned electric utilities are something that this government probably has a real interest in because the government is interested in electricity, so why not take over something like Enmax or EPCOR? Hmm. Is that the endgame for this? This government actually just wants to take over municipally owned utilities and make them public. To what end? If they do take those over, then that means they have to take over all the staff. That means they have to take over the infrastructure. Now all of a sudden the government is growing again, and for a government that prides itself on, like, "We're going to be small government," which we know they're not, taking on electrical utilities is a giant undertaking that they're actually not prepared to do and to provide that last mile, as we say, of electrical service to residents. Do we really want the provincial government to control municipal utilities? I think not. Again, Madam Speaker, no one asked for this.

Now, I'd be remiss if I didn't talk about the preventing vacancy tax, which we can pretty much call the Canmore tax because out of the over 400 municipalities in Alberta, this applies directly to Canmore. One municipality out of 400-plus, and this government wants to say: "Nope. You can't implement that tax." All the revenues from that tax in the municipality of Canmore were going to go to developing social housing and affordable housing, but they're going to take that away for people that have three or four houses in the province, people that have two or three. I had a discussion with a relative of mine that owns multiple houses across

the province, and I pretty much told them: “You know what? Suck it up. You need to pay this tax.” If you have enough money to have three houses across the province in three different municipalities, you have enough money to pay that tax.

Also, you know what? You know, also . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister of community, social services, seniors, housing.

**Mr. Nixon:** Assisted living, too, and everything in between, Madam Speaker.

What a great morning to be here in the Alberta Legislature and have a couple of minutes to talk to you about this important piece of legislation coming from my colleague the hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who has been a great partner in working with me as the minister responsible for housing in our province to be able to make sure that we can accomplish some of the most extraordinary things that we’ve seen anywhere in the country and certainly in the history of this province when it comes to housing.

I want to start first with this conversation about utilities, which the member just before me from Lethbridge-West just spoke about in the Chamber, about the concern about utilities and who should be responsible for utilities. Well, what I can tell you is that I certainly support the Municipal Affairs minister having a conversation about this issue because who should not be responsible for utilities is the leader of the NDP Party, the Leader of the Official Opposition in this province, who as a former mayor of Calgary oversaw some of the largest destruction of utilities in the history of the city of Calgary, ending up with hundreds of millions of dollars in damage to their pipes that were not repaired despite the fact that multiple reports were given to him when he was the mayor of our largest city. He did not take action as a result of that, and what happened? They ran out of water. You had Calgarians in the largest city in our province having to ration water because of the inadequacy of the Leader of the Opposition when he was the mayor to respond to that important issue despite the fact that he had been briefed on it.

In my hometown of Sundre, Alberta, we have a mayor, a great guy, His Worship Mayor Warnock, who is an awesome guy for the community of Sundre. It’s a part-time job to be the mayor of Sundre. He was briefed at a similar timeline about the challenges that were happening inside the town of Sundre with our pipes that were getting quite old in our community underneath the main highway that drives through town. You know what he did? He went and got the pipes fixed, and nobody in the community of Sundre had to go without water. So in that case, maybe you can trust somebody like that, but it certainly becomes a challenge when you end up in a spot like that.

I’ll also point out the mayor of Rimbey in my constituency, His Worship Mayor Pankiw, who was overseeing a community where the pipes were still wooden in portions of Rimbey. He was briefed on the challenges that could come as a result of that to the community. You know what he did? He took action with his council, started to fix the pipes.

Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition did not do that. He was too busy getting his picture taken somewhere and not taking action for the city of Calgary, which I suspect is why the Minister of Municipal Affairs is having to step in to be able to make sure they can protect citizens from having that ever happen to them again. God help this province if that member ever became the Premier. I don’t know what’d happen to pipes everywhere if that was the case. Maybe we’d stop fixing highways or fixing hospitals or those types of things.

**An Hon. Member:** What about pipelines?

**Mr. Nixon:** Now, most of this bill – well, the hon. members are heckling: pipelines. God help this province if the NDP ever get back in power again considering they have protested against pipelines. Their party upheld Justin Trudeau’s Liberal government for over a decade, that almost shut down the entire oil and gas industry in this province while they sat there on their hands and never voted once to defend the province of Alberta. So if they would like to have a conversation about pipelines, excited to do that at any time.

But today we’re talking about housing, Madam Speaker, including fixing utilities and the work that the Minister of Municipal Affairs is attempting to do here. Now, why does this matter? The hon. member just said that there had been no consultation that took place with municipalities, that nobody asked for these things to take place. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the Department of Municipal Affairs both under the former minister and under the current minister worked very closely with my department over the last three years having regular roundtables with industry, municipal leaders, and others that are involved in housing to be able to make sure we can come up with a plan that worked.

The NDP had put forward a plan, as you probably know, Madam Speaker, that said, essentially: do nothing. Their theory was to just ignore the homeless crisis, let everybody continue not to go into shelters, not to invest inside that space, not to invest in affordable housing. That’s why you saw affordable housing wait-lists go up by 75 per cent when the NDP were in power. They came up with this crazy idea of doing rent control. Every other jurisdiction who tried it saw a catastrophe take place inside their communities: rent go up, lack of supply, more homeless people, and challenges, in some cases like New York City, that have lasted for decades as a result of that type of a policy.

So we looked at a different approach. We sat down with Municipal Affairs and other key partners, and we went around and we had a conversation. We said: we have a supply problem in this province; we need to be able to make sure that the housing market can keep up with supply. We’ve got to make sure that mayors like the Leader of the Opposition when he was mayor get out of the way and stop making things worse by not fixing pipes or building roads or approving permits or the things that matter with that and then be able to make sure that we could create that supply situation, that we make sure there are enough homes for everybody inside this province, which would result, we predicted, in rent going down because it was a supply challenge. The NDP’s theory was to limit the supply, and then somehow, magically, the rent would go down. Clearly, that doesn’t work.

**11:50**

I will say this, Madam Speaker. During this period of time, the last couple of years, as we’ve been dealing with the housing situation across the country, two provinces did try to flirt with that a little bit, not to the level that the Alberta NDP were calling for but a little bit, in Ontario and Vancouver. I will give you my case in point of why it didn’t work. Just go check the rents in Toronto and Vancouver, and you will very clearly realize that that was a mistake. Both those provinces’ housing is going down, and rent continues to skyrocket.

Now, what’s happening in Alberta because we took that different approach? We have had nonstop for the last three years consecutive quarters of record-breaking housing builds, but also on top of that we’ve had consecutive quarters of being the only jurisdiction in the country where rent is going down. That’s the good news. That’s

because we ignored the NDP's advice, and we were able to create spaces. Now, what does that mean in numbers?

**Mr. Stephan:** Just do the opposite.

**Mr. Nixon:** Exactly. Do the opposite. My friend from Red Deer-South: I very much agree with him.

That's actually been my philosophy as a minister. It's why I'm so predictable, as the housing critic of the NDP said today in question period. I am predictable. I will always do the opposite of the NDP. That's why I'm the most successful housing minister in the country. The best advice I could ever get from the NDP is that they tell me what they would do, and then I do the opposite, which leads to my success.

What the numbers are is this. We are responsible for 12 per cent of the population, Madam Speaker. We built this year alone 25 per cent of all the housing builds in the country. We are the only place with a net positive increase of housing this year in Canada, and we're the only place where rent was going down in Canada as a result of that. It gets more staggering when you look at it for the prairies. Us as a prairie province: you know what we're responsible for? Eighty per cent of all home builds are taking place right here in this province.

We also challenge industry in our partnership with Municipal Affairs to show us what we need to do to be able to make more purpose-built rentals because that's critical to being able to lower rent long term. We have the most purpose-built rentals that were ever built in this province that took place over the last year, resulting in almost 30 per cent of all our builds being purpose-built rentals.

All of that together has caused rent to go down four times the national average in Alberta, has resulted in six of the 10 most affordable small jurisdictions being here in the province of Alberta, and has resulted in our two largest cities, Calgary and Edmonton, being the most affordable large cities anywhere in North America. That's staggering success, and that's from doing work like this.

Now, the hon. member comes from the city of Lethbridge. We had to go down and have some serious conversations with them about the fact that they weren't approving permits. They weren't actually building. In fact, when I became the minister of housing – my friend the MLA for Lethbridge-East will know this – I had to go down there because I was briefed that a housing project that had been approved by five ministers before still had not cleared council. That member would have been a council member during that period of time. I went to council. I said: this has to stop.

**Member Miyashiro:** That was your fault.

**Mr. Nixon:** There must be true, actual investments, not holding on the money. You know, the hon. member says that it's my fault. Well, I just became the minister 48 hours before, so it certainly wasn't my fault.

I'll tell you what was my fault: the fact that it finally got built, Madam Speaker. I went down there, I challenged council to get it fixed, and I told them that we would not continue to send money to Lethbridge until they started to partner with us on this. And you know what Lethbridge did? They started to invest that money. Lethbridge has at times increased their home builds by almost 200 per cent as a result of that. Credit to the mayor of Lethbridge and credit to his council for listening, working as partners to be able to make sure that Lethbridge could see the success it had and by rejecting what was a false promise of rent control and making sure it could take place.

The second issue is affordable housing, which is part of the market. You must make sure that you get enough capacity in the

market to be able to make sure affordable housing can be affordable even for the government. If there's not enough supply inside the market at this level of demand, the cost for us to build affordable housing units goes through the roof. Now, we'll supplement the rent, which is what we do in Alberta to help those who can't afford it, but our costs are still going to go up while we deal with that. This is why we have to be able to increase the supply.

We recognized in this province that we couldn't just focus on the market, but we had to focus on the market. We also at the same time invested in our stronger foundations plan, which is to create 82,000 more affordable households all across Alberta, Madam Speaker, investing – get this – \$9 billion in affordable housing over a decade. We're halfway done that. We are right on track as far as those construction numbers, which has also led the way to be able to see wait-lists go down when it comes to affordable housing, something I'm very proud of because I inherited from the NDP wait-lists that went up by 75 per cent.

Our Conservative government was able to make those investments in key areas by trusting industry, by trusting our nonprofit partners, by trusting our municipal partners, by working on things like being able to get access to land that had been abandoned for schools, a great partnership we had here with the city of Edmonton. As the outgoing mayor, the former mayor of Edmonton said, it was the best partnership he ever had with any government during his time as mayor, the partnership with this government for housing. Together with that mayor and his council we increased the housing stock in the city of Edmonton by 30 per cent in 24 months because we took time to do the things that the Minister of Municipal Affairs is doing. He's continued that work because that's the instructions from the Premier: continue to do that work, continue to find the space where we can be able to make sure we can have that success. He's bringing that legislation to the floor today.

What can the hon. members across the way do? All they can do is speak against it because they don't want that success to continue, Madam Speaker. They don't want Alberta to be successful. They want to get up inside the Chamber each day and say: the sky is falling; this is the worst day of all times. It gets a little old when you say it every day. There are some fairy tales about that. I won't get into that today, but maybe some of the members should check that out. They involve something about crying wolf and Chicken Little. That might be another one you might want to check out if you get some time. But they clearly don't want us to be successful. That's sad because that's for them just for partisan purposes so that they can get up here and make themselves feel good and rant for their TikToks or whatever they're doing instead of helping the government and, most importantly, helping their constituents make sure that they could have more homes, working with municipalities to make sure that situation can be fixed.

Lastly, I want to quickly talk about seniors' housing and continuing care. I think it is one of the most appalling things that took place over the last several years. The NDP let AHS get increased money each year for continuing care and then did not build any continuing care. It's statistically a fact. I've shown it to the media where they didn't build. They didn't build. It went flatter, it went down, but the money increased each year. They let AHS take that for pet projects or who knows what. One of the reasons why we had to deal with the situation that we found in AHS was exactly that.

This government said no. We've got aging rates that are the highest that we've ever had in the history of the province. All of the western world does. Alberta is in a little better shape because we have a younger population, but we are still impacted by the challenges of the fact that we're getting more and more seniors here, almost 5,000 a month, Madam Speaker. We said to AHS: we're

taking that back. We're going to bring it back in government, and we're going to come up with a concrete plan in partnership with municipalities, our contract providers, our nonprofit providers and make sure that we're going to be able to build places for our grandparents and our parents to be able to retire, the people who built this province.

Together with the Premier I was proud to announce on behalf of this government, every member of the government caucus, the largest continuing care capital upgrade in the history of the province. Over the next decade we're going to build 15,000 more units all across the province. We already right now today, Madam Speaker, have almost 4,000 of those units under construction. When you compare that to the NDP's plan, which was build none, zero, literally zero net new houses – it's literally zero net new continuing care facilities. Zero. That's all they built. I actually couldn't even believe it when I was first briefed on it. Zero. It's a crazy number. Actually, it's not a number technically, I suspect, but I'll check with one of my more mathematically inclined colleagues whether zero is a number or not. But it wasn't one. That's for sure. Compare that to 15,000 more units worth of investment.

You can't do that, though, if you can't get the permits. You can't do that if you can't get the land. You can't do that if construction companies are stopped from being able to do their work. You can't do that if you overregulate the sector to make sure things can't get built. You can't do that when you bring in bizarre rules like the NDP did for continuing care facilities that they had to vacuum inside the walls before you would build it like it was a surgical bay. You can't accomplish that underneath the process that they made, and most importantly you can't accomplish it if you bring in things like rent control.

I really urge everybody in this Legislature to support the Minister of Municipal Affairs for this bill and to recognize the extraordinary success of this province when it comes to housing.

12:00

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

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I won't support this bill, and I'll tell you why. I was a city councillor in Calgary from 1995 to 2010, 15 years, five terms, re-elected five times. The Premiers during those times were people who had some experience with the municipal councils. Ralph Klein, long-time mayor of Calgary, then long-time Premier of this province knew municipalities and the work of municipalities. He, obviously, was a revered mayor for Calgary. Ed Stelmach was the second Premier during my tenure as a city councillor in Calgary. I think he had school board experience, and then he went to the local county, had elected experience there, and he became a Premier of this province. Both of those Premiers respected the work of municipalities because they'd come from that scene, they'd come from that environment. When they got here, they worked closely with municipalities – every Premier tries to – and their associations. There was none of this that we're seeing in Bill 28, which is a continued attack on municipalities in this province, particularly on the municipalities across this province, their authority, their autonomy, and their jurisdictions. That's what's in Bill 28.

We know that in the spring of 2024 the UCP passed Bill 20, called the Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2024. It was the first major set of amendments affecting municipalities that this government has undertaken. At the time this side framed that as the Premier trying to control everything everywhere all at once. That was in the spring of 2024. Then in the spring of 2025, you know, like, 11 months ago, the UCP passed Bill 50, the Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2025. This was the second Municipal

Government Act amendment brought forward by the UCP. It included amendments such as the elimination of codes of conduct and a series of changes regarding chief administrative officers. We strongly opposed that bill as well, arguing that the UCP is seriously overreaching into municipal jurisdiction, encroaching on the autonomy of municipalities.

Bill 28 follows in those footsteps, Madam Speaker. It follows non-MGA-amending legislation that pools power and decision-making authority in the minister's and the Premier's offices. That's wrong. The minister and the Premier and probably most of the members on that side don't know what it's like to work as an elected municipal leader. They've never had that experience. So they don't mind stripping municipalities of their autonomy. It's an authoritarian action that this government oversteps all the time.

I was just listening to the previous speaker and his laying every issue, every problem in this province at the feet of the NDP. Madam Speaker, it belies reason. The reason it's totally a made-up argument is because if you look at the precursors to the UCP, it was the PCs. They were in power for 44 years. The UCP has been in power for seven years. That's 51 years since 1971. But every problem in this province is because of the four years of the NDP. It doesn't make any sense. They know it. But they keep saying it because, you know, they're in power, and they can say anything they want. Well, on this side we know it's not true. We know that Albertans do not want their powers eroded, but every day that's what happens from the other side. In my time at city council we worked with the provincial government, the PC governments of the day. We didn't like everything that was happening, but we didn't have our powers stripped away willy-nilly by the government power like they do today. We worked with them.

I'll just give you some examples of the stripping of power. You know, this whole Libraries Act amendment that's here and the inspectors that are going to be hired or the inspectors that are going to go into libraries across the province: these inspectors, if I review their kind of two and a half pages in this bill in terms of their powers, these are more powers than the UCP gave Judge Wyant to look at the whole corruption going on in the surgical facilities or the Turkish Tyleneol. Judge Wyant didn't have the same breadth of powers that are identified here. And why is that? Obviously, the UCP controlled all of that. They don't want to be transparent about all the problems that are going on in this government. They want to continue to throw spaghetti at the wall so that Albertans can't really try and figure out one thing or another.

Well, municipalities have it figured out. The fact that BILD was standing up with the minister when this was announced is kind of instructive because, when you look at it, municipalities are going to not be able to individually work with their local BILD and come up with off-site levy amounts. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that when I was at city council, we had some brilliant people doing those negotiations for our side. It took a while – it was a precursor to BILD at the time; it was the urban institute of developers – but we had some negotiations go on all the time, and they reflected the needs of our municipality. That's what I fear this Bill 28 will do, is that it's going to make, you know, like a homogeneous kind of approach to municipalities. They're not the same across the province. Obviously, we know that. There are hundreds of municipalities and counties and rural municipalities, towns, villages, and they deserve a unique approach so that they can address the needs of their taxpayers.

We did quite a good job as councils. I was on five different ones, and certainly the Speaker of the day today was on three of those councils with me. I just think that if there were people with some municipal experience writing these, they would not come out in the same way as they have right now, Madam Speaker. I think, as I said,

they're overreaching. They erode the authority of municipalities. They devalue local decision-making. I had a meeting with a couple of separate school board trustees, and they alerted me to the whole fact that private and charter schools now will be able to be on the same footing as them in municipalities. You know, it's going to make working at the municipal level far too onerous, complicated, and, as I said, devaluing the input of local councillors.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

The other thing is not in this bill, but another example is this UCP government taking steps to bring parties into city councils. Nobody wanted that, but you know, the government thought that would – I don't know what they think that would do. We prided ourselves at the local level of being independent. Finding a reason to run for your local city council, sharing that with potential voters, and then kind of acknowledging that they wanted to have you do that work for them: that used to be the time-honoured approach to making that happen. Now we've got all these parties at the local level and it hasn't improved anything.

12:10

I'm disappointed with Bill 28, with Bill 50 before, with the previous bill in the fall of 2024. None of those help. None of those empower municipalities, and that's what government should do, shouldn't it? I mean, we want to empower people to do better, but what we're seeing is a stripping of responsibilities. Not only are trustees feeling, across this province, both at the public and separate level, like their powers have been stripped, but now we're seeing that city councillors, town councillors are under the same kind of onerous treatment by this government.

Mr. Speaker, I won't be supporting this. I think it's in the wrong direction. I don't think it's what municipalities are looking for. You know, this government needs to back up, talk to municipalities, and respect what they can do.

Thank you.

**Mr. Kasawski:** Good morrow. Pray, lend me thy ears.

Mr. Speaker, today on National Talk Like Shakespeare Day, I rise to speak on Bill 28. Specifically, to the very real concern and impacts this legislation will have on community libraries.

**Mr. Dach:** To support or not support?

**Mr. Kasawski:** To support or not to support? That is the question, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps after this debate we'll have a better idea.

There's outstanding work done every day by the library in Strathcona County. You don't have to know what the hours are of the library. When you show up in the morning, you see a crowd – a crowd – of people waiting every day for the doors to open at the Strathcona county library in Sherwood Park. It is such a resource to our community, so beloved, so well used, and so trusted that we're left wondering where this legislation came from.

While I promise to not turn this Chamber into a five-act play, I cannot ignore the wisdom of William Shakespeare himself who warned us "wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast." Those words from *Romeo and Juliet* are particularly relevant today because, Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what the public libraries across Alberta are asking of this government. Slow down. Consult meaningfully. Ensure that in trying to address the concerns that you may have we are not creating many, many more.

As Mr. Shakespeare also reminds us in *The Tempest*, "what's past is prologue," and what we have seen from this government time and time again is a pattern. A pattern of rushing legislation – shoddy legislation – of centralizing power, and failing to listen to the very people who will be affected most, failing to listen to Albertans, and

Bill 28 is, again, no exception to this pattern, this prologue written by the UCP.

Mr. Speaker, let's be clear about what's at stake. Public libraries are not some abstract institution, they're not ideological battlegrounds; they're living, breathing community spaces. They're where newcomers find resources to start building their life here, where job seekers access the tools they need to access the workforce, where seniors find connection, where families gather and spend time on outings, where children discover the joy of reading. At the Strathcona county library, that work happens every single day through literacy programs, Internet access, job-search support, and safe, welcoming spaces for all. The library itself has become a centre where newcomers are often getting access to the social services provided by the provincial government. Yet, despite all the good that's being done, this government has chosen to include sweeping changes to the Libraries Act within this omnibus bill without any meaningful consultation, without careful consideration, and without respect for the local governance model that has served Albertans well for decades. No one asked for this, Mr. Speaker. I can assure you.

We've had the member across the way talking about the number zero a lot. He's mentioned zero many times. What I'd like to mention is that zero times has anyone written the MLA for Sherwood Park to raise any concerns about the content in the libraries at the Strathcona county library. Zero times. It's never heard about. Where is this coming from? It is unknown.

I'll tell you about some of the number one priorities, because we keep track of them. I think the number one priority that we get is that we hear about health care. Clearly that comes up a lot.

We've been hearing about pensions. That comes up a lot. People are anxious about that. We've been hearing about public safety. We've been hearing about disability services and access to AISH. We've been hearing a lot about coal mining. In particular, nobody wants coal mining in the Rocky Mountains, and they want to protect Alberta's headwaters.

Not once have I received any information or any requests mentioning anything about content in the libraries in the Strathcona county public library. No one asked for this. In Sherwood Park I've not received a single inquiry on what is on the library shelves. This legislation allows for people that are not from Sherwood Park, not from Strathcona county, to raise concerns and then invite inspectors to come into the Strathcona county library like thought police and wreak havoc on the community that we've created inside that library. It is shoddy legislation cut and paste from the U.S. MAGA movement.

We've seen this before with the UCP. In good faith we stand in the Legislature and advise the government against adopting shoddy legislation, like the legislation they brought in to take the limits off gifts, which led to entitled Conservatives taking private flights on luxury private jets to hockey games in other cities. At the beginning of the 2023 hockey season they brought in legislation to remove gift limits for MLAs. By the end of the hockey season the Premier was sitting with Sam Mraiche in a skybox in Vancouver. She was flown there, gifted a flight there on a private jet.

Now, the next step we've heard recently: on the most significant day in the term of this government, when they took away the right for teachers to bargain in good faith for their wages and working conditions, the Premier took another flight on a Saudi prince's luxury private jet. So they brought in shoddy legislation to remove gift limits, then within a year, and years on now, they are continuing to take private jets. The UCP get private jets and Albertans just get regrets. This is not thoughtful government; it is a power grab.

This legislation is another example of the UCP exerting more control over municipalities, another step in a troubling pattern, the

prologue they have written of undermining local decision-making. Municipalities are not subsidiaries of the provincial government; they are partners. They are democratically elected bodies that understand the unique needs of their communities, and when it comes to libraries, that local knowledge matters. The local community standards matter.

Under the current system library boards made up of community volunteers and local representatives are entrusted with governance, policy oversight, and ensuring that services reflect the needs of people they serve in their community. In their community. Bill 28 disrupts that balance. It shifts authority away from local boards and professional staff and places it in the hands of the minister. It creates a misalignment between responsibility and decision-making power. It centralizes control in a way that both is unnecessary and deeply concerning. Mr. Speaker, despite what this government might think, local decision-making is not a weakness. It is an enormous strength. Albertans have been clear. They do not want the government eroding the autonomy of municipalities.

12:20

The concerns do not stop there. One of the most troubling aspects of Bill 28 is the breadth of power it grants. While the stated intent may be to protect children, something we all want to do in this Legislature, the language of the bill goes far beyond that. As written, it would allow restrictions on access to library materials on any topic, in any format, for any age group. That's not targeted policy. That's not a light touch or a subtle clarification of the rules, as the minister might present to us, as he'd have you hear: it's just a subtle change. It's sweeping unchecked authority. Let us call it what it is. It's censorship. Even if materials remain physically present in a library, restricting access through provincial directives to the local community library is still a barrier. It still limits the ability of Albertans to access information freely. As Shakespeare wrote in *Twelfth Night*, "There is no darkness but ignorance." Libraries exist to combat that ignorance, to provide access to knowledge, to foster curiosity, to support lifelong learning. Bill 28 risks undermining that very mission.

Mr. Speaker, there are also serious concerns about privacy. Public libraries have long been champions of intellectual freedom and confidentiality. Albertans trust that what they read, what they research, and what they borrow remains private. But this legislation introduces a possibility of age verification requirements that could force libraries to collect and store sensitive personal information such as dates of birth. In an era where cyberthreats are increasing, this is not a trivial concern. Libraries have been working digitally to reduce the amount of personal data they retain precisely to protect users from risks like identity theft. Bill 28 moves in the opposite direction. Is the government backing up this bill with the funding to ensure that every library across this province has cybersecurity protection that is as strong as the provincial government's? This bill creates vulnerabilities. It asks front-line staff, many of whom are young workers, to act as gatekeepers to verify identification and potentially to manage sensitive information about patrons.

It goes even further. Under this bill inspectors would have the authority to enter libraries, interview staff, including part-time employees, to compel them to provide information and library operations about patrons. It's asking inspectors to come in, ask underage Albertans to snitch on patrons, to report on what they're seeing. This is bonkers, Mr. Speaker. It raises serious questions about both the privacy and psychological safety of our workers. Librarians, who take good care to make sure that their volunteers, their youth volunteers and their under-18 employees come in and work in a safe environment, are now at risk of someone from some

far-flung community outside of their own, reporting on a library, sending in an inspector, and then having that inspector come in and accost the underage employees in the library. It is not a place where you imagine will be a space of safety, something that is created in most libraries across this province, an environment that people want to visit, that is safe and welcoming.

There will be costs to this that are not being addressed by the minister. We are left with that constant thing we hear from the UCP: "Just trust us. We'll take care of it in regulations. We're not trying to do what you think we're trying to do." Then why are you cutting and pasting legislation from the U.S. MAGA movement and bringing it into Alberta? Why not let our Alberta-made way that we manage libraries continue? It works well. It is an excellent system. It is collaborative. It is practical. It is respectful of a community of diversity. It is not some U.S. cut-and-paste MAGA legislation.

Mr. Speaker, after raising a lot of good quotes from Shakespeare and speaking with some passion about how much I appreciate the library in Strathcona county, I think I'd like to let you know that I will not be supporting this omnibus bill because of the components in it that are going to be bad for libraries in Alberta and especially in Sherwood Park.

And with that, I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

### Bill 22

#### Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2026

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to share details of Bill 22, the Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2026, with you as I ask for support to get this through third reading and pass it into law.

The proposed amendments outlined in Bill 22 make up the first amendments that the Animal Protection Act has seen in over 20 years. The act establishes the minimum care requirements for all animals and prohibits causing or allowing an animal to be in distress. It enables peace officers and police officers to act when animals are in distress, including the ability to take them into custody and hold the individuals accountable. Officers can also respond to situations involving abandoned animals.

Mr. Speaker, it's been a long time since we last updated this act, and the dozens of changes that we are proposing will have lasting impacts and improve care for animals in our province. Certain amendments, of course, are administrative while others are intended to bring the act into closer harmony with existing Alberta laws and animal protection legislation across the country. Even changes that seem minor, like updating terms and definitions, will have a big impact when it comes to animal protection. For example, updating the definitions of distress and abandonment will make it easier for peace officers to intervene or remove animals from harmful conditions. I have heard concerns that certain terms are not explicitly included in Bill 22; however, I want to reassure those concerned that the proposed changes are designed to address the underlying issues.

I'm proud to share that, if passed, the Animal Protection Amendment Act will make Alberta a leader in protecting animals from repeat offenders. We will expand the availability of prohibition orders and provide guidance to the court to ensure orders are effective. We will also be the first province in Canada to allow the enforcement of prohibition orders issued in other provinces or

territories. Mr. Speaker, here's why that is so important. If a court in another province or territory has restricted or prohibited an individual from owning or living with animals, we'll be able to enforce that order here. The change will ensure that people won't be able to evade these orders and potentially reoffend in Alberta. Since we are the first province taking this on, there will be a bit of a learning curve, and I understand that some may have concerns about how this will work, and I want to assure you that is top of my mind and my department.

Many animal protection enforcement agencies across Canada routinely share information with each other either directly or through other networks. Prohibition orders are often shared through these channels. Some agencies also maintain informal lists of existing prohibition orders online. Alternatively, if an existing prohibition order comes to light following a complaint in Alberta, officers could then enforce the order immediately, potentially avoiding the need for a new court proceeding. In the future, if other provinces and territories follow Alberta's lead, there may be an opportunity to consider a more formal registry for prohibition orders to facilitate consistent information-sharing across Canada.

Now, enforcement is essential to the success of the Animal Protection Amendment Act. As we expand our framework, we need to make sure that the officers who are responsible for upholding the act are given the tools they need to succeed. Amendments to the act will modernize inspection authorities and expand them to include businesses serving the animal-owning public such as boarding and grooming facilities.

Another question I heard was about ensuring consistency between municipalities. Rest assured, Mr. Speaker, we are taking this seriously. At a minimum, peace officers across the province need to complete approved basic training at the provincial training academy or an agency authorized to deliver training under a licensing agreement with the academy. Officers often undertake additional accredited training, for example, related to warrant applications and handling of dangerous dogs. Peace officers specializing in animal protection commonly take advantage of other relevant industry training opportunities, including training related to humane handling of livestock and assessing animal body conditions.

**12:30**

To be clear, Mr. Speaker, while the proposed legislation will give peace officers greater authority to investigate and intervene, this does not create unchecked powers. Peace officers will continue to remain restricted to the terms, conditions, and territory of their specific appointment as well as existing legislation and established protocols. Oversight mechanisms and safeguards remain in place to ensure peace officers' actions are lawful and appropriate, and any concerns about the actions or conduct of a peace officer can be formally reviewed through existing processes.

Mr. Speaker, harming an animal is a serious offence, and it's time we also updated the penalties to reflect that. We will be increasing maximum fines from \$20,000 to \$250,000 and enabling, for the first time, jail time. These changes reflect our commitment to protecting animals and sending a very clear message to individuals, that abuse against animals in Alberta is not acceptable.

Another step we will be taking is to create a new offence to deter and address intentionally false complaints. When a complainant seeks to weaponize the animal protection system, possibly related to an interpersonal dispute, this wastes precious enforcement resources and can lower overall trust in the system. I understand there are concerns that this step could deter people from reporting out of fear or repercussions, but this is simply meant to discourage intentionally false or malicious reports. It is by no means intended to discourage legitimate reports even where the reporter is uncertain

whether they are or are not seeing a problem. We're not the first province or territory to take this step. Our proposed approach mirrors that in Yukon's animal protection act, and that has been in effect since 2022.

Mr. Speaker, the Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2026, is very important. It covers all animals in our province from livestock on farms to pets like cats and dogs. Now, I believe it was important to modernize Alberta's legislation to address core issues and align with other Canadian jurisdictions. I'm proud of the work that we've done. I'm confident that the changes we're proposing will have a lasting positive effect on animal protection in our province, and I thank you for this House and the time.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** If it's the wish of the minister to move third reading, I need him to do that at this time.

**Mr. Sigurdson:** With that, I would like to move third reading of Bill 22, the Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2026.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

I have the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, and then the Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Cyr:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to rise to the Assembly today to speak on an important piece of legislation, Bill 22. This bill, the Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2026, will improve outcomes for animals in distress or at risk of distress. This is a bill that we think we all can agree on that is overdue. We will be updating the Animal Protection Act for the first time in 20 years to increase fines for offences and improve court orders to protect animals from repeat offences.

This is an issue that hits close to home for many Albertans all across the province. Whether it is through raising cattle, working in veterinarian services, or having household pets, animals are an important part of our daily lives. Those who have pets at home know that they are more than that. They are truly our valued family members. I don't want to ignite a debate on dog versus cat, but no matter what pets we have at home, we all know they bring love, loyalty, and comfort.

In my family's case we have a dog named Lexa. I first met her when I was touring an animal shelter after the devastating fires in Fort McMurray. A corgi-Pomeranian mix, she immediately found her way into my heart. Seeing her there scared, in such need of a loving home, was something I couldn't ignore. So I sent a photo of her to my wife. It was safe to say I wasn't going to be leaving empty-handed.

Ever since then she has become a beloved family member to our family. She has also been by our side through holidays, birthdays, family vacations, and everything in between. She has been a loyal friend to my children as they have grown up and a source of comfort for both my wife and myself. We have been truly blessed to have her as a member of the family. Thinking about Lexa and all those other pets across the province, it really brings this issue home for me. Every animal in this province deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. It is our duty as caretakers for animals to provide them with the same level of care and attention they provide us.

It's not just pet owners who share this responsibility. Livestock producers across the province also care for and protect their animals every day. I can tell you that the vast majority of producers in this province have an incredible level of care for their animals. We have some incredible ranchers and farmers in the lakeland that do great work to respect the dignity of life of their animals. They raise cattle in humane and respectful ways, literally dedicating their lives to

proper animal welfare. If you have never been to a ranch, I highly recommend you do so. It is inspiring to see these hard-working Albertans care and tend for their herds.

We should be proud about the high standards we have here in the province, but we can always do better. Unfortunately, there are those who do not respect the welfare and well-being of animals. Animal abuse is truly a horrific evil. Hurting those who cannot defend themselves or cannot ask for help is cruel and wrong. Whether it is through neglect or outright violence, there is no excuse to mistreat a pet or livestock. The abuse of animals is a crime, Mr. Speaker, and we will not stand by when we can do more.

That is exactly what the government is doing with Bill 22. We are now giving peace officers and police officers the ability to intervene when there is a need to protect animals. There will also be expanded inspection and compliance measures, and we're opening this up for boarding and grooming activities as well. With these new powers law enforcement will be able to protect those who are unable to ask for help. The punishments for these crimes will be severe, especially for repeat offenders.

We have an obligation to protect animals as they don't have the opportunity to advocate for themselves. Please, to my friends and colleagues in this Assembly, I ask you to support this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Member Tejada:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 22, the Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2026. We know that a review and a refresh of this act is about 20 years overdue; as such, I'm pleased to see that such important issues are being addressed in our province and very happy to offer my support for this bill.

Alberta's New Democrats support improvements to outdated legislation that protects animals. As I've heard from many of the members opposite and on this side of the House, animals deserve to live in dignity. A lot of the changes that we're seeing made through Bill 22 better align Alberta with other jurisdictions, and I would hope that that's always a consideration in any of the legislation that we're looking at in this House.

Now, there are a lot of great things about this bill, and while we know that it is very much a long time coming, there's perhaps a disconnect around the laws that the UCP is willing to pass and the resources that they would be willing to provide for enforcement.

But I'll talk a little bit about some of the comments that I heard from my esteemed colleague for Edmonton-McClung around the Animal Protection Act and how it would address concerns with respect to animals and their care, their protection, and how often Albertans aren't really thinking about those protections from an agricultural standpoint. I think when we're talking about that, we're talking broadly about folks who might not be involved in their care in terms of the agricultural industry. It does speak to how in this province we have a long history of ranching and farming and how it's critical to the success and also reputation of such key industries that we prioritize making legislation that's well informed, well consulted, and review standards of care to ensure that they are relevant.

**12:40**

It's also important that we review these standards when it comes to animal ownership. Currently I do not have a pet, much to the chagrin of my daughters, but in the past – actually, I just keep thinking, like, in this job how possible is it to take good care of pets? Although I know that you would argue with me because you are a great pet owner, Member for Calgary-Edgemont.

In my family history, however, we've been very, very fortunate to interact with a lot of the rescue organizations in Calgary. We've had two pets that are rescues, and I would say that my daughters are very passionate about animal care and how the animals in their general vicinity are doing and do a little bit of the rescuing themselves sometimes.

It just gets me thinking about a lot of those organizations. I do see that there was consultation done with some of those organizations, so that's great. I would just offer that in the face of an affordability crisis, there are other preventive measures that can also be taken to support organizations like, say, Parachutes for Pets, who, I learned through the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, has lost funding. That's unfortunate because they often deal with the consequences of this government not doing enough on affordability and houselessness, and I've been able to chat with folks in that organization and see a lot of the work that's been done on pet food banks. They do great work there. We have organizations like the Meow Foundation, which is also doing a lot of great work to ensure that animals are well cared for and safe and find good homes.

Now, in terms of consultation, I did pay special attention to some of the notes from my colleague from Edmonton-Manning, who was talking about consultation with zoos and how they will definitely, at some point I'm sure, interface with the Animal Protection Act.

I myself have had some incredibly rich conversations with leaders at the Calgary Zoo, an institution in Calgary, one that I'm happy to have interacted with from babyhood to adulthood and to having my own babies. The conversations that I had with the leaders there really deepened my understanding not only of their work in terms of conservation but also their commitment to the good care and health of animals. It's something that I know if any of the members here would like to take a look at their website, they go into some detail there, but I was also just incredibly impressed by the work that they are doing.

I think that when this bill was introduced, perhaps they had not yet been involved in consultations, but it's my sincere hope that they are consulted throughout the stages of this bill and into the regulation stages. They do a lot of great work in Calgary, and I'm sure that the zoos here in Edmonton and other parts of Alberta do as well.

One of the points that I know was pointed out by some of my colleagues was around enforcement. I can see here in some of my bill notes that this involves a lot around animal owners or caretakers. I know they've changed some definitions there, so that's important. That's good. Peace officers now have the authority to seize animals in order to take the necessary steps to relieve distress. Again, very important.

Now, what I do note is that enforcement of the Animal Protection Act in Edmonton falls on the Animal Care & Control Centre. They were founded in 2019. They have peace officers who deal with animal protection. In my home city of Calgary the act is enforced by Calgary Humane Society's animal protection team. For areas outside of Edmonton and Calgary, peace officers at the Alberta Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals enforce this act. We know that especially organizations like the SPCA are a registered charity. They have 10 peace officers, and we know that they rely heavily on donor funding. We know that they do get some government funding. Just after the budget dropped, I know that there was about a \$2 million injection of funds there, but I do have questions around relying on organizations that are largely donor funded and what this government would be willing to do to shore up those supports to ensure that we're doing good enforcement on this act. We know that the RCMP, the municipal police, and peace officers appointed under the Peace Officer Act can also act on and investigate any suspicions of cruelty and enforce this act. These

duties often fall on the three previously discussed organizations, however, who specialize in this work.

I would ask that that be looked at, that we look at how we can support enforcement of this act, but in general I would say that I am very supportive of this act, of the amendments that are being made to this act, and encourage all other members of this House to also support this bill.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any others? The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Pleasure to rise this afternoon on an interesting day in the Legislature, where we are discussing Bill 22, Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2026, brought forward by the minister of agriculture, a bill which on this side of the House we will be supporting. We agree with the minister that this is legislation that is long overdue. Unfortunately, it's taken quite a while to come to the floor of this House, and while we do support the legislation, there are some shortcomings that have been mentioned by other members of the opposition; in particular, shortcomings in questions over the ability to enforce the regulations and the legislation that are being amended under this bill. We're hopeful, and we will be watching very carefully as to how the enforcement rolls out under this legislation should the act pass.

Of course, history has been in Alberta that enforcement of animal protection has been historically a complaint-based and reactive process. The expectation is that, with this renewal after 20-some years, the enforcement will become a more proactive, ongoing, investigative process rather than relying on complaints.

Granted, much of the abuse that occurs is quite often behind closed doors at maybe a puppy mill or a distant farm that doesn't have a lot of traffic or activity to it, but people in vicinities, whether it's rural Alberta or in a community: some people know and people talk. We would hope that the investigative process supersedes the complaint-based process and makes the whole enforcement more proactive and tries to prevent abuse before it actually gets to the acute stage, Mr. Speaker, because some of the times, often when abuse is discovered and has gotten to acute stage where animals are emaciated or hungry or dead or sickly, it's partly because there hasn't been enough staff to proactively and ongoingly investigate in their particular region. That's something that I don't think has been fully addressed by this legislation. Let's hope that that is something the minister is acutely aware of.

Now, as we say, Bill 22 is really overdue. There's a clear disconnect between the laws the UCP is willing to pass and, as I said, the resources they're willing to provide for enforcement, so we'll always be vigilant on the enforcement side, Mr. Speaker.

I wanted to address a couple of particular situations, Mr. Speaker. I know that section 5 of the legislation adds a new section on humane destruction of animals, and of course that makes reference to animal slaughter. In the food industry, particularly poultry, beef, pork, turkey, so forth, all animals who end their life to become our food need our protection right up until and including the method of slaughter. The manner of slaughter must be a very humane procedure and not entail any undue suffering to an animal. Of course, it's not without some type of suffering because you're ending an animal's life.

**12:50**

I've participated in numerous chicken killings, fall seasons. After our cousins and my uncle would go ahead and raise the chickens, that we would provide the feed for and sharecrop, we would go in the fall, and all the family – the six kids and my dad, my mom, everybody, aunts, uncles, cousins – got together and would

slaughter 100 to 150 chickens, depending on how many survived that season, in one day. Of course, the humane way of doing that was to chop the heads off with a cleaver or a hatchet. That was my dad's responsibility. And we carried on the process from there.

**Ms Hoffman:** Tell us more.

**Mr. Dach:** Well, I'll tell you. It may not be something that people are aware of. Once the chicken has got its head cut off, it actually jumps around quite a bit involuntarily. You don't think about that. My poor sister Colleen was chased mercilessly by a chicken with his head not there, zigging and zagging across the barnyard. She was terrified, screaming and crying. Finally, this chicken flopped and died, but not before my poor sister was traumatized for life. She never forgot. I don't think she ever forgets being chased by this poor chicken with his head cut off.

By and large, those chickens were cleanly and efficiently killed by my father, with a hatchet, as happens in slaughter facilities as well, where the procedures for ending an animal's life to begin the process of making it into food is one that is governed by regulations and I think, by and large, followed pretty closely.

There are some concerns yet in the transport of animals. All of us will have seen trucks going down the road, full of turkeys in their trailer or chickens or cattle or pigs. You wonder exactly how comfortable those animals are if it's, like, minus 30 or minus 40 out. We always need to make sure that those regulations insist that animals are not subject to undue cold temperature injury in terms of their transport to an abattoir. Also, once they get there, Mr. Speaker, a lot of folks don't realize that animals aren't necessarily transferred immediately into the slaughterhouse. There may be some time frame, sometimes a number of days, while they, particularly large animals like cattle and pigs, are actually housed sometimes in a stockyard outside an abattoir. Every step of the way we have a responsibility to ensure that those animals are protected and cared for and are not subject to abuse.

There's one other element as well, Mr. Speaker, that I know may be covered somewhat by section 5. Specifically, I haven't seen any real clear reference to it. As many members know, I was raised in the small community of Thorhild in my younger years. There was a rodeo there every year. I never missed one until I was 20 years old. Of course, it had all the regular rodeo performances, including saddle bronc and bareback. I remember when I was probably no more than about six or seven years old – it would be somewhere around 1964-65 – the grandstand was watching a performance of a saddle bronc rider. The cowboy was bucked off, and as he was ejected from the horse, the bronc rein slipped from his hand, it wrapped around the front left leg of the horse, and it snapped that horse's leg. You could hear that godawful sound right throughout the grandstand. The horse was hobbling on a broken leg.

Immediately the cowboys swung into action. A couple of them grabbed the bronc rein. Another one jumped on the horse and bit its ear as hard as he could, because that's the way to stabilize a horse. They got it down onto the ground in the arena, in front of everybody. You could see the horse had a broken leg. It was a doomed animal. Then somebody got a gate, and a tractor came in. They got this horse on the gate, and they pulled it underneath the bandstand. The PA announcer, the rodeo announcer called out for the Mountie, the RCMP constable, in the rodeo grounds to come and visit underneath the grandstand. Shortly thereafter you could hear the shot from the service revolver of the Mountie, which euthanized that poor horse.

I believe that all these things since 1965 have probably changed. There are other ways of euthanizing an animal, but my point is that I don't see in section 5 anything specific which would require that there be mandated veterinarian attendance with the ability to properly euthanize a performance animal so it is humanely done and

safely done for spectators as well as for that animal. I'm hoping to hear some clarification from the minister on that, whether section 5 actually will cover that element, because there are other performance animals which may suffer a death during a performance. Chuckwagon racehorses as well are commonly known to have injuries that result in death, and a humane euthanization of those animals is something that should be contemplated under this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

I know that other methods of farm slaughter are undertaken now. My cousin had about – he didn't quite know how many. I asked him how many bison he had. He said: "I don't know. They keep coming out of the bush." He had around 300 head of bison, and my brother went to harvest one of the animals a few years back. He had an old Lee-Enfield .303, and he was going to get off the tractor to shoot it, and my cousin yanks him back, says: "No. No. No. You stay on the tractor." It took him three shots and he got right into the hump of that bison, but the third one finally decked it. That's something that I think should be properly regulated, the farm slaughter of animals, especially large ones. How else should you drop a bison, Mr. Speaker?

You want to make sure that the animals don't suffer, no matter where they're slaughtered, in a legal fashion, and that's something I don't know has been fully contemplated under section 5 in the legislation. I hope that the minister takes these suggestions to heart in the vein in which they are recommended, having lived experience watching rodeo performance animals suffer a horrific fate in front of a whole rodeo spectator crowd. Back then it was a pretty brutal thing for everybody in that crowd to experience when that horse was put down by the service revolver of the Mountie underneath the bandstand during the rodeo performance. Something, obviously, I'll never forget.

I would wholeheartedly expect that the mandate of the individuals who are expected to be on-site during a rodeo performance or other performance animals' acts would be able to have the equipment and the right professional tools on hand to quickly and humanely carry out this unpleasant but sometimes necessary procedure.

I'm looking at the clock, and I've got a couple more minutes to continue.

**Member Irwin:** You're good.

**Mr. Dach:** Yeah.

I would say that it's something that we always should consider, Mr. Speaker. The well-being of the animals in the care of human beings is a responsibility that should never be taken lightly, and I'm glad the minister brought this legislation forward. We do have concerns about enforcement, and we will be monitoring that very carefully should this legislation pass.

Thank you.

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Are there any other speakers? Seeing none. No one is going to close.

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a third time]

1:00                    **Government Bills and Orders**  
                                  **Second Reading**  
                                  *(continued)*

**Bill 25**

**An Act to Remove Politics and Ideology from Classrooms  
 and Amend the Education Act, 2026**

[Debate adjourned April 15: Member Irwin speaking]

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

**Member Irwin:** Ten minutes left?

**The Speaker:** Ten minutes left, yes.

**Member Irwin:** Perfect.

**The Speaker:** You're psychic. Ten minutes left.

**Member Irwin:** I am so good at this job.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Really enjoyed the debate on Bill 22. Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-McClung. You know, I just want to point out a quick example. That was a bill supported by all sides of the House. We've supported multiple bills from this UCP government. They've yet to support one of ours, though. I'm always the idealist, always the optimist. Hopefully, they will. I would love to see that before I retire.

Okay. The bill at hand. I would love to speak to Bill 25. I had a chance to speak to this a little bit last week. I talked about my past, starting my teaching career at the ripe old age of 21 at Bawlf school in Bawlf, Alberta. Shout-out to Bawlf as well as Forestburg, Alberta. [interjection] Yeah. Thank you for the cheers in the Chamber for that. Yeah. Even the Speaker gave me a thumbs-up on that.

**Ms Hoffman:** Bawlf idol.

**Member Irwin:** Yeah. Bawlf idol. Yes, I did enter Bawlf idol as a teacher. I believe I was a runner-up, unfortunately. But I don't want to talk about it. It's painful.

Anyways, let's focus. You know, I've talked about my experience teaching a lot in this Chamber over the last seven years, and I really do just owe so much to that opportunity to be able to be a teacher and administrator in rural Alberta. I think a lot of the skills that I honed as a teacher are very much applicable to this Chamber, including listening and empathy and respecting multiple perspectives, which is something I'm going to talk about in a moment.

Let's talk about this bill. You know, what an opportunity this UCP government had to really prioritize public education and prioritize the people within the schools that make public education great: teachers, students, educational assistants. Unfortunately, we get this instead. Bill 25, An Act to Remove Politics and Ideology from Classrooms and Amend the Education Act, 2026. What a mouthful. I would like to spend the time that I have remaining on this bill to focus on what I see as some of the most egregious parts of this bill.

You know, when I said that I was a teacher and I talked a little bit about that, I should emphasize that much of my teaching was social studies, senior high social studies in particular, where every day in the classroom it's just an incredible opportunity to engage in critical debate, to discuss current events. Just today I shared a political cartoon from the *Globe and Mail*, and I thought: gosh darn it, if I were teaching in the classroom right now, examining political cartoons, editorial cartoons are such a great way for students to really engage in those skills of active inquiry and very much engage some of those skills that are just so central to the social studies program of study.

Every day in the social studies classroom we explore issues from multiple perspectives. Social studies at the grade 12 level, social studies 30-1 and 30-2, were some of my favourite courses to teach, wherein you examine perspectives on ideology. I'll talk a little bit more about that in a moment, but I do want to point out that after teaching in rural Alberta, I came to Edmonton to work on social studies curriculum with the province of Alberta. I might add that I worked on social studies curriculum under multiple Progressive

Conservative ministers of education. Yeah. It was a very wonderful time. Then I had a little bit of a chance to work under the NDP government, also a very excellent experience.

I can tell you that the work that we did on curriculum in the years that I was there – first, I worked on 10 to 12 social studies curriculum. Then I had the opportunity to be the executive director of senior high social studies curriculum just as we were embarking on a curriculum renewal, which was subsequently killed by this UCP government, which was incredibly troubling due to the fact that the work we did in curriculum was so extensive. We engaged with countless stakeholders: parents, teachers, students, nonprofits, the business sector. The list goes on. The level of engagement that we did was unimaginable, honestly. I remember we had lists of the stakeholders that we engaged with, and it was just so thoughtful: curriculum experts, folks in the field, all of that.

As I said, the most challenging part was that, you know, I was elected in 2019, and one of the first things that this UCP government did was that it killed all of that work. So not only was it an extreme waste of time and resources; it was also hundreds of thousands, in fact I think millions, of dollars. Don't quote me on that. I'll have to find the numbers.

**Ms Hoffman:** For sure.

**Member Irwin:** The work over years – yeah. The Member for Edmonton-Glenora is saying, “Absolutely, for sure,” because she would know those numbers.

When you do that level of consultation and engagement, it does cost money, but it's worth it – right? – because you have a leg to stand on. And then to have that curriculum work all thrown out – you know, I still remember the Premier of the day, Jason Kenney, talking about how the curriculum was engaged in woke ideologies. He mentioned things like climate change and reconciliation, and I just – gosh. To think that talking about real, 21st century issues like climate change and reconciliation could be considered and dismissed as woke by Jason Kenney was just so shocking. Then, of course, fast-forward to this current Premier, and my head was ready to explode.

Let's talk a little bit about the social studies program of studies and how this connects to Bill 25. I want to read a little bit from that document. Again, this is a social studies curriculum document that was created under previous Progressive Conservative ministers. That is still the current program of studies in Alberta today. “Central to the vision of the Alberta social studies program is the recognition of the diversity of experiences and perspectives and the pluralistic nature of Canadian society.” Love that. It makes you wonder, though. When this minister calls for neutrality and he calls for both sides, he's getting a little bit contradictory here.

I also want to mention the point that he made in the Chamber. I believe it was yesterday. I'm just relying on my memory, which is never always the best, but he said something to the effect of that we don't want students to become “agents of change.” Something along those lines. Well, I can tell you, as someone who worked very much on curriculum and, in fact, also engaged in my graduate work on the social studies curriculum, that “agents of change” or “active citizens” phraseology has been in social studies curriculum documents for actual decades. Actual decades.

**Mr. McDougall:** Social justice.

**Member Irwin:** The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek is chirping at me a little bit, but I want him to listen to this.

Agents of change, active citizenship: that has been part of social studies curriculum documents since the postwar era here in Alberta, so this isn't some new, woke ideology. Again quoting from the

Progressive Conservative-created curriculum document, what does it say? “Social studies provides opportunities for students to develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge that will enable them to become . . . active, informed and responsible citizens.” Again, you know, not a woke ideology of the 21st century. This is something that goes back decades, and you'll see similar phrases in curriculum documents all across Canada.

I want to talk a little bit more about a section that I kind of alluded to earlier, one that I find incredibly problematic, the minister speaking about neutrality and both sides. Now, again, focusing on the social studies curriculum, the social studies program of studies, I really do wonder, you know, when we engage in conversations around residential schools – residential schools come up explicitly in the social studies 10 program of studies, but it also comes up in earlier grades as well because you can teach topics like residential schools in age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate ways. There are ways in which to talk about residential schools in a way that young students can even understand.

My question is: when engaging in these direct conversations about residential schools, how does the minister seek to be impartial? How does he seek to talk about both sides? I can tell you that the elders, the Indigenous leaders that we consulted with when I worked on curriculum development, would be absolutely disturbed and disgusted by anyone who might imply that there are two sides to residential schools. When we acknowledge treaty on the first day of sitting every week in the Legislature, I think we should all understand the intergenerational impacts of residential schools, and we should never ever minimize that and the impact it has on communities today.

Let's talk about some of the other social studies. That's social studies 10. Social studies 20-1 and 20-2: perspectives on nationalism. I actually really loved teaching social studies at the grade 11 level. I think I'm going to run out of time here, but hopefully I'll have more to say here. At the grade 11 level you examine issues like ultranationalism, looking at ultranationalism as a cause of genocide, looking at the various ideologies.

**1:10**

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 25, the title of which I will decline to read. As we talk about this bill that is purportedly about removing politics and ideology from classrooms, I think back on my own experience as a student, my own education right here in Edmonton, in Alberta. There were a lot of good things in my education, things that I look back and I appreciate, things I benefited from.

Now, to give a little context, Mr. Speaker, I grew up in a very strict fundamentalist evangelical Christian home, so that made it hard for me at times. I was very different from most of the other kids around, from my classmates. I wasn't allowed to go to any movies. I was extremely restricted in what I could watch on TV. I could not listen to the same music as my friends because my parents believed it was very, very important that I not be influenced by the world around us.

So it was a bit challenging for me at times in school, Mr. Speaker, but you know what? I was supported by my teachers. I remember in grade 5 it was right about the time that Michael Jackson put out his *Thriller* album. It was big. Of course, I was not allowed to listen to it, hadn't heard it, but for our music class our teacher was having us do choreography to a Michael Jackson song. It was an incredibly difficult moment for me as a kid. I was so afraid of engaging in dancing that I sat down and I cried. My teacher did not judge me.

She did not judge my parents' beliefs. She sat down and she comforted me, and she excused me.

From grade 6 to grade 9 I went to Strathcona Christian academy. Certainly, there was a very strong bias in opinion in all of those classes at that school, Mr. Speaker. Not saying anything about it one way or the other, but just acknowledging that that was, in fact, the case.

When I came out of junior high, graduated from grade 9, I went to Eastglen high school here in Edmonton. I went there because it was a smaller school. I needed to get comfortable being back in the public school system, and you know what? I enjoyed the fact that we had smaller classes, particularly because I had the opportunity to attend classes in an advanced academic stream. Mr. Speaker, I was not shy. At that time I was still very much involved in that evangelical church community. I wasn't shy about my ideas and my beliefs. I'd been taught that it was a good thing to speak out, to witness, so I did in school.

I think in particular about my grade 12 English teacher, Mr. Hughes. English was one of my favourite classes. You know, I loved to read. I loved analysis. I loved to write. I was one of those weird kids that actually enjoyed writing essays. Now, in that class Mr. Hughes did not judge what I wrote, at least not in the way that we're talking about here today. He gave me good grades on my papers on agape love, on sexual abstinence. They were replete with citations from the Bible and prominent Christian literature of the time. Mr. Hughes gave me excellent grades because he marked for the quality of the writing and the ability to form an argument. I had learned those skills from my teachers and from the opportunities that I had in those smaller classrooms, that close attention, that support that was available.

Now, I could tell that Mr. Hughes at times was a little exasperated sometimes when I'd speak up in class and essentially – I'll be honest, Mr. Speaker – pretty much preach. Again, I'd been taught that that was an admirable thing to do. He didn't shut me down. He did engage with me at times, acknowledged that, you know, the beliefs he had were not the same as mine, but I did not feel judged. In fact, at the end of that school year Mr. Hughes wrote the reference letter for me to attend Canadian Bible College in Regina, though he was a little surprised that I asked him.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there were negative experiences that I had growing up as well because, like I said, I was not a kid that fit in. I was awkward. I was nerdy. I was clumsy. I was openly and loudly religious. Got picked on for that by the jocks, the bullies. I was also, as I continue to be, Black, and I encountered racism, high school bullies who mocked me for my natural hair. You know, back then we didn't really talk about racism in any of our classes. I don't recall it ever coming up in high school. I remember we did do *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but I don't recall any real robust discussion about contemporary racism. In fact, in 12 years of education I can't recall a single instance where we talked about that in class. But I experienced it, and I didn't have anyone I could talk to about it.

Now, what made school good, Mr. Speaker, what made it a good experience for me, all the things I highlighted today, wasn't due to a lack of a pride flag. It wasn't because there was no ability for me as a student to have a respectful dialogue with my teachers about current issues and ideas. It wasn't because the government had given some dictate to Mr. Hughes telling him he must remain neutral in the classroom. The things that made school good for me, that made me a sharp critical thinker, that gave me the skills to be able to be standing here doing what I do today are because we had smaller classes, because we had proper funding, because schools were able to hire the staff they needed, because teachers had the capacity to be able to give us attention, to provide real support, to be creative in their approach, to be real human beings and not have

to worry about the government peering over their shoulder or feeding into feeding frenzies, goading parents to distrust teachers, to distrust our public education system, to believe that they're somehow out to get their kids.

With Bill 25, Mr. Speaker, this government is doing absolutely nothing to ensure that students have those good things, those good things that provided for a good education for me, that provided for a good education for my nieces and nephews, for the kids of my friends. They're doing nothing to repair the deep damage that they've in fact done to most of those good things with their cuts to funding, with their undermining of teachers, their vilification of teachers and the folks who care for students in our schools. In fact, they've taken away many of the things that would make schools better. In fact, they've got it completely backwards and upside down. There's nothing in this bill that will improve learning or make our classrooms better. Nothing. I'd say that there is quite a bit in this bill that will make things markedly worse.

You know, if you want to talk about ideology, Mr. Speaker, talking particularly about promoting ideology using taxpayer dollars, I think back to last summer, this government's travelling road show for Alberta Next. I haven't had a chance to check out the new website they put up today. I sure hope the quality is a little higher on this one. I hope the honesty is quite a bit higher. Let me tell you that what this government put out with taxpayer dollars last year, what they toured around the province with was heavily torqued, biased information that clearly was not designed to inform debate. No. It was designed to create division. It was designed to manufacture opinion, contained outright lies, a lot of misinformation about the RCMP, about immigration in the province, about how things actually work when it comes to things like equalization and the CPP. This is not a government that knows a thing about actually educating people with neutrality.

#### 1:20

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, that this is a government that loves to claim that they love direct democracy. No. What they love is directing democracy. They love leading people by the nose. They love setting up the parameters for their referendums, for their websites, for the information they put out to lead people in a single direction. This is not a government that knows anything about actually teaching about critical thinking. This is a government that regularly promotes and pushes politics and ideology to force people in a particular direction constantly. When it comes to this bill, when it comes to so much of the legislation that they have brought into this House, it's all part of the same, part of this government using their platform and their power, the public purse to stir up anger and division around problems that don't actually exist, working furiously to make mountains out of molehills because they can't stand on their record.

As I said, their record on education is abysmal. I don't think we've seen a greater decline in our public education system under any government in the history of this province. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, because they have done such a terrible job in education, because they have created such a mess in our schools, they've turned to vilifying teachers and trying to create more anger and division to distract from the mess that they've made. I mean, this UCP government has a long history of going after teachers, trying to drive a wedge between them and the parents of the students they teach, claiming they aren't doing their jobs; they're promoting ideology.

It started with their disastrous curriculum rewrite, that my colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood was talking about. It carried right through to the strike last fall, again, Mr. Speaker, using public dollars to put out videos with all kinds of misinformation about teachers, what they were looking for, the state

of our classrooms. The fact is that that strike was driven by the fact that while this government was busy running teachers down, for its seven years in power they've been cutting funding and supports for students in schools and, like I said, leading to probably the most significant decline in the quality of our public education that we've seen under any government. That continues, and that is what we see in Bill 25.

Mr. Speaker, we stand with parents in wanting to see their kids get quality education in the classroom. We want to see parents have access to be able to talk with their teachers if they have concerns and have that discussion. But you know what? For that to work well, teachers need to have capacity. Right now they don't. This government is running them ragged with bloated classrooms, underresourced, lack of supports, lack of educational assistants and others. That hurts parents. What hurts parents is when this government tells them that teachers are the problem. Teachers are not the problem. The problem is this government, a government that seemingly does not value the power of public education.

Mr. Speaker, I benefited hugely from public education. It taught me to think critically. It gave me the skill sets that I have today. Hey, despite even some of the challenges that I had, I came away with learning a bit about how to get along with people, how to make friends. The fact is that those are the things that government needs to be focused on. I am tired of this government stirring up anger and division, fighting endless culture wars because they can't just do, in the words of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, their darn job.

The fact is that nothing in Bill 25 is going to do anything to improve our education system. It's a smokescreen. It's a distraction. It's an insult to the parents in Alberta who truly just want to see better education for their kids. I don't know if they're ever going to get it under this government, Mr. Speaker, but I'll tell you that myself and my colleagues here are ready to bring that better government that will give people the education system and the opportunities they deserve.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am excited to have an opportunity to rise and speak to an education bill. This one is titled Bill 25, An Act to Remove Politics and Ideology from Classrooms and Amend the Education Act, 2026. One of my favourite things to do is think of what more appropriate titles might be. This one certainly seems to be an act in attempt to sow more division in Alberta classrooms, to create fear among teachers and students, to try to pit parents and teachers against each other, an act to remove autonomy from duly elected, democratically elected public school boards. There are many ways that this could be more appropriately titled.

I'll start with a few questions, though, because I think this place should always be a place for learning and engagement. One of my first questions is around the removal of autonomy from school divisions. I'm grateful that I share this place with other formerly elected public school representatives, both in the public and separate school divisions. So one of the biggest ones: I'm really curious to know what problem we are trying to solve by taking away the right of school divisions to dispose of their own assets as already mandated. First right of refusal to other schools divisions, then to municipalities, and then to the open market. The government is taking that away, and the government is deciding who gets to have the assets if they're not being used. Those could be surplus school sites that schools were never built on, but they could also be school buildings that served an important purpose for many, many years in

the community and continue to have a purpose. Now the government is taking away the ability of those school divisions to be able to make that decision because they think that the provincial government is in a better position to be able to make those decisions.

I will say as somebody who campaigned very openly on keeping neighbourhood schools open, making sure that we had opportunities for students to be able to walk to school, to be able to learn with their peers in their own neighbourhoods, that if the government wants to force school closures and give away those buildings to other schools, potentially private or charter schools, or to give them away to other entities altogether, I think the government is going to have a heck of a fight on their hands.

I didn't plan on running for this. This was not part of my intended career path, to end up in this place. Sometimes life gets in the way of good plans. I trained as a teacher. I did a master's in education, and I did end up working a bit in politics, but it was when the Edmonton public school board had voted to close seven schools in one calendar year, many of which were in the area that I lived in in the city, and was looking at reviewing another 50 schools in the upcoming year that I knew I couldn't sit on my hands any longer. I thought I had to try to fight back, and I ran against an incumbent who had been a principal and assistant superintendent.

Those aren't usually conditions to win, but running on keeping your kids' neighbourhood school open and protecting the opportunity for a great public education in your neighbourhood – I think we got 69 or 70 per cent of the vote in that election. So it certainly was something that had a big groundswell of support from everyday Edmontonians who wanted to have a local voice standing up for their schools. This bill that we are being asked to debate here this afternoon and that the government wants all members, private members and opposition members, to just rubber-stamp what the cabinet put forward is certainly in direct contrast to my own political origin story.

I also want to take a moment to touch on one of the other changes that they brought in. They changed it, and now they're changing it back, and that's around the hiring of superintendents. I'd be very hopeful that the government, anyone in the government, will respond about what problem they're trying to solve. Yes, under the PCs and even under the NDP and including when I was board chair and we were hiring a superintendent, you sent the contract to the minister's office, the minister's office reviewed it, they signed off on it, and it came back. The UCP was very keen to say that they weren't going to interfere in that anymore. They were going to allow people to directly hire the superintendent. Elected school boards could do that. They did that for a few years, and now in this bill they're taking that away. I would love to know what problems the UCP saw over the last few years since they took that away and now are bringing it back. What's the problem that they are trying to solve with this piece of legislation?

**1:30**

I also want to say that when people ask me about making decisions, being a minister, being an MLA, I always feel like as long as I know my role – and my role is to guide administration on the what. Electeds decide the what. We are not in the best position to determine the how, and that is what this bill is so full of, an us-versus-them mentality. The government's going to put their thumb on the scales of experts in schools, on parents, on students, on school boards, and they're going to force their will on others.

One of the most simple examples, Mr. Speaker, is around flags in schools. I have had the honour of visiting many, many schools over my 11 years serving in this place and five years prior as a school board member and before that when student teaching or

working at the university or studying at the university. A lot of that was to do with K to 12 education. Regularly in schools you would see beautiful art projects up in the hallways where kids had designed their own flag for their family or for their house or for their community that they lived in. They talk about symbolism. They design crests. This is often at the same time they're learning about things like our provincial crest, our provincial emblems. They talk about what things define a group of people coming together.

For example, when we talk about our provincial crest, we have mountains; we have wheat; we have big open skies; we have symbols of the Crown. They're all things that come together to define who we are as Albertans, and often kids would do this about their own family identities or their own neighbourhoods. It was a beautiful project, and I fear that many teachers will be afraid to do those types of projects in their school moving forward.

I also reflect on the fact that this legislation says that, you know, Alberta flags and Canada flags are to be permitted and displayed in schools, which is great. As far as I know, every Edmonton public school, for sure when we were on the board, had a Canada flag and Alberta flag. They even had a little outline of which one goes on the left and which one goes on the right. Lots of things were provided to the schools, including those flags, to make sure that they could show those symbols. But also in schools we have other flags regularly, just like we do in this Chamber. In this Chamber we have the flags for every other province and every other territory, and that is something that I think is beautiful and unifying, and it reminds us that we are one province among many. We are part of the Confederation that is Canada. This is not something that would currently be permitted.

The government says: oh, trust us; we'll be able to permit having other types of flags potentially displayed through regulations. I will say that the time for trust is long gone, Mr. Speaker. When the government chose to force teachers who were following the law, demonstrating their right to collectivism in engaging in negotiations with their employer, and instead said, "No negotiations for you; we're going to take this to the courts" – the government is probably going to lose – "and we're going to take away your collective rights": to say that teachers love this government, to quote many people of this Chamber, could not be further from the truth. Yesterday I saw a sticker that said "hot teachers against the UCP" as a bumper sticker on a car, and hot in terms of their attitude and how they're feeling, but also I think they're pretty fired up right now. So I have to say that that is one of the biggest stretches I've heard in here.

I also wanted to touch on a couple of other pieces that my colleague the MLA for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood mentioned. For many decades, including even prior to the time in which I was elected as a school board member, UCP governments encouraged and pushed for critical thinking. In fact, it was Dave Hancock who, I think, started the Children First pin, who mandated that our responsibility was to produce engaged, ethical, and entrepreneurial citizens within our school systems. That is definitely something that it seems this legislation and this current government is not supportive of. Of course, that inspiring education legislation under him moved us along that path and it was, I'm certain, millions of dollars. I was in many banquet rooms, with many hundreds of people, including folks who were there as government workers engaging in that process.

We have much more to say about Bill 25. That's enough from me for today.

I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Bill 29 Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2026

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to move second reading of Bill 29, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2026.

This bill reflects a clear and practical vision for health care in Alberta, one that is focused on access, grounded in evidence, and responsive to the realities facing Alberta patients today. Our province is growing rapidly, and as demand for health services continues to increase, we have a responsibility to ensure our system evolves alongside this pressure. That means improving access, reducing unnecessary barriers, and making sure care is available when Albertans need it. Bill 29 advances that work in three key areas. It expands access to preventative health testing, it improves timely access to essential medications, particularly for those living with addictions, and it completes the legislative framework required to support Alberta's refocused health care system. Together they form a coherent and forward-looking approach to strengthening care across our province.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to begin with the preventative health testing, one of the most important tools we have to improve health outcomes and reduce long-term strain on our system. We know that early detection saves lives. When conditions are identified early, treatment is often less invasive, more effective, and less costly. It has better outcomes as well. It improves quality of life for patients and reduces pressure on hospitals and acute-care services. Yet today access to diagnostic tests in Alberta still depends on a referral from a physician or other provider. While that model ensures clinical oversight, it can also create delays, particularly for patients who do not have regular access to a primary care provider or those who want to be more pre-emptive and proactive about their health care. Bill 29 addresses this challenge in a careful and balanced way. If passed, this enabling legislation will create the legal framework to enable self-referred preventative health testing in Alberta. It would allow Albertans to access certain preventative tests, without requiring a provider referral, through accredited facilities.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a replacement for the public system; it is in addition to it. Physicians and nurse practitioners will continue to play a central role in determining when diagnostic testing is medically necessary. It does not remove or reduce publicly funded care. Under Alberta's public health guarantee all medically necessary tests recommended by a qualified provider will continue to be fully covered and prioritized across the province. It does not compromise patient safety. In fact, all testing in Alberta will continue to take place in accredited facilities, under established clinical and regulatory standards.

What this legislation does is create an additional optional pathway, one that expands access, reduces wait times, and gives Alberta patients more choice. It recognizes that many Albertans want to take a more active role and responsibility in managing their health care. It also acknowledges that some individuals, particularly those without a primary care provider, face barriers in accessing preventative screening. By enabling self-referral, we are removing these barriers. At the same time, we're taking a measured approach. The legislation establishes the authority while key details, including eligibility, scope of services, safeguards, and reimbursements, will be carefully defined and developed through regulation. This ensures we can implement the program responsibly, with patient safety, clinical appropriateness, and system capacity at the forefront.

1:40

Mr. Speaker, expanding access to preventative testing is not just about increasing individual choice; it also impacts the health system overall. When more people can access testing through alternative pathways, it reduces demand on publicly funded services. That helps shorten wait times for those who require urgent or medically necessary care. It is about improving flow through the system, increasing capacity, and ensuring resources are available where they are most needed.

Mr. Speaker, the second major component of this bill addresses access to medications, specifically the need for more timely treatment for Albertans living with addiction. This is in an area where timing is critical. When someone is ready to begin treatment, that window of opportunity can be brief. Delays, even short ones, can mean the difference between recovery and relapse, or worse, yet in many parts of Alberta, particularly in rural, remote, and Indigenous communities, accessing medication is not always immediate. Distance to a pharmacy, limited hours of operation, and transportation challenges all create barriers.

Bill 29 proposes a practical solution to this problem. If passed, amendments to the Pharmacy and Drug Act would allow authorized prescribers such as physicians and nurse practitioners to obtain a limited supply of certain schedule 1 medications from a licensed pharmacy through a written order. These medications could then be stored securely within the clinic and used to provide immediate treatment to patients. This is about meeting patients where they are. Instead of asking someone to leave a clinic and travel to another location potentially hours away, we're enabling care to begin right there in the area and location that they're currently at. This is particularly important for opioid agonist therapies such as Suboxone and Sublocade, which are used to treat opioid use disorders and reduce the risk of overdose. Providing these medications without delay supports recovery, stabilizes patients, and improves outcomes.

Of course, such changes must be accompanied by strong safeguards. This legislation ensures that only authorized prescribers can use written orders, that pharmacies have to verify those orders, and that medications are stored and managed according to strict standards. Regulatory colleges will establish detailed requirements for storage, tracking, and use, and existing monitoring systems will continue to provide that oversight. In addition, the minister will have the authority to impose restrictions where necessary to address any concerns related to compliance or misuse.

Mr. Speaker, this is a focused and responsible approach. It addresses a clear gap that we've heard from the industry across the province in access. It supports vulnerable populations and aligns with Alberta's broader commitment to improving mental health and addiction right across our province.

The third element of Bill 29 relates to the completion of Alberta's health refocusing system. Over the past several years, our government has undertaken significant work to restructure and strengthen the way health care is delivered in our province. We have moved from a centralized regional health authority model to a more specialized system with distinct roles and responsibilities across different sectors. I call them pillars. This work has been guided by the goal of improving accountability, enhancing co-ordination, and ensuring that decisions are made closer to where the care is delivered.

With the major structural changes now in place, the focus turns to legislative alignment. Bill 29 provides the final set of amendments required to ensure that Alberta's statutes reflect the new system accurately and function effectively. These changes include updates to the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act, the

Provincial Health Agencies Act, and the Health Insurance Premiums Act, among others. They clarify terminology. They update references to ministers and organizations and ensure consistency across the legislation. They also restore flexibility and payment arrangements for hospital service providers and align language related to physician participation with current policy.

In addition, the bill supports the final transition of remaining public health staff into the Ministry of Primary and Preventative Health Services. This change reflects the role of public health as a core government function, one that is focused on prevention, population health, and long-term sustainability. These updates ensure that the system we have built can operate as intended with clarity, stability, and strong governance. They also marked the conclusion of a multiyear process of reform.

Mr. Speaker, it's worth taking a step back and considering what this bill represents in a broader sense. Health care systems across the country are modernizing and evolving. They're responding to changing demographics, new technologies, and shifting expectations from the patients they serve. Albertans deserve a system that is accessible, provides timely care, and increasingly they expect to play a greater role in decisions about their own health care.

Albertans want to have choice, Mr. Speaker. Bill 29 reflects those expectations. It recognizes that access is not just about funding; it's about removing barriers. It recognizes that capacity can be expanded through innovation and new approaches, and it recognizes that patient choice, when implemented carefully and responsibly, can strengthen the system as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition says that expanding patient options is not in the best interest of the patient. Our response is clear. This is not about replacing the public system; it is about supporting and enhancing it. Nothing in this bill changes that. What it does is introduce additional tools that help reduce pressure, improve flow, and ensure that the system can meet growing demand.

Part of my mandate is to look ahead at the reality of challenges facing health care, challenges that are not going to go away. We've got population growth, we have aging demographics, and we have increased demand that will continue to place pressure on our services no matter what province you live in. Meeting those challenges requires action not only through investment but through policy changes that improve how care is delivered.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Bill 29 is part of that work. It supports the early detection of illness and improves access to critical medications, particularly in underserved communities, and it ensures that our legislative framework is aligned with the modern health system we have built and will continue to build upon. These are practical steps. They are measured, and they are focused on results. Madam Speaker, at its heart, this legislation is about the patients who have asked to have options when they feel most vulnerable. Bill 29 reflects a commitment to meeting those needs. It strengthens what is working, it addresses what is not working, and it prepares the system for the future. For these reasons, I encourage all members of this Assembly to support this legislation.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 29, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2026.

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. Bill 29, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2026, as being proposed by one of the health ministers, the one for primary and preventative care, is absolutely government's further erosion of the public health care

system and their attempt to further push patients into paying out of pocket, which, again, is counter to everything that the Premier and every UCP MLA in this place ran on in the last provincial election.

They promised Albertans they wouldn't have to pay out of pocket. They promised Albertans they'd never have to pay to see a doctor. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth when you actually read the legislation that they bring into this place session after session after session. This is another bill that encourages for-profit, two-tiered health care. This time it's specifically focused on diagnostic testing.

Let me tell you a little bit about what the minister says she's trying to address in this bill. She says that people don't have family doctors. That's true; almost a million Albertans don't have a family doctor. Therefore, we're going to let them pay out of pocket to be their own steward of their own health care, pay to get a whole bunch of tests done, and then they can get referred after those tests got done to specialists within the public health care system. This is, in her own opening argument today, an act to assuage her of responsibility for the erosion of primary care access in the province of Alberta. That, Madam Speaker, is so disrespectful to everyone who voted for this government when they promised they'd never have to pay for primary care. What the minister just said is: you won't have to pay for primary care; you get to be your primary care provider and then pay for the tests that you want to get done. That is not at all what Albertans thought they were voting for, whether they voted for either of the two parties elected to this Assembly in the last provincial election, because nobody ran on what the UCP is doing and proposing to do in Bill 29.

1:50

The Premier yesterday in this very place stood up and talked about women paying for their own mammograms. She says that she misspoke, but she failed to stand up and correct the record on exactly what it is that she was saying and, of course, is giving herself the ability through regulations to be able to give herself that power to download the cost of a mammogram onto women or anyone needing a mammogram. We know that men and, of course, all Albertans are susceptible. We all have tissue, and it can have tumours. She's saying: "Take it into your own charge. Be your own steward of the health care system. Good for you."

The piece about referring yourself, getting a whole bunch of tests done, and then being referred out to specialists: first of all, somebody has to read the tests, right? You're either going to pay to be part of a private health clinic that does all of this, or you're going to be using a steward within the public health care system to read all of those results, specialists to contact you, and then you, of course, are referred back into the public health care system. So this is absolutely a bill to create two different lines, one for those who pay and one for everybody else. We all know somebody, I'm sure – I can't be the only middle-aged person in this place who knows a friend or a family member who has been waiting months or years either for diagnostics or for surgery.

I get e-mails every single day. Today there was somebody who was talking about being referred for a double knee replacement that's still been waiting over a year. I have other people who are saying that they've been referred for CT scans. There was somebody who already had cancer previously. There is now a new mass on the same part of the body where they had cancer previously, and they're being referred for a CT in October. The minister says: oh, don't worry; people who need to be triaged to the top of the list will be triaged to the top of the list. Nothing could be further from the truth. They're hoping that people like the one who reached out to me with that mass will give up on the public system, pay out of pocket, and take their own responsibility for navigating

their own health care journey. You know what? They very well might, and I don't blame them. But I do blame the government because they said that this was not going to be what happened under their leadership, and it is absolutely what is happening under their leadership.

I want to also take a few minutes to talk about just how cold it is to say to people, "Well, this is going to fix things" when nobody who's a health expert believes that to be true. The government is being very disrespectful in saying: well, doctors have been gatekeepers of health care services. First of all, the vast majority of students in our medical schools are Alberta students; 90 per cent of the spots are reserved specifically for Alberta students. Who funds the postsecondary systems in this province? The province. The province is the funder. The province is determining where and how many spots we have, and they are the gatekeepers for how many people are getting into med school. They are saying that doctors are the gatekeepers for who's accessing the services that doctors have available. That is, like, so totally incongruent, that they can draw that conclusion from one to another.

The other thing that I want to reflect on is that we were all invited to participate in the Alberta Medical Association Spring Representative Forum. There were three members from this side of the House, three NDP members – the Member for Edmonton-Decore, the doctor Member for Calgary-Varsity, and myself – who had the opportunity from our side to attend and learn from doctors. They were very clear. This was before Bill 29 even came out, but the government had already foreshadowed that this was coming. The AMA, the leadership of doctors – now, the minister for primary and preventative care says: I know a doctor who thinks this is great. That is not the representative of doctors. I'm sure I can find a doctor who will also tell you that smoking can cure cancer, but that is a very rare doctor and not one that has been elected to speak on behalf of all doctors. For the minister to use these personal one-off situations to try to counter very clear factual data that's being presented by the Alberta Medical Association through their duly elected representatives is so disrespectful to those physicians who invited her to their spring general forum and presented all of the data on systems around the world where this is and isn't done and how it impacts the public health care system.

The minister used to say: well, this is going to be European style. Well, I'm sorry; there are many, many countries within Europe. Then, of course, she cherry-picks a few examples, examples where they have twice as many doctors to patients as the ratio we have here in the province of Alberta and where they have a massive social safety net largely in countries that have much higher revenues and tax bases and have a number of other services available to patients. She said: don't worry; we're going to be just like them. Well, then everyone poked holes in those arguments, and she stopped saying: European style. I think the other day it was Japanese style.

But the truth is that this is all about being American style. This is all about creating two different wait-lists, two different tracks, one track for those who can and will – there are a lot of people who can afford to pay out of pocket but know that it is wrong to jump the queue, know that it is not what they feel morally comfortable doing to put themselves in a different situation. And, no, it isn't right to take the pressure off the government.

This has been the playbook of the current Premier for decades, including when they were elected to the public school board in Calgary and pushed for further privatization, more charters, more private schools, and more vouchers. Vouchers in the education system, and now she has a minister who's very openly talking about vouchers in the health care system.

This is not what we were elected to do. It is not part of what anyone's mandate has been. This is absolutely a game and about trying to appease certain fringe groups as well as breaking confidence in the public system so that the current government can say: we have nothing left to do but sell off and privatize chunks of the system.

I'd love to be proven wrong, but this has been the playbook time and time again. It was the playbook with labs when Tyler Shandro fast-tracked the privatization of lab services, and then, of course, what did we see? We saw lineups for blocks in Calgary of people waiting for tests. We saw people waiting and logging in to register and not being able to get blood work or urine analysis for weeks or even months. It was complete and utter chaos.

The government had a path to building a centralized lab, a public lab on public land here in the city of Edmonton to serve Edmonton and north, and the government decided that they were going to cancel that contract. They were going to further privatization. What happened? They had to buy it all back, even the parts they'd already privatized in the north that had already been provided privately. The government failed so hard on how much they moved so quickly to try to privatize it all that they had to rescue the company that was contracted to do this service and bring it all back under the public umbrella.

Oh, but don't worry; they changed the brand from Alberta public labs to Alberta Precision Labs because that's really the priority to make sure that they find ways to waste money on hiring CEOs, firing CEOs, paying lawyers for breaking contracts with the construction companies that were supposed to build those labs, paying lawyers for contracts when they tell the fired CEO that they can't go to the RCMP with concerns that they have around corruption.

This has been time and time again about privatization, about making sure that they can move forward with their ideology. It is not in service of the people of Alberta paying to get a mammogram, paying to get blood work done, paying for a CT or an MRI.

I've enthusiastically attended a number of events, and there have been a number of different health care events organized across the province by Dr. Paul Parks, who I'm sure many members of this Assembly know, and the Friends of Medicare. I attended some of the events in Edmonton but also some of the events in other communities, including Grande Prairie. I think it was last month. What I heard was deep concern for lack of access to primary care, deep concern for not being able to get a family doctor or, if you have a family doctor, not being able to get it in a timely way, deep concern for what would happen in the emergency department, how many hours you might have to wait or what might be the response in that emergency room.

Of course, we've seen a number of violent incidents, including one of the most violent attacks in an emergency department on Good Friday just a few weeks ago, where one patient violently assaulted with a weapon another patient in front of at least 50 people who were witnesses to that assault. The government has been on notice from front-line workers for over five years. There are minutes going back five years demonstrating that they had a significant concern that something like this would happen, specifically at the Royal Alex but also many other work sites where people are concerned about potential violent outbreaks happening.

**2:00**

The minister of primary and preventative care touched on addictions and mental health services and how important it is, when you want to get in, that you get in to access that care, and I will say: absolutely. She talked specifically about Suboxone and Sublocade. I was very proud to be the minister when we expanded access

through virtual prescribing for people in communities outside of Edmonton and Calgary to be able to access those opioid dependency treatments in a variety of communities throughout the province. I will have to respond at another point about feedback that we've gotten from physicians and doctors about the changes around being able to carry some of that, but upon first reading it seems like a reasonable next step around methadone and Suboxone and Sublocade.

I will say, however, that I am deeply troubled by the fact that I continue to hear from Albertans who are desperate to get into treatment, who want voluntarily to get treatment, and they have to wait for weeks or even months to access, especially, residential treatment centres. The government wants to move forward on forced treatment, but they aren't even coming close to meeting the demand for voluntary treatment.

If we really want to bring forward something that does good for the people of this province, I would encourage the government to look at working with partners. Yesterday we had a number of physician assistants here. They tried to meet with many of us to be able to talk about the role that they can play.

We're going to see the first cohort graduate within the province of Alberta. There are only 20 of them, but that's progress. We definitely have a huge role that PAs can play. Most of the PAs that we've had in the country to date either came through the military, where they train – it's a postgraduate, a master's degree – in how to be a physician assistant and some of the number of things that can be done there. It definitely is a larger scope of practice than many other health care providers, but we're starting to see more training in other parts of the country, especially in Ontario. They've ramped up significantly, and now we have our first cohort graduating this year in Calgary. We should be looking at expanding those cohorts to Edmonton and other parts of the province. We should be looking at expanding the number of opportunities that we have for medical students within our own province.

There is a problem with access to primary care, and that problem has been created over the last seven years. We have had increased demand, we have had more people moving to Alberta, and we haven't even come close to catching up to where we are at in terms of meeting that demand. The government could stop being the gatekeepers, and they could actually invest more in our postsecondary institutions to be able to expand access to these programs. I know that fewer than 10 per cent of those who are applying to radiation technology programs are getting in these days, about the same for X-ray technologists. There is lots of interest from Alberta students or prospective students to pursue careers in the health field to help us meet the demand and meet the moment that we are facing, but the government has refused to take action on that and instead wants to continue to limit the number of spots there are and tell people they're free to pay to go get them. That is shameful.

This is a continuation of prior legislation, including Bill 11 that came forward last fall, where the government expanded the ability for people to bill under both systems, the public and the private, and now they're forcing that requirement onto so many other Albertans who want simple things done like tests or procedures to be able to live their lives to their fullest or to live their lives at all. Waiting months for medical diagnostics is unacceptable. The government should be fixing that for all, not just for those who are wealthy and who choose to spend their money on something that should be publicly provided.

I don't have a lot of time left, so I do just want to say that we are all stewards of the Canada Health Act in this place. It is federal legislation that has been one of our guiding pieces of legislation for a provincial responsibility. It is the province's responsibility to provide health care, but it isn't our responsibility to determine under

what constructs we do that. The tenets of the Canada Health Act, including portability, including a single-payer system, should be foundational to us all. Conservatives have been chipping away at those tenets province by province but particularly here in the prairies and particularly in Alberta for years.

I will remind us that one of the greatest Canadians, Tommy Douglas, in his final speech in the House of Commons talked about how if we don't move forward, it will be moved backwards. There are so many ways that we can move forward with public health care. We can expand prescription access for children, for seniors, for those who are low income. We can take away burdens for dental and for optical care. We can make sure that we have primary care providers – nurse practitioners, family doctors, physician assistants – available in communities throughout our province. Instead, we know that almost a million Albertans now don't have access to a primary care provider, something that was not the case when the NDP was in government. In every major municipality in this province you could get a family doctor. That's the way it should be again, and it can be again.

There weren't closed signs outside of rural emergency departments, but there are regularly. I can assure you that if you go to the Alberta Health Services hospital closure website, there will probably be two or three or even four this week. I haven't done it today, but every other week I've done it for the last year and I will do it again tomorrow, and that is a constant pattern. That is unacceptable. It is not fair that if you have a heart attack in Hinton, you might not make it. That's not okay, and it shouldn't be the norm. And telling people that the only way they can get through it is to be able to pony up, pay out of pocket, and take charge in ownership and payment of their own health care system is not only wrongheaded, but it is a failure of us to fulfill our responsibility as provincial legislators on a provincial matter, and that is health care.

I call upon all members to really take a moment of sombre reflection to think about what inspired them to run for office, why they chose provincial politics. I get asked this question a lot. Why provincial and not municipal? Why provincial and not federal? I love public health care and public education, and that is a provincial responsibility. I am so proud to be one of the people who's entrusted to help fight for it, and I call upon all of us, no matter where we sit in this place, to reflect on our responsibility as stewards of the public health care and public education system, to take actions through our votes, through our words, and through what has been entrusted to all of us by those we represent to stand up for them, to make sure that they know they have an advocate in this place who thinks it's unacceptable for them to be told to pay for their own diagnostics, to pay for their own doctor.

There are companies already advertising \$9,800 a year. There's one here that – I won't say the name of the company. But there are companies here, including in Edmonton, talking about \$9,800 a year, and that begins with getting an in-depth medical assessment, including advanced diagnostic testing such as an ECG, DXA, body composition screening, laboratory analysis, specialized genetic testing. What they don't also say, though, is that you're giving up your family doctor from before to become a member there. Then what happens if you don't have \$9,800 next year?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, I can hear your conversation on the other side of the room. Perhaps you should have it in a different room.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Haji:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the former health minister for speaking so passionately about Bill 29 and its implications. I appreciate the minister of primary and preventative services pointing out how this is supporting the public health

system, but I rise with a serious concern that this is not a support of the public health system. This is going to diminish the existing public health system, which has been deteriorating under the current government.

Madam Speaker, I want us to begin by thinking about a patient in Alberta who has been told they may need an MRI scan. That patient is worried, that patient is uncertain, and that patient is wanting for answers. Now imagine another patient with the same symptoms and the same level of concern but with the financial ability to pay out of pocket. The second patient gets answers faster and moves ahead in the line. This is what Bill 29 makes possible, and that is what is in debate today.

2:10

Bill 29 is principally wrong and practically harmful. It will make our health care system more expensive. It will not support it. It will make our health care system more inefficient, and it will make our health care system less fair for people who need it the most. The bill diminishes the clinical oversight of our doctors. It treats physicians as – I quote the Premier's statement – gatekeepers instead of the medical profession that is responsible for the clinical triage of our patients.

This bill does not exist in isolation. It is part of a broader shift in how health care is being delivered in this province. Last fall this government passed Bill 11, which marked the first phase of health care privatization in Alberta. Bill 11 legislated dual practice in our hospitals. Now Bill 29 builds on that and directly on the foundations by establishing a framework that allows Albertans to pay out of pocket for services such as their regular blood work, MRI, and CT scan. This bill changes the structure of our health care system by making Alberta health care insurance the payer of last resort while private insurers become the first option.

Madam Speaker, these two bills represent a fundamental shift away from a publicly driven system towards one that prioritizes private payment. I actually believe this is something that Albertans should have a say in. It is not something that is done through regulation in the minister's office.

So what is the scope? The scope of Bill 29 can be narrowed into four components. That includes the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act, Pharmacy and Drug Act, Provincial Health Agencies Act, and Health Insurance Premiums Act. Some of these changes are administrative changes and alignment – I get it – but the amendment to Alberta health care insurance that covers all Albertans has wide-reaching consequences for how care is accessed and how care is delivered in this province.

One of the most significant changes proposed in this bill is the introduction of self-referral for diagnostic testing. Madam Speaker, currently patients in Alberta must obtain a requisition from authorized health care providers, mostly primary care providers. This requirement is not gatekeeping; this requirement ensures that testing is guided by clinical judgment and medical necessity. This is not gatekeeping. This is a safeguard, but Bill 29 will remove the safeguard by allowing individuals to access screening, testing, and diagnostic services without referral from a physician or from a nurse practitioner. If implemented, Alberta will be the only province in Canada to allow this level of self-referral. This is a serious concern about the appropriateness of oversight care.

Madam Speaker, when Bill 11 was introduced and on this side of the House we argued that this is American style, the government's response was: European style. Now, the government tried to find this in Europe and could not. They had to go all the way to South Korea and Japan. They just can't call it Japanese-style because it will seem shameful. Why will they not do a proper environmental scan, figure out what is the best? You shouldn't go the other way around. You shouldn't develop a policy, figure out where it exists,

and then if you can't find it in North America, try in Europe. If you can't find it in Europe, try in Japan. That is how this policy is developed. I wonder if the minister will call this Japanese-style? I don't know why they wouldn't if they're so proud that this is Japanese-style.

Well, we're not changing our position. It is an American-style health system. It is a two-tier, American-style system of health care delivery. [interjection] Well, you're very creative there by – sorry, Madam Speaker. The government is so creative by re-engineering and finding its – but not calling it Japanese-style.

What are the serious concerns that I have and that we have on this side of the House on this bill? One, the ministerial authority and lack of clarity. As I said before, this is something that Albertans will have a say. But the concern is that the minister will have significant discretion to determine the types of tests and services that can be accessed through self-referral.

The associated costs, who will be eligible for this reimbursement, what are the rates, who determines the rates, what are the schedules that will be covered, and what are the schedules that will not be included in the coverage: this is not something that is on the table in this Chamber to debate on. These are the fundamental frameworks of how our health care insurance system is built. The eligibility, the reimbursement framework, the rates that will be covered, the schedules that are included in the list of coverage: all of those things are not clear. The minister determines that. That is a serious concern.

This lack of clarity, Madam Speaker, creates uncertainty and reduces transparency in how the system will operate. Imagine that you have insurance and you don't know what is included in your insurance system. Nobody will sign off on that. Albertans don't know what is included in the insurance system that the government will cover and what the government will not cover when it comes to self-referral diagnostics and lab services.

Okay. The minister's argument is that this is supporting the public system. Artificially, yes; fundamentally, no. The financial impact of this policy is so significant. Estimates suggest that enabling self-referral and private pay diagnostic services could increase costs to the publicly funded system by approximately \$800 per diagnostic test, and you have removed the clinical oversight to determine who will be doing the test and who will not. You have opened the door for all of those testers to go through. Eight hundred dollars per test. It's projected that around 3,000 Albertans will choose to pay privately for diagnostic imaging each year. This is based on the AMA's study, the Alberta Medical Association.

The follow-up care generated by each test could result in approximately \$1 million annually in low-value care costs borne by the public system. We all go for a test, and then, because we have not prioritized who will be tested, everybody that got the test, somebody, a clinician has to read, a clinician has to determine, do the interpretation, rule out what is a false positive, rule out what is a real positive, figure out other clinical contexts that this individual has. All of those things considered as low value will be dumped on the system, which would have not been dumped because of – Bill 29 opens that gate. This demonstrates that even when services are paid for privately, the downstream costs remain within our public system. So artificially, yes, but fundamentally, in real time, it's going to cost more in the system.

2:20

It's people that provide the services, the workforce. The health care system is already facing workforce challenges, including shortages of technologists and other health care professionals. Increasing private-pay opportunities may draw providers to the for-profit sector, reducing capacity within the already strained public

system. You know what that will lead to, Madam Speaker? This will lead to longer wait times, reduced access to patients who depend on the publicly funded system. When that happens, what you're creating is that some people have access and some people don't. Then you have two-tier equity concerns. It allows for-profit providers to offer faster diagnostic services to individuals who can afford to pay privately. This means that access to timely care will increasingly depend on the person's financial means rather than the medical need.

Remember, as I said already, you have already removed the safeguards, the clinical oversight that primary care providers were providing to Albertans accessing testing. Albertans have consistently expressed that they do not want a system where people can pay to skip the line, so why are we introducing this without the input from Albertans? Health care in this country is intended to be based on need. It's a principle, Madam Speaker. The health care system in this country is not supposed to be based on the ability to pay.

The other aspects are the clinical concerns and overuse of testing. There are also significant clinical concerns associated with this increased access to self-referred diagnostic testing without an oversight of clinicians, whether primary care provider, physician, or nurse practitioner. The AMA has highlighted that between 10 to 40 per cent of scans show some level of abnormalities while only 1 to 2 per cent of these findings are clinically significant, that will require medical attention. Inconsistent quality standards, variable accreditation, or fragmented reporting practices between the private and public system can also elevate the risk of inaccurate results because patients will continue going from one to another. That inconsistency will only create confusion among patients.

The other concerns, Madam Chair, are patient safety and fragmentation of care. You have a private and you have a public system that are fragmented, which will create . . .

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and it's my pleasure to join debate on Bill 29, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2026.

It is obvious from the very learned colleagues who have spoken before me that this is a bill that's quite abhorrent and certainly does not deserve to be supported and certainly it stands in the face of many of the values that I hold dear. I will not be supporting Bill 29. It's further introducing two-tiered health care, privatization, which of course I stand against. It's another bad decision by this UCP government, and we certainly see once again that they can't be trusted to care for our health system in Alberta. The chaos they've created is obvious to everybody who lives in this province.

Shifting diagnostic laboratory services access based on medical need, which is how it is now – you know, you get a requisition from your doc. You go because there's something that maybe is not right or they want to find out, so the medical professional, the doctor, gives you a requisition, and you go because they feel you need to have something tested. But it's now really about an individual's ability to pay and at their own discretion.

This certainly contravenes the Canada Health Act, and it's going to create much more chaos in our system. We certainly here in the NDP don't support privately paid self-referred diagnostic lab services, and if the bill does pass in our province, Alberta will be the only province in Canada where self-referral is allowed. All other provinces do require a requisition from a physician.

You know, we've been here before, Madam Speaker, with many bad decisions by the UCP. One that kind of relates pretty significantly to this bad bill is just the cancellation of the superlab

back in 2019 when the UCP was first elected. It was all part of some very backwards legislation that was put forward by the Kenney government in 2019. The Edmonton superlab project was part of sort of the decimation of many public programs that were actually very key to the support of Albertans. Just as a side note, one of the programs that was terminated was the Seniors Advocate, the stand-alone office that served seniors, and that's just one example of many, many bad ones.

You know, this project that the NDP government brought forward, the superlab as it was known, was really like a world-class facility meant to streamline and really elevate lab results and have it all under one roof to support Albertans. It was to improve efficiency. The public management of the diagnostic laboratory services would have been consolidated so that it would support the whole province.

You know, as the MLA for Edmonton-Riverview, that was in the U of A south campus, where already the Notley government had worked to move that project forward, and \$23 million had already been invested. Kenney threw that all out the window. He threw away that \$23 million, threw away that world-class facility and said: "No, no. We're going to privatize. We're going to privatize lab services."

Now we begin the long, sad story of what the UCP has done to decimate laboratory services for Albertans. That's a fundamental aspect of the health system that we all must have and utilize to make sure that we're diagnosed properly and then we get the proper treatment so that we can live healthy lives, long, healthy lives.

At the time when Kenney flushed the superlab, health professionals raised concerns, saying that the laboratory infrastructure was bursting at the seams and a centralized, modern facility would improve diagnostic services for Alberta. But as I said, the UCP threw that all out. You know, I would see it. I drive in my riding, and it was right by Wellspring, which is a support facility for people with cancer and their families, and it provides those kind of softer services that support people as they go through the cancer journey. Certainly, not only as the MLA for the area but as a cancer survivor myself, I would often go to Wellspring. I used to exercise there, actually, in a program. But of course the UCP wasted another \$12.1 million in costs to return the site to the grassy field that it had been originally, so they'd lost \$35 million in total. Bad decision after bad decision: it's really abhorrent.

Just more recently, 2023, the UCP took over DynaLife due to significant service delays and the company's insolvency, really costing Alberta taxpayers about \$150 million. You know, another bad decision, and that was because they didn't want a public agency. They wanted a private agency, but what did they do in the end? They made it a public agency. They took over that, so if they . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but the clock strikes 2:30 and the House stands adjourned.

[The Assembly adjourned at 2:30 p.m. to Monday, May 4, at 1:30 p.m.]



## **Bill Status Report for the 31st Legislature - 2nd Session (2025-2026)**

**Activity to Thursday, April 23, 2026**

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

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

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

### **Bill 1 — International Agreements Act (Smith)**

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

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

Committee of the Whole — 184-87 (*Nov. 4, 2025 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 250-52 (*Nov. 6, 2025 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 26, 2025 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force November 26, 2025; SA 2025, cI-3.8 ]

### **Bill 2 — Back to School Act (Horner)**

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

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

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

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

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 28, 2025 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on October 28, 2025; SA 2025 cB-0.5 ]

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

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

Second Reading — 135-37 (*Oct. 30, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 187-93 (*Nov. 4, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 215-16 (*Nov. 5, 2025 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 334-37 (*Nov. 18, 2025 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 371-73 (*Nov. 19, 2025 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 26, 2025 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2025 c17 ]

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

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

Second Reading — 193-201 (*Nov. 4, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 216-24 (*Nov. 5, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 289 (*Nov. 17, 2025 eve., adjourned*), 323-34 (*Nov. 18, 2025 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 408-13 (*Nov. 20, 2025 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 447-55 (*Nov. 24, 2025 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 26, 2025 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force November 26, 2025, with exceptions; SA 2025 c18 ]

### **Bill 5 — Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (Schow)**

First Reading — 271 (*Nov. 17, 2025 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 322-23 (*Nov. 18, 2025 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 407-08 (*Nov. 20, 2025 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 589-90 (*Nov. 27, 2025 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force December 11, 2025; SA 2025 c23 ]

**Bill 6 — Education (Prioritizing Literacy and Numeracy) Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2) (Nicolaides)**

First Reading — 150 (Nov. 3, 2025 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 252-60 (Nov. 6, 2025 aft., adjourned), 289-98 (Nov. 17, 2025 eve., adjourned), 337-39 (Nov. 18, 2025 aft., adjourned), 341-51 (Nov. 18, 2025 eve., adjourned; amendments introduced), 455-65 (Nov. 24, 2025 eve., adjourned; amendments introduced), 504-14 (Nov. 25, 2025 eve., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole — 681-86 (Dec. 2, 2025 eve., passed)

Third Reading — 713-21 (Dec. 3, 2025 aft., passed)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2025 c19 ]

**Bill 7 — Water Amendment Act, 2025 (Schulz)**

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

Second Reading — 224-35 (Nov. 5, 2025 aft., adjourned), 298-307 (Nov. 17, 2025 eve., adjourned), 351-55 (Nov. 18, 2025 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 480-93 (Nov. 25, 2025 aft., passed)

Third Reading — 536-43 (Nov. 26, 2025 aft., adjourned), 661-63 (Dec. 2, 2025 aft., passed)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2025 c27 ]

**Bill 8 — Utilities Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (Neudorf)**

First Reading — 478 (Nov. 25, 2025 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 663-70 (Dec. 2, 2025 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 737-44 (Dec. 3, 2025 eve., passed with amendments)

Third Reading — 766-71 (Dec. 4, 2025 aft., passed)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 11, 2025, with exceptions; SA 2025 c26 ]

**Bill 9 — Protecting Alberta's Children Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (Amery)**

First Reading — 319-20 (Nov. 18, 2025 aft., passed on division)

Second Reading — 378-91 (Nov. 19, 2025 aft., adjourned), 493-501 (Nov. 25, 2025 aft., adjourned), 549-54 (Nov. 26, 2025 aft., adjourned), 676-79 (Dec. 2, 2025 aft., adjourned), 815-22 (Dec. 8, 2025 eve., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole — 855 (Dec. 9, 2025 aft., adjourned), 873-80 (Dec. 9, 2025 eve., passed on division)

Third Reading — 891 (Dec. 9, 2025 eve., adjourned on division), 892-900 (Dec. 9, 2025 eve., passed on division)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 11, 2025; SA 2025 c24 ]

**Bill 10 — Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2) (Nally)**

First Reading — 271 (Nov. 17, 2025 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 374-78 (Nov. 19, 2025 aft., adjourned), 514-21 (Nov. 25, 2025 eve., adjourned), 543-49 (Nov. 26, 2025 aft., adjourned), 670-76 (Dec. 2, 2025 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 728-29 (Dec. 3, 2025 aft., adjourned), 744-45 (Dec. 3, 2025 eve., passed)

Third Reading — 789-94 (Dec. 8, 2025 eve., passed)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2025 c25 ]

**Bill 11 — Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2) (LaGrange)**

First Reading — 426 (Nov. 24, 2025, passed)

Second Reading — 555-64 (Nov. 26, 2025 eve., adjourned), 590-96 (Nov. 27, 2025 aft., adjourned), 637-46 (Dec. 1, 2025 eve., adjourned), 808-15 (Dec. 8, 2025 eve., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole — 856 (Dec. 9, 2025 aft., adjourned), 867-73 (Dec. 9, 2025 eve., passed on division with amendments)

Third Reading — 913-14 (Dec. 10, 2025 aft., adjourned on division), 916-22 (Dec. 10, 2025 aft., passed on division)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2025 c21 ]

**Bill 12 — Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2) (S) (Horner)**

First Reading — 478 (Nov. 25, 2025 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 693-98 (Dec. 2, 2025 eve., adjourned), 731-37 (Dec. 3, 2025 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 745-50 (Dec. 3, 2025 eve., adjourned), 850-55 (Dec. 9, 2025 aft., passed with amendments)

Third Reading — 860-67 (Dec. 9, 2025 eve., passed on division)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2025 c20 ]

**Bill 13 — Regulated Professions Neutrality Act (Amery)**

First Reading — 404 (Nov. 20, 2025 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 564-73 (Nov. 26, 2025 eve., adjourned), 629-37 (Dec. 1, 2025 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 686-92 (Dec. 2, 2025 eve., adjourned), 801-08 (Dec. 8, 2025 eve., passed)

Third Reading — 887-91 (Dec. 9, 2025 eve., passed on division)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2025 cR-13.3 ]

**Bill 14 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (Amery)**

First Reading — 763 (Dec. 4, 2025 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 794-801 (Dec. 8, 2025 eve., adjourned), 844-50 (Dec. 9, 2025 aft., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole — 856 (Dec. 9, 2025 aft., adjourned), 880-87 (Dec. 9, 2025 eve., passed on division with amendments)

Third Reading — 922-23 (Dec. 10, 2025 aft., adjourned on division), 924-31 (Dec. 10, 2025 aft., passed on division)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 11, 2025, with exceptions; SA 2025 c22 ]

**Bill 15 — Public Safety and Emergency Services Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Ellis)**

First Reading — 943 (Feb. 24, 2026 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 972-83 (Feb. 25, 2026 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 1141-48 (Mar. 19, 2026 morn., passed)

Third Reading — 1337-44 (Mar. 31, 2026 aft., passed)

Royal Assent — (Apr. 16, 2026 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force April 16, 2026; SA 2026, c5 ]

**Bill 16 — Traveller Protection and Destination Development Act (Boitchenko)**

First Reading — 963 (Feb. 25, 2026 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 1065-68 (Mar. 12, 2026 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 1148-52 (Mar. 19, 2026 morn., passed)

Third Reading — 1216-19 (Mar. 24, 2026 aft., passed)

Royal Assent — (Mar. 26, 2026 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on Proclamation; SA 2026, cT-6.7 ]

**Bill 17 — Fiscal Measures Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Horner)**

First Reading — 1039 (Mar. 10, 2026 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 1210-16 (Mar. 24, 2026 aft.), 1241-44 (Mar. 25, 2026 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 1270-73 (Mar. 26, 2026 morn., passed)

Third Reading — 1273-76 (Mar. 26, 2026 morn., passed)

Royal Assent — (Mar. 26, 2026 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2026 c3 ]

**Bill 18 — Safeguards for Last Resort Termination of Life Act (Amery)**

First Reading — 1124 (Mar. 18, 2026 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 1332-37 (Mar. 31, 2026 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 1462-65 (Apr. 14, 2026 aft., adjourned), 1524-28 (Apr. 16, 2026 morn., passed)

Third Reading — 1607-12 (Apr. 22, 2026 aft., passed on division)

**Bill 19 — Appropriation Act, 2026 (\$) (Horner)**

First Reading — 1140 (Mar. 19, 2026 morn., passed)

Second Reading — 1222-27 (Mar. 24, 2026 aft., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole — 1248-58 (Mar. 25, 2026 aft., passed on division)

Third Reading — 1278-88 (Mar. 26, 2026 morn., passed on division)

Royal Assent — (Mar. 26, 2026 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force March 26, 2026; SA 2026, c1 ]

**Bill 20 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2026 (\$) (Horner)**

First Reading — 1197 (Mar. 23, 2026 eve., passed)

Second Reading — 1219-21 (Mar. 24, 2026 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 1244-48 (Mar. 25, 2026 aft., passed)

Third Reading — 1276-78 (Mar. 26, 2026 morn., passed on division)

Royal Assent — (Mar. 26, 2026) [Comes into force March 26, 2026; SA 2026, c2 ]

**Bill 21 — Interprovincial Trade Mutual Recognition Act (Schow)**

First Reading — 1261 (*Mar. 26, 2026 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 1344-49 (*Mar. 31, 2026 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1404-08 (*Apr. 2, 2026 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1453-55 (*Apr. 14, 2026 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Apr. 16, 2026 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on Proclamation; SA 2026, cI-9.5 ]

**Bill 22 — Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2026 (Sigurdson, RJ)**

First Reading — 1299 (*Mar. 30, 2026 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1399-1404 (*Apr. 2, 2026 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1618-20 (*Apr. 22, 2026 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1643-47 (*Apr. 23, 2026 aft., passed*)

**Bill 23 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Amery)**

First Reading — 1299 (*Mar. 30, 2026 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1455-62 (*Apr. 14, 2026 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1492-98 (*Apr. 15, 2026 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1520-24 (*Apr. 16, 2026 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Apr. 16, 2026 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force April 16, 2026, with exceptions; SA 2026, c4 ]

**Bill 24 — Alberta Whisky Act (Nally)**

First Reading — 1329 (*Mar. 31, 2026 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1393-99 (*Apr. 2, 2026 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1498-99 (*Apr. 15, 2026 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1532-36 (*Apr. 16, 2026 morn., adjourned*), 1607 (*Apr. 22, 2026 aft., passed*)

**Bill 25 — An Act to Remove Politics and Ideology from Classrooms and Amend the Education Act, 2026 (Nicolaides)**

First Reading — 1329 (*Mar. 31, 2026 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1465-71 (*Apr. 14, 2026 aft., adjourned*), 1499-1504 (*Apr. 15, 2026 aft., adjourned*), 1647-51 (*Apr. 23, 2026 morn., adjourned*)

**Bill 26 — Immigration Oversight Act (Schow)**

First Reading — 1353 (*Apr. 1, 2026 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1528-32 (*Apr. 16, 2026 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1620-24 (*Apr. 22, 2026 aft., passed*)

**Bill 27 — Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Horner)**

First Reading — 1353 (*Apr. 1, 2026 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1487-92 (*Apr. 15, 2026 aft., adjourned*), 1612-18 (*Apr. 22, 2026 aft., passed*)

**Bill 28 — Municipal Affairs and Housing Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Williams)**

First Reading — 1385 (*Apr. 2, 2026 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 1636-43 (*Apr. 23, 2026 morn., adjourned*)

**Bill 29 — Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (LaGrange)**

First Reading — 1420 (*Apr. 13, 2026 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1651-57 (*Apr. 23, 2026 morn., adjourned*)

**Bill 30 — Expedited 120-Day Approvals Act (Jean)**

First Reading — 1450 (*Apr. 14, 2026 aft., passed*)

**Bill 31 — Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Nally)**

First Reading — 1627 (*Apr. 23, 2026 morn., passed*)

**Bill 32 — Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2026 (Amery)**

First Reading — 1635 (*Apr. 23, 2026 morn., passed*)

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

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

Second Reading — 154-65 (*Nov. 3, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 274-76 (*Nov. 17, 2025 aft., defeated on division*)

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

First Reading — 248 (*Nov. 6, 2025 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 276-84 (*Nov. 17, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 427-31 (*Nov. 24, 2025 aft., defeated on division*)

**Bill 203 — Energy Storage Planning for Investment Act (Al-Guneid)**

First Reading — 319 (*Nov. 18, 2025 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 431-39 (*Nov. 24, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 608-13 (*Dec. 1, 2025 aft., defeated on division*)

**Bill 204 — Public Interest Disclosure (Publicly Funded Health Entity Whistleblower Protection) Act (Sweet)**

First Reading — 534 (*Nov. 26, 2025 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 613-20 (*Dec. 1, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 1014-20 (*Mar. 9, 2026 aft., defeated on division*)

**Bill 205 — Non-Disclosure Agreements Act (Johnson)**

First Reading — 1129 (*Mar. 19, 2026 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 1169 (*Mar. 23, 2026 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Families and Communities*)

**Bill 206 — Accessible Alberta Act (Renaud)**

First Reading — 1063 (*Mar. 12, 2026 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1081-94 (*Mar. 16, 2026 aft., adjourned*), 1166-69 (*Mar. 23, 2026 aft., defeated on division*)

**Bill 207 — Primary Provincial Industries Recognition Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Dyck)**

First Reading — 1269 (*Mar. 26, 2026 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 1300-1311 (*Mar. 30, 2026 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1424-32 (*Apr. 13, 2026 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1549-51 (*Apr. 20, 2026 aft., passed*)

**Bill 208 — Tobacco, Smoking and Vaping Reduction Amendment Act, 2026 (Petrovic)**

First Reading — 1507 (*Apr. 16, 2026 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 1551 (*Apr. 20, 2026 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future*)

**Bill 209 — Consumer Protection (Affordability Measures) Amendment Act, 2026 (Eremenko)**

First Reading — 1635 (*Apr. 23, 2026 morn., passed*)

**Bill Pr1 — The Ranchmen's Club Ordinance Amendment Act, 2026 (Ceci)**

First Reading — 1269 (*Mar. 26, 2026 morn., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills*), 1450 (*Apr. 14, 2026 aft., reported to Assembly; proceeded with*)

**Bill Pr2 — Prairie Bible Institute Amendment Act, 2026 (Sawyer)**

First Reading — 1269 (*Mar. 26, 2026 morn., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills*), 1450 (*Apr. 14, 2026 aft., reported to Assembly; proceeded with*)







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