



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, May 4, 2026

Day 52

The Honourable Ric McIver, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 31st Legislature**  
Second Session

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van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, ECA, Red Deer-North (UC)  
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Williams, Hon. Dan D.A., ECA, Peace River (UC),  
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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC),  
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**Party standings:**

United Conservative: 47

New Democrat: 38

Progressive Tory: 1

Independent: 1

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Nathan Neudorf	Minister of Affordability and Utilities
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Education and Childcare
Jason Nixon	Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Indigenous Relations
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R.J. Sigurdson	Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation
Searle Turton	Minister of Children and Family Services
Dan Williams	Minister of Municipal Affairs
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Muhammad Yaseen	Associate Minister of Multiculturalism

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Shane Getson	Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridor Development
Chelsae Petrovic	Parliamentary Secretary for Health Workforce Engagement
Ron Wiebe	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health (North)
Justin Wright	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health (South)
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Northern Development

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 Deputy Chair: Mrs. Johnson  
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 Rowswell  
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 Wiebe  
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**Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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 Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach  
 Boparai  
 Bouchard  
 de Jonge  
 Elmeligi  
 Hoyle  
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**Select Special Citizen Initiative Proposal Review Committee**

Chair: Mr. Lundy  
 Deputy Chair: Mrs. Sawhney  
 Ellingson  
 Nixon  
 Pancholi  
 Sawyer

**Select Special Committee on Electoral Boundaries**

Chair: Mr. Lundy  
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 Gray  
 Sawyer  
 Wiebe

**Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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 Dyck  
 Miyashiro  
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**Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

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 Brar, Gurtej  
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**Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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**Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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 Al-Guneid  
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 Cyr  
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 Petrovic  
 Rowswell  
 Yao

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, May 4, 2026

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Hon. members, it being the first sitting day of the week, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw. I invite all to participate in the official language of their choice.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all of us command.  
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,  
The True North strong and free!  
From far and wide, O Canada,  
We stand on guard for thee.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

### Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

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

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, seated in my gallery today is the hon. Rick Orman, former MLA for Calgary-Montrose from 1986 to 1993. During his time as a member he served in cabinet as minister of career development and employment from 1986 to 1988, minister of labour from 1988 to 1989, and as minister of energy from 1989 to 1992. I ask that he please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** We start with the Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the African-Caribbean food bank and the Guiding Light Women Empowerment Society, two organizations doing amazing work in our community. It was great to meet with them today. I'd ask that they all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Mr. Gurtej Brar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you 75 brilliant grade 6 students along with their 12 teachers and guardians from Pollard Meadows school. I ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are pleased today to welcome a group of new staff from the public service who are taking part in procedural orientation. I was able to meet with them earlier this morning and was happy to try to answer a few questions about the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. I want to thank them all for being here today and welcome them. We're so glad you've chosen to be part of our team. I invite you all to please stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Ip:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Navy Brar, community leader, entrepreneur, and cofounder of Edmonton Fashion Week. She's a recipient of top 40 under 40 and was named Mrs. India Worldwide Air 2023. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Wright:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you Mr. Allan Cameron, founder of Veterans Voices of Canada. Mr. Cameron was recently awarded the civil division meritorious service medal for his tireless work over the past 20 years paying tribute to Canada's most honourable veterans through his on-camera interviews and military history museum. I encourage Mr. Cameron to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Chamber.

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister of Multiculturalism.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's such a pleasure for me to rise today to introduce to you and through you to the entire Assembly Mr. Imtiaz Ahmed Chaudhry, a real estate professional, volunteer, and director of Al Mustafa Canada in Calgary. He's here today with his wife, Shehla, their children Talha, Taalea, and Tania, as well as his brother Iftikhar Ahmed Chaudhry. May I ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Edmonton-South.

**Member Hoyle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to introduce to you and through you 10 amazing students, delegates from MacEwan University UN Club, who recently returned from New York, earning an outstanding delegation award. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and introduce through you and to you and to the whole Assembly from Pilgrims Hospice board chair Nick Trovato, vice-chair Carole Ancil-Michalyszyn, CEO Monica Robson, their team members Dr. Samuel Fanous, Alanna Posteraro, Paige Tirs, and Lori Miranda, who all look after our terminally ill and do just an amazing job for those at end of life. Thank you so much, and please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a school group from Bluffton, Alberta, home of the Rock, a great place if any of you have been in central Alberta. I'd ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**Member Boparai:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Sajin Singh Khunkhun, one of my Calgary-Falconridge constituency assistants, a volunteer with the Guru Nanak's Free Kitchen and Whitehorn Community Association who recently graduated from Mount Royal University with a bachelor of arts and policy studies. He's focused on youth and community engagement through education and public service. I ask Sajin to rise to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

## Members' Statements

### Alberta Music Action Plan

**Mrs. Sawyer:** Mr. Speaker, last week our government made a landmark nation-leading announcement, the launch of our Alberta music action plan, the first of its kind in Canada, solidifying music as both a powerful cultural force and a major driver of economic growth. Globally the music industry is valued at nearly 32 billion USD, and countries like South Korea and Germany have harnessed that potential into a pillar of economic success. Canada's market now ranks ninth world-wide, growing at nearly 6 per cent last year, outpacing the United States. Alberta is a key part of this success. Supporting over 23,000 jobs, our music sector generates nearly \$5 billion in economic output and contributes over \$2.5 billion to GDP. The industry is primed for even more growth, and with the Alberta action plan we will unlock our full music potential.

1:40

This made-in-Alberta plan is driven by industry, supported by government, and built for Albertans. Our plan opens the door to new investment, stronger industry development, and greater global reach for Alberta talent by strengthening the full industry pipeline. The creation of a Music Commission ensures the industry has a clear unified voice, and that will champion local artists and position Alberta as a place to be for creative and economic success. Our music commissioner will attract top talent and support strong lifelong careers in the sector right here at home.

Our announcement brought together over 150 music and entertainment industry leaders alongside four incredible performances. I was privileged to be in the room, and I can tell you that the support and excitement was electric. The message was clear. The talent is here, the opportunity is now, and all eyes are on Alberta as we lead the way.

Mr. Speaker, with the Alberta music action plan our government is supporting creative sectors. Our government is diversifying our economy and securing Alberta's place on the global stage. That is leadership, and that is the future we're building for Alberta's music industry.

Thank you, and may the perfect fourth be with you.

### Fort McMurray Wildfire 10th Anniversary

**Mr. Kasawski:** Ten years ago 90,000 people were forced to flee Fort McMurray in what remains the largest, most rapid single-day evacuation in the history of modern forest fires. Cellphones and dash cams captured video that day of Albertans cursing, praying, and weeping as they escaped the flames reaching over their cars, the sky raining fire, and blasts of heat so intense they could not

touch their car windows. Choices that day were stark and few. There was now and there was never for most people in Fort McMurray.

The rest of us could only follow the news hour by hour, horrified by what we were hearing and seeing, left wondering how. How did this fire turn on the city so quickly? How would everyone get out? How could we help? In the days that followed across Alberta people opened their homes to evacuees. Universities opened their dorms. Hotels provided their rooms. People donated what they could and offered support to families who had lost almost everything and were glad just to be together, safe and alive.

We witnessed extraordinary acts of courage: firefighters who kept working even knowing their own homes were likely being consumed by the fire, RCMP and Alberta sheriffs who guided tens of thousands to safety, health care workers who refused to leave until every patient was evacuated, teachers and child care workers ensuring that children under their watch made it to their parents safely, and, just as importantly, neighbours who helped neighbours, that community heroism that saves lives.

As we reflect 10 years later, we recognize Fort McMurray's resilience. We acknowledge that changing climate conditions are making disasters like this more frequent and severe, a reminder of the importance of being prepared, taking responsibility, and taking care of each other. Today we honour those affected, those who helped, the strength of a community, and a province that came together when it mattered most.

Thank you.

### Rural Physician Recruitment and Retention

**Mr. Wiebe:** Mr. Speaker, living in rural Alberta is a unique challenge yet a completely fulfilling experience. When you don't have the luxury of huge city budgets, you tend to rely on each other, and because of that, it means much, much more. This is why the rural doctors that serve our communities are indispensable. Rural practice means providing care where access is limited, where drives are long and attention to detail needs to be of utmost importance.

Across our region it can be difficult for families to access basic primary care. In many of our northern communities people rely on emergency rooms or going without care altogether. Seniors managing chronic illness, young families seeking pediatric care, and Indigenous communities working to improve health outcomes all feel the strain of physician shortages. Rural doctors are the backbone of our communities. They often serve as point of care for hundreds, sometimes thousands of residents. This cannot be understated.

Recruitment and retention remains a key challenge, but with our government committed to giving Alberta the best possible care, I know that we will continue to attract more physicians to rural Alberta. Our government is working hard every day to recruit and retain hard-working physicians to serve in our rural areas. In fact, we introduced \$17.5 million to support residents who commit to practising in rural communities after completing their training. Across the province we are adding 210 new medical school seats.

To our current and prospective doctors: thank you for your unwavering commitment and dedication to Albertans. You have grown to become our families and our closest friends, and you serve selflessly. Rural Alberta will never be able to thank you enough for all you do; however, we will never stop trying.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Electoral List Distribution and Use

**Member Kayande:** Mr. Speaker, the personal information of 3 and a half million Albertans was leaked illegally to people who aren't

supposed to have it. Millions of Albertans' names, addresses, voter identification numbers, phone numbers are now in the hands of people who were never authorized to hold it. That's a problem.

The personal data of voters can be misused. We saw an example of this when the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction inappropriately leaked a voter's record. In order to save his political career, the government changed the rules to prevent the Chief Electoral Officer from investigating these types of breaches.

Who could have known? Who could have known that this government's loosening election laws would have made data breaches more likely? The Chief Electoral Officer knew.

Under Bill 54, for an investigation to begin, the Election Commissioner will need to be satisfied that a breach of the legislation has occurred before they can speak to anyone about the allegation, or gather and review any records. Practically this means that the onus will fall on a complainant to provide a [substantially] completed investigation in order for the Election Commissioner to look into a matter.

The Premier herself was censured by the Ethics Commissioner for interfering in the criminal prosecution of an election candidate who ran against me in the 2023 election. It seems this government's response is not to behave better but to prevent the censure of bad actions.

The separatists got the memo. They realized there would be no consequences for misusing Albertans' personal data. Misuse of our data in the voter file is an inevitable consequence of this government's partisan meddling in elections to save their own political skins. That's not right. Albertans have a right to know who will be held accountable.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I made sure I didn't interrupt, but as we go into question period and other things, I'll just caution that we should be careful about how we talk about something that might be before the courts.

#### Fort McMurray Wildfire 10th Anniversary

**Mr. Yao:** Ten years ago Fort McMurray was forced into a defining moment. On May 3, 2016, more than 88,000 residents fled as wildfire tore through our neighbourhoods, destroying over 2,500 homes and forever changing the rhythm of life in the north. The Horse River wildfire left scars that remain visible not only in rebuilt communities like Waterways but in the lived memories carried by those who evacuated through massive flames and gridlocked roads.

In just one day our community was able to evacuate 88,000-plus people. We saw selfless acts of unity as people took in strangers, people carpoled, other communities set up evacuation centres overnight, yet from the ashes rose a deeper sense of who Fort McMurray truly is.

In the months and years that followed the fires, Fort McMurray did not fracture. Families returned home not because rebuilding was easy but because this place mattered. The community stands tall despite the evidence of destruction around it. As we still acknowledge the lasting emotional toll of the evacuation and loss, we also speak to a powerful determination to move forward, to build from the ashes without forgetting what was endured.

That balance between reflection and resolve now defines Fort McMurray's identity a decade later. Rebuilding here has been more than about bricks and beams. It has meant restoring trust, strengthening preparedness, and ensuring future generations understand both the fragility and the strength of the community they call home. Investments in fire prevention, emergency planning, and community readiness reflect lessons learned and a refusal to be caught unprepared again.

The story of Fort McMurray is not one of destruction but of resilience. It is a testament to what happens when a community is under duress and the province and a nation that come together to support that community. Ten years on the flames no longer define Fort McMurray, but the strength revealed in their wake continues to do so. On this day not only can we commemorate the 10-year anniversary of the Fort McMurray fire; we can also celebrate the International Firefighters' Day.

Thank you to all those who stepped up for the community during the wildfire. Thank you to all the firefighters who continue to serve. We all remain Fort McMurray Strong.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### Alberta Hospital Edmonton Site Development

**Ms Sweet:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the more than 70,000 people I represent in northeast Edmonton and the many thousands more who rely on the same strained health care system. It's been clear for a decade. Northeast Edmonton needs a hospital, a real full-service hospital with emergency care, acute care, and integrated mental health supports, but this government has taken the very land that was identified for that hospital and reassigned it to a 150-bed treatment centre. This is where the concern becomes even more serious. By using the only available service land for a limited-scope facility, the government has not just delayed a hospital but has put the possibility of a new hospital at risk altogether.

1:50

Community leaders, health care workers, and families are asking the same question. Why would the government knowingly use the hospital site for something that does not include emergency or acute care? Ambulances are already driving past our neighbourhoods to overcrowded hospitals across our city. Parents are already travelling long distances in the middle of the night when our children are sick or injured. Now, by removing the only viable site, this government has made it even harder to meet the urgent and growing needs of northeast Edmonton.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents support mental health and addiction treatment, but they also know that treatment without emergency care, without acute care, and without wraparound supports is not a complete system. They expected both. A 150-bed treatment centre may help some, but it isn't the full answer to the health care needs of my community and it does not justify sacrificing the land that was meant for a hospital, a hospital that remains essential, overdue, and demanded by my community.

My constituents are asking for fairness and for equitable access to health care, and they are asking this government to restore the hospital plan, protect the land needed to build it, and finally deliver the full-service facility that northeast Edmonton urgently needs.

#### Oral Question Period

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

**Mr. Nenshi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May the fourth be with you.

#### Investigation of Electoral List Distribution and Use

**Mr. Nenshi:** Mr. Speaker, the thing about this government is that they never ease anyone's mind. They never ease anyone's troubles. Instead, they add on more and more things for Albertans to worry about. The latest example may be the largest data breach in Canada's history. Let's be clear. This is a big deal. Every single Canadian

citizen over 18 in Alberta has had their personal information exposed to bad actors for over a month, and the government has done basically nothing. Does the Premier understand what a big deal this is, and what's she going to do about it?

**The Speaker:** Just a gentle caution that both sides should do our best to not prejudice what might be under investigation or before the courts.

The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Nixon:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Smith:** We are aware of the situation and the potential data breach of electors' personal information, and we affirm that the protection of personal information is of utmost importance. We take it very seriously. If a breach has been discovered, then we hope that those who are responsible are held accountable to the full extent of the law. This is an area of the act that could result in a \$100,000 fine or up to a year in prison, so it is very serious. We are encouraged by the fact that the EPS, RCMP, and Elections Alberta are investigating.

**The Speaker:** A point of order was noted at 1:52.

**Mr. Nenshi:** This is not just about looking backwards, Mr. Speaker, or punishing wrongdoers. It's about fixing the problem we have in front of us right now.

Today, as we heard from those beautiful members' statements, is the 10th anniversary of the Fort McMurray fire. We're reminded of the critical role that government and leadership has to play in an emergency. Mr. Speaker, this data breach is an emergency. All we've had from the government is a 74-word statement that can be summarized into: not our fault; nothing to see here. Is the Premier treating this like the emergency that it is? Has she convened the players?

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

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure the member opposite knows that there's a process here, and part of the reason why the Election Commissioner does have power under the Public Inquiries Act is so that they have the power to summon persons as witnesses, require them to give evidence under oath orally or in writing, produce documents, papers, or things that the commissioner deems to be required for a full investigation. The office has the power that it needs. It has the intent, clearly, because they've already gone to court to get an injunction. They are working in collaboration with the RCMP and EPS, and we look forward to seeing the results of the investigation.

**Mr. Nenshi:** So the government is doing nothing.

The critical thing is that this isn't about the investigation. It's about how to help Albertans today. The government had plenty of warning on this. Journalists warned Elections Alberta at the end of March. I myself found out about it on April 17. I immediately informed the relevant authorities. Even the Premier's best friend, separatist leader UCP president Mitch Sylvestre, said that he had suspicions about this data breach weeks ago. A simple question for the Premier: what did the government know and when did they know it?

**Ms Smith:** Well, I was watching social media when the elections officials and EPS showed up at one of the events. That's when I knew. It would have been nice if the member opposite had actually

told government when he found out on April 17, and it would have been nice if any of the journalists who had also informed Elections Alberta had told us, but they didn't. In point of fact it is the law that Elections Alberta has to conduct their investigations privately before they go public with them. There's no obligation or requirement for them to inform government, and in fact it would have been inappropriate for them to do so.

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

**Mr. Nenshi:** So this government, with all its resources, with all its friends in the separatist movement, with the Premier and her chief of staff seemingly getting all their information on Twitter all day, didn't know about this. That begs the question: what happened here? Jeffrey Rath told separatists to sign up to the Centurion Project on March 24 in order to gain a thousand signatures each on the petition. Mr. Speaker, this is the smoking gun. This questions the validity of the entire petition process and every signature. Does the Premier admit the petition is now invalid?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, we have independent offices so they can do their work. In this case we are waiting for the judge to finish her ruling to determine whether the signatures can be validated. When that occurs, it goes to Elections Alberta to validate the signatures. They have already indicated that they're going to have a higher level of scrutiny and take more time. I would just ask the members opposite to believe in the process, believe in the independence of the office, believe in the independence of the commissioner, and to let them do their work.

**Mr. Nenshi:** They fired the Election Commissioner. They fired the Auditor General. Some respect for independent offices. Bill 54 took away powers from Elections Alberta.

One of the Centurion Project's leaders, however, has said that this app, presumably including Albertans' data, was presented to the White House weeks ago. The Premier consistently downplays foreign interference here, but now that Donald Trump's people have access to Albertans' personal data, what's the Premier going to do? Is she going down to Mar-a-Lago and beg for it back?

**The Speaker:** The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to correct the record, the Auditor General came to the end of his eight-year appointment, and there is a new Auditor General in place that also has the same powers of an independent commissioner, because independent officers need to be able to do their work.

We're watching, Mr. Speaker, as we go through and see whether a breach has occurred, what the consequences of that will be. It's determined by the Election Commissioner. Then we can make a judgment at that point on whether there need to be any additional changes in the law, but at the moment we want the process to play out.

**Mr. Nenshi:** There's a referendum coming. There's an election coming. We cannot wait years for the RCMP to conclude an investigation. We need to act now. The Premier has pretended for over a year to be an innocent bystander in the whole separatist movement. Meanwhile the separatists have taken over her party and her caucus. Today they claim to have met the targeted number of signatures, a target they could only meet because it was massively lowered by this Premier, and now we have reason to believe that even that lowered number of signatures contains forged signatures. Does the Premier agree this invalidates the entire petition?

**The Speaker:** The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reason we made the changes to elections law was so that we could have more timely investigations. The clock has started, and we would hope that Elections Alberta would complete their investigation within the two-year time frame from when they knew or ought to have known. That is what the legislation says. I think we now see the wisdom of that so that we can see how rapidly we can get an investigation so we can make the judgment and see if there is any additional legislation that needs to be changed at that time. As I've said, we continue to be supportive of a sovereign Alberta within a united Canada. That is the position of this government.

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

**Mr. Nenshi:** I'm not sure, but I think the Premier just said that there won't be a referendum for two years. That'll be news to her separatist friends.

All of this fraud and corruption is enabled by the UCP's lousy legislation, and this data breach is no exception. The Chief Electoral Officer has clearly said that Bill 54 significantly hampers his ability to investigate this and all other investigations. We warned the government about this a year ago. We warned them about it a month ago in relation to the Justice minister and Sam Mraiche. Now that 3 million Albertans' data is breached, will the Premier be rescinding this bill?

2:00

**Ms Smith:** No, Mr. Speaker, because the investigation time window that we changed was to reduce it to two years so we could get an answer on whether there's been wrongdoing and people can be held to account.

**Ms Hoffman:** So two years from now you're going to acknowledge wrongdoing?

**Ms Smith:** No, they have to have it done within the next two years, Mr. Speaker, as opposed to the unlimited time frame that they had before.

That was the point of it. People need to know, if a breach has occurred, what the consequences will be. That is the reason why we changed the legislation. Quite frankly, there clearly is no limitation. Reasonable grounds to believe an offence has been committed: clearly, they have reasonable grounds because an investigation is under way, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Nenshi:** Except, of course, that that investigation didn't start for a month after the first complaint started. People's data was out there for an entire month, accessible to any bad actor in the province.

The Chief Electoral Officer is an officer of this Legislature and needs to explain to this Legislature what went wrong here. We've requested an emergency meeting. We've requested summoning Mr. McClure to the committee. Will the government make that happen? Will they make it happen in the next 48 hours?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, there is a meeting of the Legislative Offices on May 11, which is a week from today. I understand the Chief Electoral Officer will be going to talk about requirements of his office in order to be able to manage the additional workload created by recall petitions as well as the referendum and the upcoming election. I would encourage the members opposite who are present on that committee to direct their questions to him at that time.

**The Speaker:** Member, the last question was more about committee business than government policy. Go ahead.

**Mr. Nenshi:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier clearly doesn't think this is a big deal. She doesn't want to do anything. She wants to let the processes play out because she's scared that something will be uncovered. But you know who else is scared? Albertans. Albertans are scared and upset. Many of them – police officers, judges, survivors of violence – are fearing for their safety and for their very lives. Times like this require empathy, compassion, and strong leadership to get things done, none of which are being experienced today. Will the Premier change course today and treat this like the emergency it is?

**The Speaker:** The Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will educate the professor once again to understand what can happen if government interferes in an independent process. That is when you can have a judicial review and people won't be held accountable. We on this side want the people who are responsible, if they have harmed someone, to be held accountable. That is the reason why we have to go through the process and why I trust the RCMP and the EPS, and I trust Elections Alberta to get to the bottom of it. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. I know you've all got lots to say. There are meeting rooms where you can go there and say it while the rest of us can hear who's been recognized, and that next person will be the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Mr. Williams:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** And we have a point of order noted at 2:03 p.m.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, the massive data breach that occurred thanks to the UCP's separatist friends has put millions of Albertans at serious risk. This weekend a woman who had fled domestic violence had to once again relocate herself and her family. Her home address was made public for over a month due to the dangerous incompetence of the government's friends in the Centurion Project. Does the Premier understand the gravity of the situation, that domestic violence survivors are being forced to relocate for their safety because of this data breach?

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

**Mr. Amery:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. We absolutely understand the seriousness of this matter. Protecting the personal data information of Albertans is of the utmost importance to this government. We have said it unequivocally. We'll say it again. Those responsible should be held accountable under the full extent of the law. We know that Albertans are concerned. We know that those that are victims of intimate partner violence and domestic violence and all vulnerable Albertans deserve the protection of the law, and this government will do everything it can to protect them.

**Ms Gray:** Three million Albertans had their home addresses breached by this website leak. In as little as 30 seconds anyone could sign up and get the information from the voters' list, a list that this government and their appointee to Elections Alberta are supposed to safeguard. This included addresses, phone numbers, and more, and the Premier's response to this so far has been the 74-word tweet that we saw. If this is an emergency, if they understand the seriousness, what is the Premier doing today to protect the

privacy of millions of registered Albertan voters, especially those fleeing violence?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Amery:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We, too, share what the hon. member said about the seriousness of the breach of data of the personal information of Albertans. We take it incredibly seriously. It's exactly why the Edmonton Police Service, the RCMP, and Elections Alberta are in fact investigating this information. We know that these were breaches of the act. We hope that those who have breached the act are held accountable, and as a government we know that information is surfacing day by day. We'll assess our next steps, and we'll take action wherever needed.

**Ms Gray:** Next steps are exactly what Albertans want to hear about and what I'm asking about now, Mr. Speaker.

There are thousands of Albertans who are facing extremely similar circumstances, not just domestic violence but for a number of different reasons. My question to the government is: what supports for survivors or for Albertans whose safety has been compromised will be made available? What is the government doing today to properly react to this data breach and to understand that they hear what Albertans are telling them, that this is serious, this is harmful, and we need action now?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Once again, we're very much aligned in that position. We know that this is an extremely serious matter. We know that the agencies tasked with investigating this are doing their jobs. Elections Alberta is an independent office, and it is conducting an investigation. In fact, on April 28 Elections Alberta was in court seeking an injunction to stop the breach of data. We know that the Edmonton police force is leading the investigation. We know that the RCMP is leading an investigation. We're going to let these investigations pan out, and we will take action wherever needed.

**The Speaker:** The long preamble we heard before the last question was perfectly in order because it was on question 4. On the questions from now on no preambles on the supplementaries.

The next question belongs to Edmonton-Decore.

### Federal Health Transfer Payments

**Mr. Haji:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the federal Health minister warned this government about compliance with the Canada Health Act as the UCP rapidly expands health care privatization. Last year they legislated physicians' dual practice, that opens the door to hospital services privatization, and now Bill 29 will expand two-tier private diagnostic testing. Why is the Premier pushing a two-tier, American-style system that puts Albertans at risk of a Canada Health Act violation and higher costs to Albertans?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. In fact, I had a very good conversation with the federal Minister of Health where we discussed not only Bill 11 but also Bill 29. She indicated that she had no concerns about the bill on the self-referrals whatsoever and that she is looking at Bill 11 on the dual practice. I assured her that we will in fact be compliant with the Canada Health Act, but we are going to make sure that all Albertans have the quality care they deserve and need.

**Mr. Haji:** Given that Canada health transfer funding is provided only if provinces comply with the Canada Health Act under the principles of public administration, comprehensiveness, universality, portability, and accessibility, given that this province allows extra billing on user charges for medically necessary care, the federal government has the constitutional right to claw back those amounts. Why is this government pushing policies that violate the Canada Health Act framework, making care more expensive while weakening the public health care system that Albertans rely on?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're not doing anything of the sort. In fact, dual practice does exist in other provinces, in Quebec as well as New Brunswick, where they can do dual practice on a case-by-case basis in New Brunswick. Those provinces have not seen any clawbacks because they are, in fact, compliant with the Canada Health Act. We intend to be compliant with the Canada Health Act. More to come as the regulations roll out.

Thank you.

2:10

**Mr. Haji:** Given that the health budget for this year estimates roughly \$7 billion in Canada health transfers, given that under the Canada Health Act any out-of-pocket charges for core services trigger automatic dollar-to-dollar federal penalties, given that this UCP government already holds the record for Canada health transfer penalties in the history of this province, \$13 million compared to under both Progressive Conservative and NDP governments with zero penalties in the history of this province, how many penalties is this minister now budgeting because of Bill 11 and Bill 29, and . . .

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order. When I stand up, you've got to stop talking. That's how it works.

The minister of health.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, when the Canada Health Act came into effect, it was a 50-50 split with the provincial governments. Now we are seeing less than 24 per cent coming to the province. We're spending over \$34 billion on health care in Alberta. More and more that comes from the federal government comes with strings attached. We want to have full, autonomous control in Alberta. We're going to continue to make sure that we have excellent health care. We're going to be compliant with the Canada Health Act, and we're going to make sure that we are not having . . .

**The Speaker:** Order. On both sides you only get 35 seconds no matter how much you might want more.

The next question belongs to Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

### Strathcona Community Hospital Expansion

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, residents of Strathcona county and local areas know how important it is to have access to hospital care close to home as our communities continue to grow. Today's announcement marks an important step forward in planning the expansion of the Strathcona community hospital, bringing welcome news to families across the region. Can the Minister of Hospital and Surgical Health Services please share with the House how this investment will help expand hospital services, improve surgical capacity, and ensure more Albertans can access the care they need closer to where they live?

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

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's population is growing rapidly, which is driving higher demand at our hospitals. That's why our government is investing \$2 million to begin planning a major expansion of the Strathcona community hospital. Subject to planning, the project would add up to 120 in-patient beds with an additional 32 shelved for future use as well as new surgical suites capable of supporting over 4,000 surgeries. For a facility that sees over 47,000 emergency visits, this is a well-needed expansion. I would like to thank the staff, Strathcona Community Hospital Foundation, and the MLA for Strathcona-Sherwood Park for his advocacy for this important project.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Mr. Speaker, given that residents of Strathcona county and area depend on the Strathcona community hospital not only for emergency care but also for services like diagnostic imaging and laboratory service and given that demand for health care continues to increase in this rapidly growing region and further given that families want to understand how this investment will support the services they rely on, could the same minister please explain how this project will expand and enhance these essential services for the community?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We know that we need to strengthen the health care services offered at the Strathcona community hospital. That's why this project plans to enhance and add a broader range of services, including two endoscopy procedure rooms, specialized ambulatory clinics, expanded diagnostic imaging, pharmacy, and lab services, a hemodialysis unit, and integrated mental health supports. Together these additions will improve access, reduce pressure on surrounding hospitals, and ensure patients receive the right care at the right place closer to their home with overall benefits for all involved.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The member.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for the answer. Given that demand for acute care continues to grow across the Edmonton area region and given that many residents are looking for ways government is working to better meet these pressures, could the minister please explain how the proposed expansion of the Strathcona community hospital will help alleviate pressure on the acute-care system in Edmonton and area and what other investments the government is making to strengthen health care capacity across Edmonton and area?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The planned expansion of the Strathcona community hospital is just one part of our broader provincial effort to strengthen health care in the capital region. This includes other projects like \$7 million to plan in-patient towers at the Grey Nuns and Misericordia community hospitals, which would add about 700 in-patient beds. We're also investing \$39 million over three years to plan and acquire land for urgent care centres, two of which will be located in Edmonton, in west Edmonton and south Edmonton. And we've allocated \$37 million to support planning for a new stand-alone Stollery, which would increase capacity to 321 beds up from 225. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Only the Member for Calgary-Currie should we hear from.

## Supervised Drug Consumption Sites

**Member Eremenko:** Mr. Speaker, the last time we were in Chambers, the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction made news because he claimed that he saw people collapse and die while touring a supervised consumption site. I want to be very clear. Since the first SCS opened in Canada in 2003, Health Canada has reported zero fatal overdoses. Will the minister apologize for misleading Albertans about what happened at the supervised consumption site, and will he reverse his decision to close the sites in Calgary and Lethbridge at the end of June?

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

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you point out regularly, we've got 35 seconds to answer questions here, so I'm glad for the opportunity to clarify my comments.

**Ms Hoffman:** To tell the truth.

**Mr. Wilson:** Drug consumption sites keep people trapped in addiction.

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

**Mr. Wilson:** When seeing people inject drugs at these sites, I was struck by the hopelessness of the situation. As we have seen in B.C., NDP policies keep people trapped in addiction, and they end up dying. Addiction is a treatable illness. People caught in the cycle of addiction need help and treatment, and the Alberta recovery model is about helping people get the treatment they need, unlike some of the members opposite.

**The Speaker:** And your 35 seconds are up, Minister.

A point of order was noted at 2:16.

**Member Eremenko:** Given that the minister last week made a weak attempt at correcting the record by saying that people merely appeared to die and given that if . . .

**Mr. Yao:** Drug pushers. Drug pushers.

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

**An Hon. Member:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, you definitely don't get to bark while you're leaving the room or any time that you're not recognized.

Start your 35 seconds over again. You get a fresh start.

**Member Eremenko:** Given that the minister last week made a weak attempt to correct the record by saying that people merely appeared to die and given that if that were true, he would have also seen supervised consumption site staff immediately respond with emergency medical interventions to reduce the overdose and save that client's life, can the minister tell us what he actually saw on his site tour? Why won't he recognize the life-saving efforts of front-line health care workers at the few remaining supervised consumption sites we have left?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we know, these drug consumption sites were designed as a temporary crisis response. These sites do not break the cycle of addiction; they actually prolong it. They were not intended to be permanent. Since then our system has evolved, and it treats addiction. Real change

comes from recovery-oriented care and treatment that helps people reclaim their lives. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. I made us listen to the question, which we should anyways. Now I'm going to make us listen to the answer, which we should anyways.

Go ahead.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A real change comes from recovery-oriented care and treatment that helps people reclaim their lives, rebuild relationships, and restore wellness. Albertans struggling with addiction deserve the opportunity to seek treatment and live a healthier and more hopeful life. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. You know how it works. One person gets recognized; we listen to them. Let's try that.

**Member Eremenko:** Given that according to the ministry's own substance use surveillance data in the last full calendar year 55 per cent of opioid-related deaths were in a private residence, 6 per cent in a facility, 30 per cent were in public, and 6 per cent were in a hotel and given that, in case you missed it, zero per cent were in a supervised consumption site, will the minister remind us again why the one place where people are not dying is the place he's choosing to shut down?

**The Speaker:** We heard the question. Now let's hear the answer from the minister.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government has made major investments in expanding our addiction treatment capacity. We've expanded the number of addiction treatment beds, including detox treatment and recovery, by 55 per cent since 2019. Right now we're building 11 recovery communities, which will add more than 700 new beds, to support more than 2,000 Albertans a year with life-saving recovery. This is all available at no cost to the individual or their family. We also offer immediate same-day access to evidence-based treatment, medication through the virtual opioid dependency program. Our government is committed to supporting those facing addiction.

## 2:20 Food Prices and Affordability

**Member Gurinder Brar:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans don't need another meeting with the grocery barons. They need relief from high prices. The minister says that he's meeting with the grocers to ask why groceries cost so much, but let's be honest. When have billion-dollar grocery chains ever walked out of a meeting and said, "You know what? Let's make less profit today"? While the minister is having conversations, families in my riding are having calculations, deciding which bill not to pay this month. Will today be another ministerial outburst, or will Albertans finally hear a plan to lower grocery prices?

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

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've been clear that we understand the high cost of groceries is one of the top issues on Albertans' minds. As such, we're doing what we do. We're listening to Albertans, we're engaging with grocery stores, and we're having the difficult conversations. I'll have more to report in the near future.

**Member Gurinder Brar:** Given that the UCP government's big idea to lower grocery prices was a website of so-called tips and

given that that website tells struggling families to shop online, to check for broken eggs, and to compare flyers for the best deals and given that that's not affordability policy – that's grocery homework – will the minister take action, find real solutions, and stop blaming Albertans and start actually helping them?

**Mr. Nally:** Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Speaker:** I will recognize you, I promise. The hon. minister.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you. That member has to take yes for an answer. We don't have the NDP approach of shooting first and asking questions later. We saw that with farm safety legislation. That one piece of legislation is why they will never win another seat in rural Alberta, Mr. Speaker. That's not the approach that we use on this side. We're listening to Albertans, we're having conversations with the grocery stores, and I'll have more to report in the near future.

**The Speaker:** Only the hon. member.

**Member Gurinder Brar:** Given that whenever solutions are brought forward from our side like stopping shrinkflation, this government does nothing and given that Albertans need lower prices, not just useless meetings with the minister and his grocery baron buddies, and given that the whole UCP plan seems to be to meet with grocers who set prices, launch websites to blame Albertans, and get angry when questioned, instead of attacking ideas or raising his voice, will the minister accept that the UCP government has done nothing to help Albertans with high grocery prices?

**The Speaker:** Now we should only hear from the minister.

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've heard the NDP solution to the high cost of groceries. It's to eat the rich. It was an actual leadership candidate for the NDP that said that on stage. Now, it was actually not that candidate that won. Their new leader is Avi Lewis. His solution is to nationalize grocery stores. That's right. The NDP under Avi Lewis want to nationalize grocery stores. They're going to have Soviet-style breadlines. They'll be handing equity cards out at the door. The NDP doesn't bring solutions to the table. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Glad somebody is having a good time. The next question belongs to Camrose.

## Hardisty Community Charter School

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Battle River school division made the difficult decision due to financial constraints to close Allan Johnstone school in Hardisty, resulting in the loss of the community's local school. In response, members of the Hardisty community have come together and have put a significant amount of work establishing a public charter school scheduled to open in September. To the minister of education: what requirements must a community meet to proceed with the establishment of a charter school in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. McDougall:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. Charter schools are an established and valued part of Alberta's public education system. They provide specialized programming that meets the diverse needs of Alberta students and are increasingly a stable and enduring feature of our system. Charter schools must offer unique programming or a

vocational program. For unique programs such as Hardisty the charter application must show how student outcomes will improve and share their innovations with the larger education community. Charters must also demonstrate significant community and parental support as well as financial . . .

**The Speaker:** Order. Order, Minister.  
Go ahead, Camrose, please.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer. Given that recently I attended a fundraiser in Hardisty for the school where many of the locals said that they had never seen a gathering that large in the community and further given that the generosity of those bidding was commendable and the local business community really stepped up with their support, to the same minister: what do communities need to be prepared for in terms of financial commitment once they take over a school and open it as a charter?

**The Speaker:** The minister.

**Mr. McDougall:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. Strong financial planning is essential to ensuring a charter school's long-term success and viability. When opening a new charter school, the school authority must secure a location, employ certified teachers, plan for all operational resources required during the school year, and prepare financial statements. Once opened, public charter schools receive the same base instruction funding as public, separate, and francophone school divisions. In '26-27 charter schools received approximately \$218.1 million, an increase of \$17.2 million.

**The Speaker:** Camrose.

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that response. Given the significant amount of work that has already been undertaken by the Hardisty community to meet the administrative and governance requirements and given the strong financial support demonstrated through recent community fundraising efforts, to the same minister: what remaining regulatory, operational, or approval-related hurdles must the Hardisty charter school team still address in order to open the school as planned in September?

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

**Mr. McDougall:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. Hardisty has met all conditions to be accredited. Department staff will now work with the authority to ensure all commencement tasks are completed prior to the school opening. This includes having a minimum number of students required to ensure the program offered is educationally and financially viable; providing proof that the school building complies with municipal zoning bylaws and applicable municipal and provincial health, safety, fire, and building standards and requirements; and ensuring appropriate staffing and governance are in place.

**The Speaker:** The next question belongs to Banff-Kananaskis.

### Grassy Mountain Coal Project Water Licence Application

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the past few years the Minister of Energy and Minerals has adamantly asserted that the proposed Grassy Mountain coal mine wouldn't need a new water

licence. We know, of course, that that's inaccurate. Coal mining requires large volumes of water for processing, washing, and spraying across all of its operations. Now – surprise – Northback has submitted a new Water Act licence application to divert 185,000 cubic metres of water from Blairmore Creek. Did the Minister of Energy and Minerals know a water licence application was coming, or is he just as surprised as the rest of us?

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

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell the hon. member that through the rigorous process that this province has to go through through the Water Act, through EPEA, through AER, they will have to go through as many of those steps as possible so that we make sure that that water going downstream is clean and clear, and we are committed to that. I am downstream. I live downstream from that potential project, and I can tell her that we'll make sure that the most stringent application is applied in this situation.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Well, given that there shouldn't even be an application, Mr. Speaker, given that Northback has been totally ambiguous as to what this water is for and has yet to submit a full mine proposal that would detail that information, given that applying for a new water licence before submitting a project proposal goes against standard process, given that the water licence application cannot be evaluated by the AER without the details contained in the project proposal, to the Minister of Energy and Minerals: why would the AER even accept the water licence application if it can't be properly evaluated?

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

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the member for the question. I can tell the member that when it comes to any application for any coal mining operation in the eastern slopes, they will follow the most rigorous standards in the world. We're very proud of those standards. We will make sure that those standards are followed to the letter. When it comes to the AER, there is a full process that has to take place. There are environmental impact assessments that have to take place. There are water licences that have to be applied for, as the member knows. We will make sure that those are followed to the T. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Only Banff-Kananaskis.

**Dr. Elmeligi:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that that process is already being circumnavigated by Northback just by submitting a water licence application before a full project application, given that the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas told media that the basin is closed and any project needs to get water allocations from communities or buy it from an existing licence holder, given that Blairmore Creek's population of threatened westslope cutthroat trout is ranked as high risk and in need of protection, this is a new licence, and it's not allowed. To the minister of environment: is the . . .

2:30

**The Speaker:** You've got to stop talking when your 35 seconds are up.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to let the hon. member know that she is correct in that the South Saskatchewan River basin is a closed basin. I have been clear and we'll continue to be clear on this issue that if there is any application for new water licences, those have to come from existing water licence holders. That process will not be circumnavigated. I'm not sure exactly where the

member is going with this question, but I can tell her that we will follow the rules that we have on this to the T.

**The Speaker:** Next question belongs to Lacombe-Ponoka.

### Continuing Care Capital Funding

**Mrs. Johnson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Alberta's senior population continues to grow rapidly, more Albertans rely on continuing care spaces, making it increasingly more important to ensure these spaces are more than just health care facilities. With the recent announcement of funding for quality-of-life improvements at Lacombe hospital's extended care facility can the Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services please outline how this investment will transform these spaces into homelike environments, helping residents age with comfort, dignity, and independence?

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

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is correct. We just announced \$7 million to be invested in 52 facilities, impacting 4,000 residents inside our facilities, to be able to make sure that we improve those facilities and modernize them so they can continue to serve Albertans for decades to come.

Unfortunately, the NDP, when they were in government, not only did not build any new continuing care homes; they actually didn't invest in capital maintenance and renewal dollars. The Auditor General called them out for that, and we made changes, Mr. Speaker. This is the first step in being able to make sure that we correct the NDP's mistakes when it comes to keeping care of seniors in continuing care. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** I heard quite a bit of chatter from those not recognized. Let's just hear from Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mrs. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister for that answer. Given that continuing care spaces aren't supposed to function merely as health care facilities but as homes as well and further given that making improvements can enhance residents' sense of belonging, comfort, and connection to these spaces, can the same minister provide details on what types of physical, social, or environmental improvements will be made at Lacombe hospital's extended care facility and how residents and families will be engaged in shaping these changes?

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, we would be working through our resident and family councils, who will be providing input specifically on each of these different units and the facilities where they're being built, making sure that they're modern and that they're safe for individuals to continue to use but also upgrading things for memory care, outside activities like gardening, and also making sure that there's great intergenerational support inside those facilities. [interjections] I know the NDP keep heckling about that. That's because they didn't want to do that when they were in government because they clearly don't care about seniors. But that member and this minister do, and that's why we're investing this money to be able to make sure we can continue to provide those supports.

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

**Mrs. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister for that answer. Given that Alberta is expected to be home to more than 1 million seniors in the next 10 years and further given that this government is making significant investments to build new

spaces to accommodate this projected growth, to the same minister: how does this government's recent investments in increasing continuing care capacity ensure that we are caring for Albertan seniors today and into the future?

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what we did just this past week was announce another \$400 million to be able to add another 1,100 continuing care spaces across the province. That's on top of the 3,000 that are already under construction here in Alberta, making sure that we can keep up with the demand that we have for facility-based care inside our province. Sadly, again, we inherited from the Official Opposition, from the NDP, zero construction when it came to continuing care, but we're fixing that right now. We're taking it seriously, and we're going to make sure that we continue to build enough units for Albertans now and for decades to come.

### Affordability Measures

**Member Boparai:** Mr. Speaker, our province is facing an affordability crisis under this UCP government. Food bank use across Alberta is rising at alarming levels. Every single month Albertans are paying more for auto insurance and utilities and now hundreds of dollars more in property taxes, with Calgary families being hit from every direction. Given that gas prices remain high with no relief at the pumps and given that this government has no plan to bring insurance costs down, why is there no end in sight to this affordability crisis under this UCP government?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, that just is not true. We do have a plan on auto insurance. It's called the care-first system. That will be live January 1, 2027. It's been a very heavy lift to reform an auto insurance system. It's taken us approaching two years to try to land this plane, but it'll bring stability to pricing, and it'll also bring the best care for injured Albertans. It'll have the highest level of benefits of any care-first system across the country.

Fuel tax was mentioned. We have a legislated program in place that makes sense for Albertans.

**Member Boparai:** Given that Albertans already pay more for auto insurance than our neighbours in B.C., Saskatchewan, and much of the rest of Canada and given this costs families thousands of dollars a year, given that Albertans are forced to drive farther for school, health care, and everyday needs because of this government's failures and given that families are paying more not just for fuel but for some of the highest auto insurance rates, with even more increases coming, why has this government taken no actions to substantially bring down insurance and fuel costs for Alberta families?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, the member is complaining about the system that we're changing. The answer is in the question. Yeah, they are the second-highest premiums in the country. The highest is Ontario, who also has a very tort-based system. We're going to take the biggest cost out of the system. We're very excited about bringing forward our care-first system.

When it comes to the price of fuel, here's a little good news for everyone. The cheapest fuel in Canada has been in Alberta for the last 60 days: 30 cents cheaper than British Columbia, 26 cents cheaper than Quebec, 10 cents cheaper than Ontario. The Alberta advantage is real, Mr. Speaker.

**Member Boparai:** Given the rising insurance costs, some of the hardest hit are our hard-working taxi drivers, many in Calgary-Falconridge and across Alberta, who rely on this work to support their families. Given that their insurance still does not cover hail,

theft, or fire and given years of devastating hailstorms followed by nothing but meetings and excuses from this UCP government, will this government finally work on solutions for hard-working taxi drivers paying these exorbitant costs, or will this government continue to drive hard-working taxi drivers into one dead end after another?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, a lot of work and thought has gone into the auto insurance reforms. You know, we had multiple pillars built around affordability but also accessibility, ensuring that we focused on the costs that could actually be controlled within the system. Very difficult to control hail when you live on the east side of the Rockies. It's a little different here than it is in Saskatchewan. But the costs that we can control we're trying to control. We take a proactive approach to look at affordability all the time; doesn't have to be in a crisis. We want to keep taxes low. I'll remind everyone we're the government that cut them.

### Provincial Fuel Tax

**Mr. Dach:** Mr. Speaker, this UCP government amended legislation multiple times to make it easier for a separatist referendum petition to gather signatures by reducing the number of signatures required and increasing the time permitted to collect them. However, when asked to remove the provincial fuel tax to give Albertans a badly needed break at the pumps, the Premier and Finance minister point to their formula they pretend to be written in stone to justify doing nothing to cushion Albertans from punishing fuel prices. Why the double standard?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, this is a little rich coming from the walk-or-take-the-bus party. Like, how can we say that with a straight face? The policies that were brought in by the other side with the policy intention of making it more expensive to drive: that was their answer for Albertans, walk or take the bus.

What have we done? We've brought in a proactive program that is correlated to: when higher royalties come in for the province, relief is given to Albertans and it stays for the entire quarter. Makes a lot of sense, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Dach:** Given that recent reports indicate two-thirds of Canadians plan to curtail their summer holiday driving trips because they cannot afford the cost of fuel and given in Alberta all our summer tourist destinations are poised to suffer as a result and given that means less money spent on camping trips, hotel rooms, restaurant meals, and everything else that tourists spend money on, has the government calculated how much Alberta's tourism industry stands to lose because they refuse to make summer travel more affordable by removing the provincial fuel tax right now?

2:40

**Mr. Horner:** The beauty of this program is that a decision doesn't have to be made. It will be monitored over the previous quarter, and then it will happen automatically. If prices remain elevated for oil, it will come off automatically on July 1, and it will stay off right till the start of October, Mr. Speaker. There's no policy decision that needs to be made by a political person, no interference in that way.

I think that for the members opposite it's a little rich to start caring about the economy when their sole goal was to drive up costs and drive people out of this province. We will always have a steady hand when it comes to these things.

**Mr. Dach:** Given that \$400 may be a drop in the bucket to the Finance minister but hard-working Albertans find that's real money and given that removing the Alberta fuel tax will save the average

Alberta driver about \$400 per year and given the federal government already removed the 10 cents a litre from fuel, why doesn't the government respond to the desperate pleas of thousands of Albertans who have already maxed out their credit cards trying to make ends meet and help Albertans who are struggling to prevent financial collapse by suspending the Alberta fuel tax right now?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, affordability is a real concern. It is across this country. It is across a lot of the globe right now. That's why I think we need a steady hand and a real approach that makes sense. I'd remind everyone that we just tabled a \$9.4 billion deficit. If you're talking about decreasing revenue by \$400 million in a quarter without making sure you have the additional royalties first, what are you actually asking for? Do you want to put that on top of the deficit, or do you want to cut transportation's maintenance budget? We have responsibilities, things that we need to take care of in this province. That's why we're doing this slowly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung. No. This is the last question. Right. You got one more? No. You had yours. Okay. We're all done here.

In 30 seconds we will continue with the Routine.

### Notices of Motions

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

**Mr. Kasawski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to give notice that pursuant to Standing Order 42 at the appropriate time I intend to move the following motion.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly acknowledge that gasoline prices across Alberta have risen in excess of \$1.80 per litre, acknowledge that these unprecedented overnight surges in gasoline prices are putting increased financial pressures on Albertans, recognize that the government of Canada has recently suspended the federal fuel tax in response to this surge in gasoline prices, urge the government to respond to this recent surge in gasoline prices and associated increases in provincial revenue by immediately suspending collection of the provincial fuel tax of 13 cents per litre on gasoline and diesel.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of an article by Jen Gerson entitled Elections Alberta's Massive Failure Could Have Put People in Danger. I Tried to Warn Them. I urge all members to read this.

**The Speaker:** Okay. You don't get to actually do the political statement at the end of your tabling. You just get to say the nature of the tabling.

Go ahead, Calgary-Falconridge.

**Member Boparai:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to table the five copies of a letter written by taxi drivers to the Premier of Alberta: Urgent Concerns Regarding Insurance and Sustainability of The Taxi Industry in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** That's how to do a tabling.  
Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the five requisite copies of an editorial written by an Alberta Filipino respected veteran journalist Bing J. Jaleco entitled Separation Issue Just

‘Smoke and Mirrors’ Tactic, meant to distract from affordability issues.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Foothills.

**Member Ellingson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m very pleased to rise and table the requisite five copies of Sustainable Calgary’s State of Our City 2026 report, Widening Our Circle of Care.

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

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to inform the Assembly that there’ll be no evening sitting this evening.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m tabling five letters from constituents of Calgary-Buffalo wishing that the government would declare a state of emergency for Alberta’s health care system.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Beddington.

**Ms Chapman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of April 28 op-ed titled A Government-directed Lesson in Critical Thinking.

**The Speaker:** If you want to go first, you need to tell your colleagues to wait for you.  
Edmonton-Riverview.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to table five copies of a letter to the editor that was published in the *Edmonton Journal*, April 4, regarding gerrymandering the electoral map by the UCP.

**The Speaker:** Lethbridge-West.

**Member Miyashiro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have some cards from the Lethbridge Historical Society regarding the UCP plans to knock down the 113-year-old Galbraith school.

**The Speaker:** We are now at points of order. The first one happened at or about 1:52 p.m. from the government side.

#### Point of Order Parliamentary Language

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j), probably amongst others. As a member of this Chamber for about 12 years there have been many times where the person sitting in the chair I have disagreed with. We do have a process in this place on how to proceed with those disagreements. You cautioned this Chamber twice today about what you could or could not say or to be cautious, more specifically, about what you might say that is before the courts. Once during Members’ Statements the Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, got quite upset. I almost called a point order at that time; chose not to.

At the time that I did call a point of order, though, you also cautioned this Chamber, Mr. Speaker. That member got upset again, very, very clearly upset, but then also said, and I quote, “That’s bull-blank,” using the full words. If she doesn’t like your ruling, stand up under 13(2) in the standing orders and get an explanation for the rulings. If not, take it to a note or outside this Chamber. It’s inappropriate. I have no idea if the Blues caught it or

not, but the member knows she did it, and she should apologize for it. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Only the hon. Opposition House Leader.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m happy to educate the minister opposite. The Blues did not catch it because it did not happen. The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud did not use unparliamentary language of that level in this House. This is not a point of order. He clearly misheard something else. I do not have the benefit of the Blues, so, please, I hope you will let us all know what you do find.

**The Speaker:** Okay. The Blues: “Just [to] caution that both sides should do our best to not prejudice.” If there was a heckle, it didn’t show up in the Blues. So having no evidence and no admission of said point of order, then I have no choice but to consider it not a point of order and the matter dealt with. We all know that we don’t use those words in here. I’m not saying that anybody did. I’m just saying that we all know better.

Okay. Next point of order at 2:03 p.m.

**Mr. Schow:** Withdraw.

**The Speaker:** You’re withdrawing?

**Mr. Schow:** Yeah.

**The Speaker:** Okay. That’s dealt with.

The last one at or about 2:16 p.m. from the government side.

#### Point of Order Allegations against a Member

**Mr. Schow:** Yeah. That’s right, Mr. Speaker. I called the point of order at the time you’ve noted, and I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j). Off the record was when this comment was made, so I’m not sure if the Blues caught it on the ambient microphones. However, at the time noted, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora clearly said to the minister, “Tell the truth.”

Mr. Speaker, you can’t do indirectly what you cannot do directly in this Chamber. Calling the minister a liar would be unparliamentary. A lot – I re-emphasize: a lot – comes from that chair from a sedentary position in this Chamber. Often much of it is just incoherent jargon, but a lot of it is coherent. A lot of it makes it across the aisle, and a lot of it is out of order. In this instance I do believe it is out of order to suggest that the minister is not telling the truth.

2:50

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It would be unparliamentary to suggest that a minister or a member of this Chamber is not telling the truth, which made today’s question period a bit of a challenge after the minister needed to clarify statements that he made in this House.

That being said, I think you will appreciate, Mr. Speaker, that it is clear that heckling someone “tell the truth” – we’ve had many, many rulings in this place. It is akin to calling someone a liar. Fortunately, that’s not what’s happened. I don’t know if this will be accurately reflected in the Blues, but when you read the Blues, I’d ask you to look for this language because what was happening was that the minister at the time was talking about how short of a time there is in this House and how he was misunderstood in the past. I believe his exact language was that you have 35 seconds, and at that

point a member on my side did heckle but heckled to complete that sentence, and the heckle was “to tell the truth.”

“You have 35 seconds to tell the truth” is not accusing the minister of not telling the truth. It is not yelling, “Tell the truth,” which would be a point of order. We’ve talked before about the context and the nuance, but in this case the heckle was not “tell the truth.” The heckle was “to tell the truth,” referring to that there are 35 seconds to do so and in no way implying that the minister wouldn’t be doing that.

Thank you for hearing my arguments, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Well, I have the Blues. I think we can all agree that it’s long established that yelling, “Tell the truth” is essentially akin to calling somebody a liar and definitely is not allowed. To read the Blues, the minister said, “Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you point out regularly, we’ve got 35 seconds to answer questions here, so I’m glad for the opportunity to clarify my comments.” It picks up Edmonton-Glenora saying, “To tell the truth.”

Here’s the problem we’ve got. It sure sounds a lot like “Tell the truth” and it wasn’t that person’s turn to talk either, which leads to these things. Let me just say this. If the person that said that actually had the microphone, then it would definitely not be a point of order because it was in context. Finishing someone’s sentence isn’t what we encourage around here but sometimes happens or trying to finish someone on the opposite side’s sentence.

I’m going to call it debate today because you’re not wrong. They said, “To tell the truth,” but I’m going to also say that it sure could’ve sounded to a lot of people, including the Government House Leader, honestly, “Tell the truth,” because that was part of what was actually chirped, right? Anything said when you’re not recognized: we can call that chirped or barked or whatever. I think that’s what I go by. It’s anything other than speaking when it’s your turn.

I would caution, despite the context, for that member to be cautious about how they try to finish someone else’s sentence and the ease with which that could be misunderstood. At some point they could end up on the wrong side of this, but today we’re going to call it a matter of argument.

That concludes points of order.

## Motions under Standing Order 42

**The Speaker:** That takes us to Standing Order 42 moved by the Member for Sherwood Park, I believe.

### Provincial Fuel Tax Suspension

Mr. Kasawski:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly acknowledge that gasoline prices across Alberta have risen in excess of \$1.80 per litre, acknowledge that these unprecedented overnight surges in gasoline prices are putting increased financial pressures on Albertans, recognize that the government of Canada has recently suspended the federal fuel tax in response to this surge in gasoline prices, urge the government to respond to this recent surge in gasoline prices and associated increases in provincial revenue by immediately suspending collection of the provincial fuel tax of 13 cents per litre on gasoline and diesel.

**Mr. Kasawski:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. So we’ve had the motion read in, a motion to discuss gas tax relief. I’m standing pursuant to Standing Order 42 to seek unanimous consent of this House to have an emergency debate. It feels like now is an important time to have that discussion in this Legislature.

The cost at the pumps has now risen over \$1.80 per litre. In a place like Alberta, where driving is essential for the majority of people, fuelling up is not optional. People have places to be, work to get to, appointments to attend, and activities to drive kids to, and now they’re paying astronomically high prices every single time they’re at the pump while grocery prices continue to rise and life is getting more expensive. Luckily, Mr. Speaker, there is something that can be done to help give Albertans just a little relief at the pumps. The government could cut the provincial gas tax, give Albertans a break, not make them choose between the costly necessities they need the most to live life here in Alberta.

The cost-of-living crisis is getting worse and worse each day for Albertans who haven’t seen wage increases in seven years under the UCP government. As the cost of gas continues to fluctuate, jumping by 30 cents overnight just a few days ago, the least this government could do is help Albertans save where they can. We have seen the UCP members of this House say over and over again that they won’t give Albertans this little bit of relief. Why not? Great questions today from this side of the House asking why there is a double standard in the way they change rules for their priorities. This is an emergent issue impacting Albertans in every corner of this province, in every constituency, no matter their political stripe. This is not a partisan issue. Wanting to help Albertans save money during an affordability crisis should not be a partisan debate, but the discussion needs to happen in this legislation to set it in motion.

The federal government has just given everyone since April 20 a bit of reprieve by pausing the federal gas tax until Labour Day this year. They saw Canadians struggling with the continuous changing of gas prices that are becoming quite unbearable. We’re hearing it at the doors. We’re hearing in conversations that it is the number one issue and the most noticeable thing when people talk to us as MLAs. How do you afford life in this province? If this government wants to help Albertans, then let’s have this conversation here in the Legislature. Don’t make hard-working Albertans pick between groceries, gas, or rent. Help Albertans avoid going into credit card debt with a meaningful action they will notice every time they fill up at the pump.

For most people in Alberta driving a car is not an option, but it is essential. Suspending the vehicle fuel tax would be meaningful to everyone who drives. Suspending the fuel tax would be worth it to make life a little more affordable in Alberta. This House needs to have this conversation now about how severely impacted Albertans are by the extremely high fuel prices and what solutions we can offer. This is an urgent conversation and is one that needs to happen. I urge all members of this Assembly to vote in support of this motion to have this conversation.

Mr. Speaker, if I could just add on, we’ve heard from the Minister of Finance in other questions and throughout debate that they cannot make this change, so we’re inviting to have that conversation to have that change made so that we can change the rules and the legislation in place that will allow them to give that break to Albertans because Albertans are asking for it. Even when you discuss them, they’re feeling like they’re being taxed coming and going. They’re paying for fuel tax at the pump, and then they’re driving to work, where they’re getting taxed for their earnings just so they can try to afford life here in Alberta. It’s an unfair system for them, and they are asking for the provincial government to recognize that, have the discussion. By not having that discussion, they’re feeling like they are not being heard by the Legislature. It’s a time when our democracy is asking for these conversations to be brought up, to be made here to us, to have these discussions, not to be cut short; to have actual proper debate.

I think back to the time when the war started, with Donald Trump's actions, and we did not have this opportunity to have a debate. It's had a massive impact on Albertans.

**The Speaker:** From the government side the hon. minister of – good gracious.

**Mr. Horner:** Finance.

**The Speaker:** Finance. Let's try Finance.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans expect governments to be practical when it comes to our tax structure, not ideological. We understand that prices have gone up at the pump, and it's tough on everyone. Global conflict in Iran has put a strain on fuel prices but also other living expenses like grocery prices.

3:00

When global markets move, every Albertan feels it, and we do not ignore that reality. That is exactly why this government implemented the Alberta fuel tax relief program in 2022. We brought this program in to ensure that when global oil prices are high for a sustained period of time, Albertans see that reflected in lower provincial fuel taxes at the pump. This program exists because we've had the foresight to legislate it.

Now the program works automatically and predictably, and it works for the benefit of Albertans. It uses a 20 trading-day average of WTI oil prices leading into each quarter. If that average reaches defined thresholds between \$80 and \$90 a barrel, fuel tax rates are reduced or removed entirely. If it does not, the rate returns to its standard level. That structure removes guesswork, it removes political interference, and it ensures stability for families, businesses, and industry.

Mr. Speaker, this is not theoretical. Our government has already provided this relief to Albertans. From April 1, 2022, to December 31, 2022, Albertans received the full 13 cents per litre relief when oil prices were high. Through 2023 we kept fuel tax at zero for the full year because high prices were sustained. Then from January 1 to March 31, 2024, as prices came down, the program adjusted, and only 9 cents per litre applied. This is what responsible policy looks like. It responds to real conditions and holds steady when it should. For the last quarter the average WTI price was \$75.25 per barrel. That did not meet the \$80 threshold, so the system held exactly as designed. Stability matters. Predictability at the pump for families and businesses. Especially small businesses need consistency to plan and invest.

Now, let's be clear about the NDP alternative. The former NDP government supported a carbon tax that directly increased the cost of fuel. They said higher prices would change behaviour, and, most shamefully, they told Albertans to take the bus. This is not only insensitive; that policy is plain out of touch for millions of Albertans. With the NDP's carbon tax higher costs were not a side effect; they were intentionally engineered. Albertans remember being told to pay more, drive less, and accept it. Mr. Speaker, we take a different approach. We do not design policy to control how Albertans live. We design policy to provide relief when conditions allow and stability when they do not. That is what this program delivers.

I'll ask the opposition directly if they're advocating to scrap this program entirely. What is their plan when revenues fall short? Will they raise other taxes, cut services, or increase the deficit? Those are the real choices and consequences of their political positioning. Under this government Albertans benefit from the second-lowest fuel tax in the nation, and Albertans are always paying less for fuel than other provinces.

Mr. Speaker, we will choose stability over uncertainty and real relief over rhetoric. The NDP's motion is short sighted. It ignores how energy markets actually work and contradicts their own record of driving up costs. I urge all members of this House to vote down this motion and stand with reason over rhetoric. If prices remain high, Albertans can rest assured that under our government's fuel tax policy, taxes will come off and they will stay off for three full months.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Unanimous consent denied]

## Orders of the Day

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

**The Speaker:** Order. When I stand up, you will stop walking. That's how it works here. No, St. Albert, you don't go. I want to hear you answer me. Did you hear me?

**Ms Renaud:** I heard you.

**The Speaker:** Will you do it next time? Every time?

**Ms Renaud:** I stopped.

**The Speaker:** No, not until I yelled at you, you didn't. You will stop when the Speaker stands every single time.

## Bill 209

### Consumer Protection (Affordability Measures) Amendment Act, 2026

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Currie, go ahead.

**Member Eremenko:** Thank you. Sorry. I missed that that was the Calgary-Currie prompt.

Thank you so much. It is my sincere pleasure to stand and speak to Bill 209, that introduces a series of amendments to the Consumer Protection Act that are intended to give back a little more money and a little more time to Albertans, something I know we could all use a little more of.

Bill 209 offers a simple, practical solution for those annoying and pesky fees that pop up when it's often too late or when you're in a real pinch. Even worse, they're fees that hit the buyer simply for transactions related to something that belongs to the buyer already, such as the really kind of incredible fees that you're often charged at nonbank ATMs to withdraw your own money or fees to transfer a ticket that you already purchased.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

There are four sections that will be added or amended to the existing Consumer Protection Act. I'm very happy to get into those, but before I do, I encourage everyone listening to think about examples in their own lives or recent interactions where they were caught by surprise at fees they did not expect to be added to the final price tag or at the time-consuming and burdensome process to cancel a subscription. Based on my conversations around this bill, every single person has some kind of story related to their own challenges and frequent sticker shock when trying to purchase a good or service, withdraw their own money, or terminate a monthly payment.

Let's get started. The first amendment, Madam Speaker, is a call for transparent pricing, or what other jurisdictions refer to as

attainable pricing. Now, when we did a little bit of a media hit for this bill last week, one of the questions that was raised by a journalist was the degree of consultation with businesses, how we are talking about the business environment, and the challenges that this presents when it comes to denying them additional costs or an ability to cover their fees. But here's the thing. We're not denying any fees at all. Businesses need to charge what businesses need to charge to be able to run a business and turn a profit. That is what businesses do, and I don't begrudge them that at all.

However, what I do think we need to do is provide a little bit of clarity for the consumer about what the actual final ticket price is going to be, what the actual total charge is going to be, and that is something that happens not always. It's not a guaranteed process that there is transparency at the initial ticket price that is then reflective of the final purchase price. It's often called attainable pricing. We're just asking for businesses to be up front about what the actual cost of a good or product or service is.

Bill 209 would prohibit the last-minute add-on fees, like those for processing or servicing. It would ensure that there are no surprise charges once you've already committed, no feeling like the real price was hidden until it was too late. Albertans deserve to know the true cost of something up front, before they're at the checkout. This aligns with legislative efforts being worked on in other jurisdictions that are equal parts transparency and, I would say, consumer literacy. For example, changes to labelling protocols, that provide unit pricing in addition to the total cost, mean that consumers can spend a little less time calculating the final cost or the best deal and more time making informed decisions that help them save money and serve their families.

The second set of amendments to the Consumer Protection Act provide click-to-cancel assurances. Now, on this one I certainly have my own story, as I'm sure many, many people here do as well. We have some big sports fans in my house, Madam Speaker, but to try and manage the volume of costly monthly subscriptions, we'll sign up for only specific times of the year in our house. It just so happens that right now it's F1 season, we have NHL playoffs, and of course this year we're also very excited for the World Cup. They're all happening at the same time, and much to my chagrin they're all on different platforms, too.

I justify it because when the season is over, I have full intention of cancelling the subscriptions, but I have a feeling that I will be in for a world of hurt trying to cancel these pesky services once they have run their course. I think it should be as easy to cancel as it is to sign up, and I reckon many sports fans or anybody else who, you know, is inclined to maybe take advantage of some of those free trials would agree. Those three months we got for free from SiriusXM: when they've reached their end, I should quickly be able to access the information and decide if it's something I want to continue. Apologies to my husband, who will be surprised when it's not on the car radio any longer.

Someone shared a story with me who spent almost a year to cancel a monthly subscription. They eventually were told by the bank that they had to change their credit card, and they did, and even then the withdrawals kept coming. Another story from someone living on a very tight fixed income who seized upon a free trial for a meal delivery plan: six months later and no matter how many calls to customer service, the boxes just kept coming, and you better believe that they were coming at a full price.

**3:10**

And that's only when people know about the monthly charge, Madam Speaker. For all kinds of reasons we don't always look at our monthly credit card bills or bank statements as closely as we should. Let this be a reminder to Albertans to thoroughly review

those statements, say, a few times a year to ensure you're not paying for things you don't use or that you no longer want.

So often, too often these issues persist for people who can least afford it: seniors, people living in poverty or on really measly fixed-income supports, newcomers who may not have familiarity with how these programs function. Too many companies rely on confusing or time-consuming cancellation processes to keep people paying longer than they intended to. Bill 209 would prevent corporations from trapping people in subscriptions through deliberately complex or confusing cancellation processes.

I'll take this opportunity to address one of the critiques I received concerning Bill 209, and that is the potential savings per household. A subscription might be \$20 a month, Madam Speaker. Right now that might get you a bag of apples and a dozen eggs. It barely puts a quarter tank worth of gas in the car. But it begs the question: who could use that \$20 more, the single mom in Lacombe or the media conglomerate? The student at Grant MacEwan or Uber? For those Albertans for whom the cost isn't the issue, I am positive that they would like to at least have that time back, the time spent reading the fine print, the time on hold with customer service reps and chasing down the right e-mail addresses to finally cancel that pesky service.

With Bill 209 Albertans will no longer have to pay outrageous amounts to withdraw their own money. If passed, the bill will cap withdrawal fees at nonbank ATMs to 5 per cent of the withdrawal amount or \$5, whichever is lower. There's nothing worse than being at a concert or a bar only to discover that they only take cash. You scramble to find the closest ATM and discover that to take out 60 bucks, it'll cost \$6 or \$8 to take out your own money. You're on the Stampede grounds, and you need cash in a pinch; you shouldn't have to pay an arm and a leg to access your own money. It may not happen often, but when it does, you shouldn't be penalized for it.

Finally, Bill 209 tackles ticket transfer fees. It would prohibit ticketing platforms and resellers from charging people just to transfer a ticket to someone else. To be clear, these are tickets that already belong to you. Why is it that corporations can then also control who might get it after that initial purchase point? You shouldn't be penalized for doing that.

Bill 209, Madam Speaker, offers a simple, practical set of amendments that will help to leave a little more money in people's pockets. It aims to give everyday people a break. I hope the government members will genuinely consider supporting the bill. It's really a no-brainer. I'm proud to sponsor Bill 209.

All we have to do is read the headlines to know how important affordability measures are. On energy prices we just heard my colleague talk about the impact that gas tax relief would have on Albertans. On the cost of groceries my colleague from Calgary-Elbow introduced a bill to curb shrinkflation. We've raised the potential benefit from addressing restrictive covenants imposed by grocery stores. The UCP members have voted down or have dismissed both.

On the cost of housing, one of the first bills introduced by the Official Opposition would have introduced measures to limit rental increases, but guess what? The UCP vehemently voted it down. And on job insecurity and affordability stress we have highlighted the many, many ways in which this government has made life more expensive: American-style health care, no-fault auto insurance with massive hikes to premiums, denying Canada disability benefits from AISH recipients, hiking property taxes \$340 a year for the average Calgary household.

I encourage the members opposite to support Bill 209. Put a little bit more money and a little bit more time back in Albertans' pockets.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, can I just have you move second reading of Bill 209, please? You just have to say: I move second reading.

**Member Eremenko:** With that, I move second reading of private member's Bill 209. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.

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

**Mr. Nally:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Nobody deserves to get ripped off. There's something that every Albertan understands. If you're paying for something, you should know what you're paying, plain and simple, and right now we already have strong rules in place to protect Albertans. Businesses are required to be up front about their prices. There are no hidden fees, and they can't mislead. They can't hide the real cost behind fine print or clever wording. If they do, there are consequences. So let's be clear about where we're starting from. There's already a framework in place that protects Albertans and holds bad actors accountable.

That's why when I look at this bill, I don't question the intent, but I do question the approach because while the intent may be good, this bill falls short on engagement. It reads like a high school book report, Madam Speaker. It sounds good on paper, but it doesn't reflect the full picture of how this will actually play out in the real world. It duplicates rules that are already in place, especially when it comes to clear, upfront pricing. Instead of building on what works, it layers on top without doing the groundwork to understand how it will actually affect people, and that matters because consumer protection is a balancing act. You don't get it right by writing rules in an NDP socialist echo chamber. You don't get it right by focusing on one side and ignoring the other. You have to protect consumers, absolutely, but you also have to respect the businesses that follow the rules, the ones that employ Albertans and serve them well.

And here's the problem with this bill. Those voices weren't part of the conversation. There's no real evidence that small businesses or job creators were consulted before this was put forward. The Member for Calgary-Currie couldn't even confirm that as she was asked at her press conference, when she was specifically requested to inform them which businesses had been consulted. When you leave them out, you don't get better policy. You get policy that may sound good but could be damaging.

Madam Speaker, we've seen this before. We saw it with the NDP's carbon tax. They pushed it through, told Albertans it would be fine, and families ended up paying more for everyday life. This is bad NDP policy that made everything more expensive for Albertans. We also saw it with their farm safety legislation. This was their attempt to unionize the family farm. It was rushed. It was top down without properly working with the people affected by it, and it created real concern across rural Alberta. This one piece of legislation, farm safety legislation, will be the sole reason they never win another seat in rural Alberta.

Now we're seeing that pattern again. Time and time again, Madam Speaker, their ideas sound like they come out of elite American university echo chambers. They might read well in theory, but they don't line up with how people actually run businesses, make payroll, and serve customers here in Alberta. A bill that sounds good on paper, but the work behind the scenes hasn't been done.

Madam Speaker, this bill talks about new limits, new rules, and new requirements, but it doesn't answer the most important question: what happens next? Do costs actually go down? Do they just move somewhere else? Do businesses absorb them, or do they

pass them on in ways that are harder to see? Do small businesses survive under these changes, or do we end up with fewer choices and less competition? These are real-world questions, and they weren't answered because the conversation didn't happen. That's the difference between this side of the House and the other side. We believe in doing the work first. We believe in talking to people. We believe in getting it right.

I want to talk about judgment for a moment because when you're making decisions that affect people's cost of living and the businesses in their communities, judgment matters. We recently heard the leader of the NDP tell a story. He said that he had thought all of his subscriptions were handled, thought he'd cancelled everything, and then he checked, and he realized that he missed one, \$1,000 a year. Madam Speaker, that's not just a small oversight; that's a window into how someone approaches money. If you can miss \$1,000 in your own budget, how can Albertans trust you to manage a provincial budget worth tens of billions?

This job isn't about assumptions. It's about discipline, it's about paying attention to the details, and it's about doing the work to make sure you actually understand the impact of your decisions, and this bill doesn't reflect that kind of discipline. It reflects the same top-down thinking that we've seen before: assume first; check later.

Madam Speaker, no one deserves to get ripped off, but Albertans also don't deserve legislation that duplicates what's already working and ignores the people who would be most impacted. They deserve better. They deserve a government that listens, a government that works with businesses, not around them, a government that builds protections that actually work in the real world, and that's exactly what we're doing.

3:20

We'll do the work that the NDP won't. We talk to people on the ground, and we'll make sure that when we bring forward changes, they're thoughtful, balanced, and actually deliver. Madam Speaker, we have all-in pricing protections in this province. If somebody is finding that the total cost is not being disclosed, then they should contact the consumer protection unit, and they will investigate.

Madam Speaker, for all of these reasons, I will not be supporting Bill 209, and I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to do the same. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Kasawski:** Thanks, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to rise and speak on Bill 209. I just want to address something the minister said. He spoke about a few things that were interesting, but I thought it was interesting that the minister used his time to address this bill to talk about Alberta seven years ago, from the past, a hopeful, progressive Alberta, one that everyone was happy to live in and looked forward to growing up in. That was the Alberta he was talking about, and now we have him talking about the entitled UCP and how they approve the Premier travelling around in luxury jets, spending money on a red carpet. When we're asking to take meaningful action with Bill 209 to address the cost of living in Alberta, he decides to go years back and talk about this hopeful, progressive Alberta we used to have, and we'll have that Alberta again after the next election.

What is our vision for Alberta, Madam Speaker? That's the question we ask every time a bill is introduced into this Legislature for debate. From that side we get this vision of a future of Alberta that is stark, lonely, unsafe, and unfamiliar, people disconnected from their neighbours, people without connection to this place and the communities that make it a great place to live, work, and raise

a family. Under the UCP Albertans will stop looking out for each other. They'll turn away from others. You'll be on your own in every aspect of your life. Bill 209 is working on addressing that by making sure things are affordable in Alberta in a meaningful way, and then we can focus on taking care of each other collectively.

For the UCP life in Alberta is transactional. In their vision education for our children will no longer be something we all pay for collectively. Health care services will become menu items. You can pay for it if you want, but the health care you need won't be available unless you're also willing to pay for it. Things that work in our province will be broken under the UCP like the integrated fire and ambulance services that provide emergency life services to over 600,000 Albertans in some of our largest communities like my own. Strathcona county, Red Deer, Lethbridge, St. Albert, Fort McMurray: they've all relied on superior service from integrated fire and ambulance emergency services, and under the transactional vision of the UCP their version of ambulance services will be privatized, and Albertans will need to pay. With the UCP Albertans always have to pay. Albertans feel ignored, and we're paying a steep price.

The UCP is wasting our time and money on the wrong priorities like referendums on separation when they should be focused on the cost of living. Bills are up, and costs are up. Rent is up. Wait times are up. Albertans want simple, basic, pragmatic action taken by their government to cut costs, fix what's broken, and put money back in people's pockets. Albertans need a government that puts Albertans' priorities first. Let's get back to basics in government. The entitlement and misuse of taxpayer money by the UCP is killing this province, and Albertans deserve better: better wages, lower utility bills, and fair prices. Bill 209 is trying to take some meaningful steps to address fair prices in Alberta.

Better wages will build a better economy. If you make a better wage in Alberta, you'll turn around and spend more money right here in Alberta.

We're an exporting province of energy. Lowering our utility bill costs for homeowners and businesses means more energy to export to the rest of the world.

Now, fair prices: we need to protect consumers. In too many situations we've let businesses prey on consumers without checks and balances from the government. It is time for an Alberta government that will protect Albertans and stop predatory pricing. We make the gas for your vehicles right here in Alberta. The price at the pumps should not jump 35 cents just because Donald Trump starts another war. We make our money off royalties. We can eliminate the UCP's provincial sales tax on fuel and rental cars. This government has built arenas for NHL hockey teams, and then their ownership groups turn around and mark up food and beverages 600 per cent for hockey fans: \$20 for a can of beer at a hockey game, \$10 for a bottle of water. It's not fair.

We need to put an end to online predatory pricing as well. Airlines, grocery stores, Amazon cannot be able to use AI and advanced algorithms to charge your neighbour one price and you another for the same item. Bill 209 will take meaningful, measurable, and important action to protect Albertans from predatory pricing.

Some examples were brought up and great ideas of what has been told to the Member for Calgary-Currie. You know, if you're at a festival and the vendors inside the gates accept only cash, you should not be charged over \$8 to withdraw your own money from an ATM machine so you can spend it at that festival. If you're at a concert or a sports event in one of Alberta's arenas, you should not be charged \$10 for a bottle of water and \$20 for a can of beer once you're inside the gate, especially – especially – the ones that have been paid for with taxpayer money. It's egregious that in Edmonton

and Calgary the NHL teams who built their arenas with taxpayer money are then turning around and making those same Albertans pay crazy prices just to consume beverages and food inside while they're watching a game or at a concert.

At a time when Albertans are struggling with the cost of living, unexpected charges or exploitative fees can be the last straw for someone. Consumers feel deceived on already expensive costs when last-minute fees are being tacked on, ultimately eroding trust in everyday transactions. Let's restore good faith to business practices in Alberta. Madam Speaker, I come from business. Operating in good faith with my clients, with my customers is how you have continued business. It's how you have success. We need to make sure that we create and reinforce a culture in Alberta of good-faith operating.

Today we acknowledge the 10-year anniversary of the Fort McMurray fire, a time when Albertans all came together when it mattered most. We collectively stepped in for each other and took care of each other. People didn't fuss over price. People didn't fuss over: what are they going to make? They didn't look at it as an opportunity to exploit customers. They looked at it as an opportunity to help each other, to operate in good faith. Imagine if the people of Fort McMurray escaped with their lives and were then faced with hotels which increased their nightly rate by 600 per cent, taking advantage of the situation. That would be predatory pricing, and we cannot have that in Alberta. If we have that, we need a government that is willing to take a closer look at it, investigate, and make choices even if they're tough choices, even if it bothers their friends that are trying to take money from consumers. We need to do what's best for Albertans.

It's not fair when Albertans are in a situation like a closed environment like an arena and they cannot get a fair deal on the food and beverages, which outside those gates would be one-sixth of the price.

So, Madam Speaker, we have been brought forward with a bill that's going to take meaningful action. Just to highlight those pieces again, Bill 209, the consumer protection affordability measures for Albertans being brought forward by the Alberta New Democrats: there are four components that are key to addressing these objectives. These are just changes that can be made. They're not going to affect the government treasury, but they are going to protect Albertans.

We want to have transparent pricing so you know that when you're told that something is going to be \$72, after you go to pay for it, you don't find out it's \$106 because of additional charges that are tacked on and not brought forward at the time of promotion.

### 3:30

Easy cancellation. You should not be stuck for hours on the phone trying to get out of making payments for something that you do not want. It should be easy to cancel that. There should not be sludge in the system that prevents that.

White-label ATMs should not be able to charge exorbitant prices so that you can access cash of your own that you can spend at events and festivals you're attending.

The ticket reselling fees in this province: we need to address it. We cannot say that we're Alberta – there's a large global company that is running the ticket resales. We control our own environment. We control our destiny. We should support Bill 209 so we can protect Albertans from predatory pricing.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Member Kayande:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my honour to rise today to speak to Bill 209. Let me start with who this bill is for.

It's a good bill. I want to commend the Member for Calgary-Currie for actually addressing problems that matter to the people of Alberta. This is a very good bill, and it's one I'm really excited about. Who is this bill for? This bill is for anybody who's ever paid a junk fee. This bill is for anybody who's ever had any trouble cancelling a subscription. This bill is for anyone who feels they've been done dirty by Ticketmaster. This is a bill for anybody who has looked at their ATM receipt and said: what is this? Basically, this is a bill for anybody in Alberta because every single person in Alberta has had those experiences.

This bill puts a stop to those predatory pricing techniques of monopolists, people who have generated monopolies. Now, monopoly has a particular economic definition, and I'm not going to go into that. What it is: everybody who's played the board game Monopoly, when you own all the colours, you can charge double the rent. That's a monopoly. There are monopolies, companies that have gone out of their way to roll up venues, to roll up other market advantages. I want to be very clear that the law does not say that all monopolies are bad, and that's not what I'm saying either. Monopolies can be fine. They can lower prices. But for a monopoly to use its power to make life more difficult for customers is wrong. That can show up in a bunch of different ways.

I have children who are growing into adulthood. One thing they were really, really excited about Bill 209, about this bill, was a ban on ticket transfer fees. Actually, there was some unparliamentary language associated with how my kids feel that Ticketmaster handles ticket transfers and how much it charges. It's not just Ticketmaster. Suppose you have purchased tickets for a soccer game that is happening this summer. Let's pretend, right? Let's pretend that you were one of those people who, you know, ponied up \$750 to watch Qatar play Bosnia, for example. Like, two soccer powerhouses right there. Seven hundred and fifty dollars for the ticket.

See, back in the old days, back when I was, you know, younger, I had time to go to events. Sometimes my dad would take me to the Northlands coliseum when the Oilers were playing. In my mind it was always a playoff game, and it was always Edmonton versus the Kings. You know, we would go there, and sometimes we didn't always have tickets, right? There was somebody standing out there with two tickets in their hand. You can look at the things, right? You can look at the things and you can say: yeah, this looks real to me. You'd hand over your money, and you'd get back an actual real ticket. You could verify that it was actually real because you could see the thing.

Well, over time, of course, that's all gone electronic, and the companies that manage venues now and manage revenue and manage the ticketing at them have deliberately created technology environments where it is impossible for anybody to actually verify that a ticket is genuine. They did this deliberately. They did this deliberately to open up a resale pathway. Boy, that must have driven Peter Pocklington absolutely crazy that I was going to a hockey game as a little kid without actually, like, paying a second transfer fee, right? That must drive venue owners absolutely insane.

The fact is that now there's a technology environment that makes it impossible to distinguish whether a ticket is real or not just by going up on Facebook Marketplace. Somebody could actually take a photograph of the thing or the QR code and send it to you. It wouldn't mean anything because you have no way of verifying it. Now the only way that you could be sure that you're not going to be scammed on second-hand ticket purchases is to make sure that it's done on the official marketplace.

Well, FIFA, the company that owns global soccer or the nonprofit or whatever it is has decided in its infinite wisdom that if you make a transfer, that if you use the marketplace to sell your

tickets, not only will the buyer pay a 15 per cent charge, but the seller will also pay a 15 per cent charge. That is a 30 per cent hit on the price of a ticket that cannot be effectively transferred to a stranger any other way than the marketplace; otherwise, somebody would be sure to be getting scammed. It's not right, Madam Speaker. It's not right.

The government has a beautiful opportunity here. The government members have a beautiful opportunity to support the little guy in the province, those of us who are prey to large multinationals who have built massive monopolies and who are using their power to take our money. Is this government going to stand with Ticketmaster and FIFA, or is the government going to stand with the people of Alberta, who are paying 30 per cent for a ticket transfer?

Now, this is not just about ticket transfer fees although I can talk about that for a long time. It's so unjust. This bill will make it easier for junk fees to show up in e-commerce transactions. If there's a junk fee, you deserve to know about it and you deserve to accept it and know that it's included in the price before you actually buy the thing. You should have the right to easily cancel your monthly subscriptions. This isn't rocket science.

What's this going to do to businesses? You know what? I never ran a business. I never worked at a business that needed to treat customers in that way in order to make a profit. The businesses that I worked for were always very up front about what their fees were. I know when the sales team was talking to clients and the client was just like, "Okay, so how much do you charge for this?" we said: "You know what? You're not going to like what we charge, but this is what it is. This is why it's a fair deal."

I want to be very clear. It is very hard to do business in Alberta right now. It is very hard to be a small-business person. It is also very hard to be in all sorts of business. Costs are going up. This government is making it ludicrously hard for businesses to be in business, for businesses to provide the services that they do. The real wage of Albertans has not increased since 2019, and we are the only province in Canada where that is true. We are the only province in Canada where wages after inflation have not increased since 2019. What that means is that if you're operating a restaurant, your customers are poorer. Cost of food has gone up, cost of rent has gone up, cost of labour has gone up, yet your margins are getting squeezed because of this government.

3:40

I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about the monopolists. I'm talking about the billionaires. I'm talking about the people who have taken control over wide swaths of our economy, making it even harder for those of us who are in the business of making honest livings to make an honest living. It's not right. This government has a choice. They can actually support the little guy here. This is a bill for the little guy. This is a bill for the little guy who pays unreasonable ticket transfer fees, who pays \$7 for a . . . [Member Kayande's speaking time expired]

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

**Member Boparai:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I stand here today on behalf of the people of Calgary-Falconridge. In my constituency the Alberta advantage feels like a distant memory. My neighbours aren't asking for high-level economic theories. They're asking why they can't afford to live in the province they call home. Let's call the current economic state what it is, a crisis manufactured by this government. While families are struggling to put milk on the table,

this government has overseen a \$9.4 billion deficit in the 2026 budget. The UCP is doing what they were never asked to do. They're prioritizing ideology over the basic needs of Albertans, who are being squeezed from every side.

Madam Speaker, this government stood by while auto insurance premiums climbed by 45 per cent. They watched as Alberta's electricity prices became the most expensive in the country. Albertans are paying hundreds of dollars more just to keep the lights on and their cars on the road. This year the UCP raised the provincial education property tax by 15 per cent. They're downloading their fiscal failures onto the backs of the municipal taxpayers and renters.

Madam Speaker, despite record resource wealth in the past we are now looking at a \$24 billion cumulative shortfall over the next three years. This isn't just bad luck; it's bad management. While the UCP focuses on corporate giveaways, the average family is facing death by a thousand cuts through new user fees, tourism levies, and a 6 per cent vehicle rental tax. It is an unfair practice to lure Albertans in with one price and hit them with a different one at checkout. Bill 209 ensures the price you see is the price you pay. No more processing fees or service charges appearing out of thin air.

Madam Speaker, 73 per cent of Canadians have been trapped by a free trial. Companies make it one click to sign up but a maze of phone calls and hidden menus to cancel. We are ending that. If it's an Internet sales contract, the cancellation must be as easy as the purchase.

It is predatory to charge \$7 or \$10 for someone to access \$40 of their own money. Madam Speaker, Bill 209 caps these private ATM fees at 5 per cent or \$5. This is about protecting the most vulnerable who need cash for everyday essentials.

We are banning transfer fees on secondary tickets. Let's say that you bought a ticket for a Flames game and can't go. You shouldn't be charged again just to hand that ticket to a friend.

Bill 209 doesn't cost the taxpayer a cent. It is a legislative shield for Albertans against corporate greed. If the members opposite vote against this, they're telling Albertans that they support junk fees. They're telling the people of Calgary-Falconridge and Albertans that they side with the companies that profit from subscription traps and ATM gouging.

This government has been an affordability disaster. Today they have a chance to do one small thing right. Madam Speaker, Albertans deserve a government that puts people first, not one that adds a 15 per cent property tax hike while the province sinks into debt.

Madam Speaker, I am here to fight for the families not just in my constituency but all over Alberta who are tired of being ignored. I'm here to support Bill 209. It's time we stopped the gouging and started the healing. I urge every member of this Assembly to support this bill. Let's give Albertans back a little bit of their hard-earned money and a lot more of their dignity.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Member Hoyle:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 209, Consumer Protection (Affordability Measures) Amendment Act, 2026. First, I want to start by thanking my colleague the Member for Calgary-Currie for putting this bill forward because it's actually focused on what matters to all Albertans, affordability.

This bill takes practical, targeted steps to deal with the kind of costs that don't always make headlines but quietly drain people's bank accounts month after month. At a time when families are

struggling with the cost of living, when rent is high, groceries are expensive, and wages are not keeping pace, it is the smaller hidden charges that push people over the edge. Those unexpected fees, the subscriptions that people didn't mean to keep but it's just difficult to sign out of, the unexpected extra costs that show up at that very last step of your purchase when you're already committed and through that process: individually they may seem minor, but together they add up, and they add up fast.

Bill 209 is about putting a stop to that. It is about fairness, it is about transparency, but also being pro business in a way that actually matters by creating a marketplace that Albertans can trust because strong consumer protection is the foundation of a healthy economy. When customers trust that the price they see is the price they pay, they're more likely to spend and even repurchase again and again. When they know they won't be trapped in subscriptions they may not want after some time, they are more willing to try new services. When they feel confident that they're not being taken advantage of, they participate more fully in the economy, and that is good for consumers and it is good for businesses.

Bill 209 delivers that through four key measures. First, transparent pricing. The price advertised should be the price paid aside from taxes, and it should be clearly stated in shipping. No more getting to the final checkout screen to only discover a stack of additional processing, service, or administrative fees that were never disclosed up front. To be clear, this bill doesn't ban fees but requires honesty about them, and that matters because hidden fees erode trust. They make consumers feel misled even when the underlying product or service is legitimate.

The second part of Bill 209 is easy cancellation. We've all experienced it at some point. Signing up for a subscription takes seconds to do, but cancelling it can take hours. In fact, you can sometimes cancel it and still have, you know, that not be cancelled even though you were told it was cancelled. You click through endless menus. You're asked to call a number only to wait on hold forever and still get no one or no support and then be offered multiple discounts to still stay. Eventually, many people give up.

3:50

Who has time for these kinds of meandering processes that are unfair and not transparent? This is not an accident but an effective business model. Seventy-three per cent of Canadians have forgotten to cancel a subscription after a free trial, mainly because it's not accessible and easy to do; 66 per cent have paid for subscriptions they didn't even remember signing up for; and more than half have allowed subscriptions to continue simply because cancelling was too difficult. So what we're seeing here is a pattern of consumer entrapment, not consumer choice. Bill 209 fixes that by requiring that cancellation be as easy as sign-up, and frankly this is long overdue.

This bill also caps fees for white-label ATMs, and they are the nonbank machines that you see at events and convenience stores and venues, places where people often need quick access to cash. All too often those machines charge excessive fees, taking advantage of convenience and sometimes lack of alternatives. This bill does not eliminate those machines, and it does not prevent businesses from earning revenue through them. It simply sets a reasonable cap, no more than 5 per cent of the withdrawal amount up to a maximum of \$5. If someone withdraws \$150, they're not hit with \$7 or \$8 in fees; they pay a maximum of just \$5. That is a modest and balanced measure that protects consumers without undermining the viability of the service.

Finally, Bill 209 addresses ticket reselling fees. Right now if someone buys a second-hand ticket for a concert or a sporting event or any type of entertainment show, they're often already paying

above face value. Then, on top of that, they're charged a transfer fee just to receive the ticket. That is a fee on a fee. This bill would prohibit that endless practice that is also not transparent most of the time. If someone is already paying a premium for a resold ticket, they should not be charged again simply to have it transferred to them.

Madam Speaker, altogether these measures are practical, targeted, and, quite frankly, overdue. They address real frustrations that Albertans deal with every day and help people keep more of their hard-earned money in their pockets. They create a more transparent and trustworthy marketplace. This is why Bill 209 should be an easy yes for every member of this Assembly.

Supporting this bill also means being honest about the broader context here. While Bill 209 takes steps to protect consumers from hidden and exploitative fees, Albertans are facing rising costs across the board, and many of those costs are a result of decisions made by this UCP government. This government has increased fees in multiple areas. It has allowed costs to rise without delivering the services people expect in return. At the same time this government has failed to address the underlying affordability challenges that families are dealing with every single day. There's a tendency to frame consumer protection and pro-business policy as being at odds with each other, and that is a mistake. The most successful economies in the world are not the ones with the weaker rules but the ones with the clearest and transparent rules.

Businesses benefit from clarity and consistency and a level playing field. Bill 209 sets clear expectations and ensures that businesses compete on the quality of their products and services and not on their ability to hide fees or trap customers. That is pro competition, pro growth, and pro business. If this government truly wants to position itself as pro business, then it needs to go further, not just on consumer protection but on economic leadership. Because while we're here talking about fairness and everyday transactions, there is a bigger conversation happening about Alberta's place in the Canadian economy.

We are in a moment where Canada-first policies matter more than ever, where strengthening internal trade, building national supply chains, and supporting Canadian businesses should be top priority, yet we continue to see mixed signals from this government. On the one hand, there are efforts like internal trade legislation to improve economic integration, and on the other hand there's a refusal to clearly and unequivocally denounce separating type of rhetoric within its own ranks. That contradiction matters because businesses do not operate in a vacuum. They make decisions based on stability, predictability, and confidence in the future. When there's uncertainty about a province's long-term direction, our questions about whether it is fully committed to Canada, that creates risk and risk drives investment away. Ultimately, both businesses and consumers suffer.

If the UCP is serious about supporting businesses and protecting consumers, then it needs to be equally serious about sending a clear message. Alberta is part of Canada. It's committed to the Canadian economy. It's committed to being focused on strengthening and not undermining those connections and our economy.

Albertans deserve and need broader action on affordability. They need a government that is focused on reducing costs, not adding to them. No hidden fees. None of these monopolies that are beyond profits. A government that understands that every dollar matters. They need a government that is committed to building a strong, stable, and united economy within Canada.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others on Bill 209 in second reading? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Member Ceci:** Thank you very much for the opportunity to address this private member's bill from my colleague from Calgary-Currie. Consumer protection, affordability measures: Madam Speaker, it's time for this sort of thing in Alberta. I say that because I look to the work done in other provinces, and they seem to be taking action on all of these items that have been brought up by my colleague from Calgary-Currie. For instance, Quebec has introduced a bill to protect against abuse of practices and ticket reselling and online subscriptions, two of the four points that have been brought up by my colleague. Just to reiterate those points, there are four core components to address the two objectives, which are to help Albertans with affordability measures across the province and to lay in better consumer protections.

The four core components to address those objectives that I just mentioned are transparent pricing, easy cancellation, white-label ATM rules, and ticket reselling fees. I pointed to Quebec because they have a bill that protects against abusive practices in those two things, online subscriptions and ticket reselling. Their bill requires any contract, including sequential performance, to be able to be cancelled at the click of a button. I just think about, as one of my colleagues mentioned, how easy it is to get a subscription or to spend money on things like subscriptions or Internet or gaming. It's easy to do that with the click of a button. But try and get out of it, and that's where the problems start to occur and start to pile up for people who want to do that.

Now, Quebec has a bill that they've introduced. It helps people with regard to cancelling things like I've just mentioned, subscriptions, other kinds of things you can do online with the click of a – make it easy to get out of it as it is to get into it. It further mandates that there will be notice sent two to 10 days prior to the end of a period where goods or services are either free or discounted.

Another colleague talked about food-to-your-door purchases and how many people do that because they find it easier and, you know, lives are really busy. But try and get out of those things: it's difficult.

Quebec's bill also made stipulation around ticket resales to ensure that consumers are fully aware that it is a resale ticket and it's upcharged. The problem we're trying to address is that people are paying additional fees on top of the resale fees, which seems like a really expensive way to get your entertainment. We want to try and make things more affordable.

4:00

Ontario has some consumer protection legislation that requires businesses to make consumers aware of the renewal or extension of a contract. Who hasn't kind of looked at their monthly statement and said, you know, "I thought I got rid of that," whatever it was in terms of purchasing a regular monthly contract that you thought you had taken care of. That Ontario consumer protection legislation means that consumers must be made aware before a monthly autocharge to ensure they still want to be paying for the subscription or service that they've originally signed up for. There's also a cooling-off period. Now, that's not mentioned in this bill, but I think cooling-off periods are present in some other major purchases that we can get into. I think it would be a good idea to look at that as well. Ontario has that in their consumer protection legislation, which seems like a good thing.

Just another point on my colleague from Calgary-Currie and the criticism that came from the other side, you know: have you done your research? Well, the research is here. Other provinces have done this work, and piggybacking on good work from other provinces is not a bad thing, Madam Speaker.

British Columbia has legislation introduced against automatic renewals of contracts without advance notification, approval from the customer, or ability to cancel. These are protections put in place for those citizens in those provinces which, we are arguing, should be available to Albertans as well. The reason B.C. did that, Madam Speaker, is because it's seen as a benefit to many vulnerable consumers out there, people like seniors, newcomers, and low-income people, people with low financial acuity who may fall prey to pressure sales tactics and then find they get into a kind of unsustainable monthly economic debt scenario.

Those things would benefit Albertans. Those things in other provinces are things that Bill 209 argues. Why is it important to do things like that that talk about affordability? Because, Madam Speaker, when I look at the state of our city 2026, and the city is Calgary, that was submitted by Calgary-Foothills earlier today – five copies were given to the Clerk. You know, the state of the city in 2026 in Calgary shows that in Calgary the ratio of average to medium income growth has grown by 8 per cent since 1976, indicating that income inequality in the city of Calgary generally worsened. If you look at the graphs here, it significantly worsened under the UCP. The number of people who are experiencing greater struggles is growing in Calgary.

Look at the affordability of housing in Calgary also. Why housing? Because a major portion of people's income goes on a monthly basis to housing. Together in 2021 18.4 per cent of Calgary renters and owners were paying too much for their housing. That's 2021, and we know what's happened to housing since 2021. The rent increases in Calgary alone have skyrocketed. Since 2010 rent in Calgary has increased 80 per cent from \$950 for probably a two-bedroom unit to \$1,700.

Money is at a premium for Calgarians; money is at a premium for Albertans across the province. Anything to better protect their money and ensure that they have money at the end of the month to afford things they want, like consumer protection, Bill 209, is a good thing to introduce, Madam Speaker.

I just want to point out about food insecurity and how it kind of connects to private member's Bill 209 from Calgary-Currie. In 2023 the percentage of Calgarians reporting food insecurity was about 32 per cent, and this percentage has only been increasing over the past several years. Again, if you look at the graphs that are part of this submission, food insecurity has gone from – the last year of the NDP was about 20 per cent; now it's 32 per cent, and that was in 2023. It's gotten just higher and higher as a result of the inactivity by this government to address the financial needs of Albertans.

My colleague has done a good thing by bringing this bill forward. I certainly think we need as progressive consumer protections in this province as other provinces have indicated that they've already tackled. My colleague previously talked to me about the number of Canadians, and Alberta obviously is a subset of that. Seventy-three per cent of Canadians have forgotten to cancel subscriptions.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak about the private members' business, Bill 209. It's a rare day – it's Monday – when we get to speak about private members' business. It's a pleasure to do so when, of course, it's brought forward by a member with the illustrious cachet of the Member for Calgary-Currie, who has most often in this Legislature always undertaken to bring forward legislation and speak very, very eloquently about the fundamental underpinnings of social democracy when it comes to her values and to her motivations for talking about legislation and then how she argues vehemently in

favour of pieces of legislation that, without fail, support human beings.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

That is, I think, a fundamental difference between this opposition, the NDP opposition, New Democrat opposition, social democrat opposition, and the Conservative governments of the day, whether they be UCP or former governments over long periods of time. Mr. Speaker, if you analyze things properly, you'll find that – guess what? – the conservatives always try to look at things in terms of how it affects business and the general economy, hoping things will trickle down, whereas we here in the New Democratic Party, whether we're in government or we're in opposition, always look at how a piece of legislation affects human beings. That is our guidepost, and it always will be because human beings are who elect us, and that is the underpinning motivation that we have on this side of the House.

That's why Bill 209, the private member's bill brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Currie, is so important. It's fundamentally a piece of legislation that really is a nameplate for what we stand for on this side of the House, and that is standing up for people, human beings, right now at a time frame where people are really hurting. We know this from our own family members and beyond. We know from our constituents, Mr. Speaker, where people are really having trouble being able to afford just monthly bills. We hear stories of people regularly maxing out their credit cards and not knowing whether they're going to be able to make it for another month. That is something that this bill goes to address in terms of making sure that the measures that are consumer protection measures help folks in the process of making ends meet on a monthly basis, whether that be for buying entertainment or whether that be for using a cash machine.

4:10

The minister across the way, the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction, did say something we believe in as well: nobody likes being ripped off. However, Mr. Speaker, we actually do something about it. In the analysis the balance that we're looking for: the top priority is people. It's the consumers who we always look to to tell us whether or not they're benefiting from a piece of legislation, contrary to what happens with the Conservative government members. The real-world analysis and the real world that they have always looks at whether or not it's the overall economy that benefits rather than individual human beings. Consumers, the public, individual Albertans are the last people that the UCP considers when balancing legislation, quote, unquote. They look forward to a complaint-based system, complaints that arise out of unfairness that's in the marketplace, not a rules-based business model.

Mr. Speaker, as the Premier pointed out a few days ago in the Legislature, not only are we in this Legislature as members of the opposition very representative of rural Alberta, many of us having rural roots, and the Premier listed those rural roots; we also have a large number of our caucus who are of a business background, myself included, and others who have been building refineries in the real world or who have been operating small businesses in the construction industry and myself in the real estate industry.

What we've seen in our business experience, Mr. Speaker, is that businesses really want transparency. They want reliability. They want fairness, and they want a level playing field in the rules that govern operation of business in Alberta, where government is the rightful referee and that's accepted. The top priority for any business that wants to survive is the well-being of your customers. Now, that doesn't go to say that there are not bad actors in business.

That happens. That's what rules are for, and even rules that seem to be customarily acceptable change over time. There's an evolution that takes place.

That's what Bill 209 speaks to as well, Mr. Speaker. It's an evolution of the rules because, as it stands right now, we are way behind legislatively in protecting consumers against the gouging of resale ticket prices, against the prices charged to use a white-label ATM. At a time when Albertans are struggling with the cost of living, unexpected charges or exploitative fees are the last thing that they need to contend with. This evolution of the rules that we're undertaking right now with Bill 209, the private member's bill brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Currie, reflects that we are way behind and tries to do a little bit of catch-up with respect to changing the rules so that there is a level playing field.

I think of the example of the real estate business, Mr. Speaker, which I first joined in 1985, a few years back. There was a standard practice in the real estate business, an accepted standard practice, of charging for a listing that you wanted to put on a multiple listing service of the real estate board. It's the Edmonton real estate board I'm speaking about. I think it's the same thing in Calgary. If you wanted to list something on the MLS system, the fee was 7 per cent of the first \$100,000 and 3 per cent of the balance. Guess what? That fee wasn't set by the businesses. That fee was set by the real estate board, and for years it was the real estate board who insisted that if you want to list something on the MLS system, it's 7 per cent of the first \$100,000 and 3 per cent of the balance. Any brokerage that wanted to list their properties on the MLS system had to charge customers that fee.

Ultimately, that got changed in the evolution of business practices and rightfully so, Mr. Speaker, because that took advantage of a rather monopolistic position that the real estate board held in the marketplace. The next evolution of that standard was that each brokerage then was able to set its own individual fees. And guess what? The fee ended up being from each brokerage pretty much across the board 7 per cent of the first \$100,000 and 3 per cent of the balance. That didn't seem to break the monopoly either, and ultimately the evolution of the rules around real estate listing rates, commission rates – each individual agent ultimately was given responsibility to be able to totally negotiate their own individual fee without direction or influence from their brokerage. That's where we're at right now, Mr. Speaker. It's a totally wide open field, where individual agents will charge whatever they wish. There's a panoply of different business models that have evolved as a result of that freedom being brought down to the individual agents to charge what they saw fit for their services in the real estate industry.

Mr. Speaker, what we're seeing here is an evolution as well that reflects the reality today, that individual consumers in this province in a really tough time are being forced to pay some exorbitant fees that a government would be right to control and to regulate. There's nothing wrong with those words. Businesses who operate with their customers in mind, with their customers' well-being in mind, welcome a level playing field where regulations ensure that bad players don't make a bad reputation for everybody and that people are treated fairly.

I mean, I can imagine what might have happened years ago. I know my grandmother sold the milk that she produced from her farm. She would actually put it on a sleigh in the wintertime and take it a couple of miles into town and sell it door to door. I can imagine what would have happened if somebody else tried to sell it for more.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to PMB 209, the Consumer Protection (Affordability Measures) Amendment Act, 2026. I do find it really interesting that the minister decided to take his time and speak about the NDP golden hits, the things that we did when we were in government, as a way to deflect away from his responsibility as the minister of consumer protection and the role that the government plays in ensuring that Albertans are able to engage in services across the province without potentially paying a higher premium than they need to.

It was a great opportunity for this minister to stand up and say: "You know what? We're going to try to address some of the affordability issues that Albertans are facing. We recognize that it's a problem. We recognize that life is becoming more and more expensive for Albertans." Yet the minister did none of those things and, in fact, didn't even acknowledge that the government has a role to play in ensuring that consumers, Albertans, are protected when it comes to fees associated with services.

It had me thinking, Mr. Speaker. Like, why would the government be so resistant about wanting to address fees that Albertans have to pay? Then I was like, "Oh, I know why," and I'm going to tell you why. I only have 10 minutes, so I'm not sure how I'm going to get through all of it, but let's start at the beginning. Land titles and property-related fees that the government requires Albertans to pay whenever they go to engage at a registry office: they've increased land title search fees. The government has increased higher land transfer registration fees, has increased mortgage registration fees and additional administrative charges through the land titles office. That just happened.

Car rental and transportation-related fees. The government has now introduced a new provincial car rental levy and also has increased previous fees related to car rentals. There's now an administrative surcharge added to rental agreements, and higher vehicle licensing registration pass-through fees are being charged to customers. It basically has increased costs for travel for workers, families, and visitors coming to the province.

But we can't stop there because then we have to talk about school fees and the fees that the government has placed on Albertans when it comes to those fees. Those would include basic school and instructional fees, transportation like the yellow bus, noon hour supervision fees, course-specific fees like fine arts – if you want to be in sports, if you want to play an instrument, you're probably going to have to rent that equipment from the schools – technology and digital learning fees, graduation fees and event fees, early learning fees, full-day kindergarten add-on fees, and expanding school supply requirement fees such as Chrome tablets or any of those sorts of things.

4:20

Again, when we go to postsecondary after elementary and junior high, we also have to pay more fees. Tuition increase has gone up across the province by this government. Mandatory non-instructional fees, course-specific labs, studio, clinical fees, applications, transcripts, graduation fees, meal plan fees, parking and transportation fees, international student surcharges, apprenticeship and trade training fees: all raised over the last few years since this government has come into power.

Now, of course, when we want to look at "How do we get across this province?" let's look at drivers' licence renewal fees, vehicle registration fee increases. Corporate register filing fees have increased; vital stats document fees. Also, let's not forget about the \$200 EV tax that anybody who drives an electric vehicle now has to pay because of this government. But, you know, if you get in a car accident or if you have to go pay maybe a speeding ticket, you're now going to have to pay higher court filing fees, increased

small claim fees, document processing fees, and for some reason there's a sheriff servicing fee. I feel like we have to get explanation from the government on exactly why we're paying a sheriff servicing fee, but it exists, so it happens.

Then the best one that I'm sure all Albertans love, the parks, camping, and outdoor access fee, the Kananaskis conservation pass that was introduced by this government, increasing camping registration fees, higher daily use fees in some areas, depending on where you go. Also, we know that wood has gone up in campsites. Also, paying for electricity. If you drive an EV, you pay an additional fee for going camping because you're driving an electric vehicle, and for some reason that makes it more expensive. Not quite sure that that makes sense, but that fee also exists.

Then it comes to health care: health care related administrative fees, increased ambulance fees, higher medical documentation fees if you need a form filled out by your doctor, if you need a WCB form filled out by your doctor. All of the forms: there's now a fee. Adjusted long-term care accommodation charge. Apparently, as you age, because the government doesn't believe in aging in place – they would like you to move into a long-term care facility – there is now a provincial fee for that. Thank you on behalf of the seniors, government of Alberta.

Now let's talk about tourism and hospitality fees. There's now been an increase in hotel tourism levies in some regions. There's also an increase in hospitality surcharges tied to provincial regulations. This affects travellers, tourism operators, and local economies.

That's just the list that I could find in the last – I don't know – couple of minutes. I know there are more because I know I've missed some sectors, I'm pretty sure. I actually know I've missed some sectors, but these were kind of the high-level fees that this government has somehow managed to download on Albertans since they've become the government.

Of course, as we're standing here saying, "Let's bring down the cost of living for Albertans; let's address fees and the different hidden fees that Albertans have to pay", the government is going to be like: nope; can't do that. If we do that, then they're going to know that we've got all these hidden fees that we're actually making them pay, and we don't want to protect consumers from paying the government fees that we've hidden under the line items in some contract to rent a car or, you know, going to get a Kananaskis pass. Like, don't get an electric vehicle. We're going to charge you more for that. We're just going to hide it in the sublines, and we're going to hope Albertans don't know.

Because of that, that this bill is a very important bill that brings down the cost of living for Albertans, that addresses this whole idea of hiding fees in the subprint of contracts, the government, of course, is going to say no because they hide fees in their subcontracts all the time, and then they try to be like: it's less expensive to live in Alberta until you add up all of the hidden fees that we have imposed on Albertans as the government and that we continue to hide in the sublines every single time.

I find it really disappointing because there are opportunities by this government to address the affordability crunch, to help bring down costs for Albertans. If the government doesn't want to take the NDP's solutions to the problem, if they want to come up with their own, I have just provided a list of, like, 20 different ministries, about 100 different fees that this government continues to charge Albertans that they could easily look at and be like: well, maybe we should get rid of that one. But, of course, the government won't do that because they've created this fallacy of saying that we don't charge Albertans for everything, and it's so cheap to live here. Yet it's so expensive to live here because the government keeps making life more expensive.

I don't understand. Like, they don't want to do the gas tax thing. They find that that's not a solution to the problem. The government thinks that that's a silly solution. Fine. Why don't you get rid of the Kananaskis pass and let families who want to spend time with their kids over the summer actually be able to do something that doesn't cost them more money and give them access to the outdoors, where they can do things for free, instead of charging them for it? I mean, that's an easy fee to get rid of.

There are many opportunities that this government can do to help bring down the cost. It would include voting for this bill, where, again, there are fees upon fees that Albertans are being forced to pay that many of them don't know about. I guess that's the conversation – right? – that the government doesn't want to hold businesses accountable for doing it because they don't want to be held accountable for doing the exact same thing. I think that is actually the biggest problem, and it is the weakness of this government to acknowledge that there are things that they can do. In fact, I would say that when they introduced their most recent budget, they knew that there were opportunities to help address lots of the things that people are talking about, about the affordability piece, and instead they actually increased many of the fees I just listed.

Again, the government is just trying to hide and not wanting to address consumer protection for Albertans.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Member for Lethbridge-West.

**Member Miyashiro:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know how I follow that up. That was brilliant. Are you kidding me? That was brilliant.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I listened to the members opposite heckle someone trying to introduce a motion to remove the gas tax for a certain period for affordability reasons. I listened to people heckle the fact that we want to introduce a bunch of affordability measures. We heard them heckle – I don't know – lowering fees, everything that we brought forward, minimum wage. Anything that we've introduced to help make life more affordable for people in Alberta the people opposite vote down.

I don't want to say "hypocrisy" or "hypocrite" because that's probably unparliamentary. However, I think what we can say is that there are some disingenuous beliefs over there and speeches that we've heard. They could just come out and say that as a group the UCP really doesn't believe in making things more affordable for people in Alberta, everyday Albertans. Maybe more for corporate, maybe more for rich people but certainly not for middle-class and low-wage earners.

You know what? Things like this Bill 209 help the majority of Albertans, people in the middle class. These are measures that we're not even asking them to stoop all the way to the bottom and help people that are, you know, low-wage earners and low-income earners. Can't do that. Can't look at something like this and say, "Wait, that doesn't help, you know, rich people enough" although it might. I mean, rich people are the ones that have the most subscriptions, and they buy the most tickets. I've got a good story about tickets in a minute, though. I'll get to that.

So affordability: I'm not sure why it's such a hard thing for this government to deal with, right? Let's take my colleague from Sherwood Park. He introduces a motion to get rid of the gas tax for a while, make things more affordable so people aren't paying those high rates, and we heard the Provincial Treasurer, the Minister of Finance, say that we can't do that. We have a plan. We have a process. We have this formula that, you know, it has to be at this much for so long, and then we can actually maybe look at lowering the price of a litre of gasoline in Alberta.

However, our shadow minister of Finance sent us a note today and said that he saw an article that estimates that the government of Alberta brings in \$20 million a day for every \$10 over budget the price of oil is right now; \$20 million a day. Oil has averaged over \$30 over budget throughout April. Do the math on this. In one month they will have brought in more money than the gas tax brings in over the course of an entire year. But can't afford it, can't pass on those savings to everyday Albertans. As the royalties go up and as they stay high, the revenue just keeps piling in and piling in, and that deficit is just lowering every day, Mr. Speaker. Every day.

4:30

Why can't we do things like this? I think the members opposite need to ask themselves, and you know what? It's probably the fact that you get pretty comfortable when you're making the wage that a lot of them are over there. You get comfortable when – I don't know – 75 per cent of the members opposite get a wage top-up because they're either ministers or parliamentary secretaries. You forget the people that you're supposed to help in this province. Those of us on this side of the House that have worked with kids and families in the children's services system and worked with people in the developmental disability sector and worked with people with mental illness and worked with homeless and worked with seniors understand that every cent counts.

Whether it's transparent pricing so you know exactly what you're buying when you go to check out – it seems like a simple thing, but sometimes it's not so simple. The thing about subscriptions is interesting, right? Just about everything you do now is online and requires a subscription of some kind. Doesn't matter what it is. If you want to buy something online, you need a subscription to it. Do people forget that they have them? I do it all the time. I have to go back and contact some business and say, "Yeah, I'm not using that anymore; I've got to get rid of it," and they're like, "It takes a month." I think there's a national newspaper that I wasn't really accessing very often anymore. Sent in my subscription cancellation; they said it would take 30 days. What is that? This click to cancel is a great thing.

The ticketing thing that my colleague from Calgary-Elbow was speaking about at length is very interesting because it should actually cost less to do ticketing online because it's data transfer.

**Member Kayande:** It should.

**Member Miyashiro:** It absolutely should.

However, in my community, interestingly, they have a ticket set-up that if you go and buy a paper ticket at the ticket office for different events at two different venues, same system, you don't have an extra fee for getting a paper ticket. But if you order those tickets online and you want to pick them up, you have to pay an extra fee, or if you order those tickets online and you want to just use an electronic ticket, you have to pay a fee if you buy that online.

I think these are measures that we can take just to help everyday Albertans, and I'm going to keep saying that because this is what we're talking about, right? We're not even talking about bringing people up, our lowest income people and our most needy people that need a leg up every day. We're talking about middle-class, everyday Albertans, and it seems really obvious that the members across the aisle aren't really interested in helping everyday Albertans.

You know what? I'm going to refer to my colleague from Edmonton-Manning, who was talking about all those different fees. We want to talk about being so inexpensive in Alberta and having the lowest tax rates and, you know, everything's so great here. We are a great province, but when people come here and find out what's

not affordable, it's all those fees that they add on to everything. I think those fees just add up, especially if you're active and you're doing different things and you want to engage in the community, and then all of a sudden: bang. Go camping: extra fees, extra gas tax, extra camping fees if you're in an electric. The one about the extra fees for being in an electric vehicle is just so ideological it's not even funny.

The other thing: you want to be punitive to students who we want to engage in higher education and keep charging them extra fees for different things. That's also regressive, Mr. Speaker. We should be putting money into those kinds of activities so those young people can actually have the best opportunity to get the best education that we provide in this province. Yet, as my colleague mentioned, we have all these different fees that young people have to pay.

We have all these fees that newcomers to Alberta have to pay. Oh, but we shouldn't have to worry about newcomers in a little bit because, you know, this government is antinewcomers, so we should not even worry about that one.

It's the fees that seniors have to pay. There is a fee for the seniors driver's licence. It was one that was removed, and then it was actually put back in, and it doesn't really make sense, right? It's not just the fact that most seniors are struggling, but a great percentage of seniors are. If you want to means test it, fine; means test it. Just don't blanket put it in for everybody because some can't afford it. I ran a seniors' organization in Lethbridge. Fully 25 to 30 per cent of the members that came to my centre were getting some kind of financial assistance.

Think about that. Seniors are about to make up 25 per cent of our population within the next 10 years or less. Actually, within the next seven years, I think, now. And we want to keep piling fees like this on seniors, make it unaffordable for them? Those are things, Mr. Speaker, that I don't think we want to think about doing because not all seniors are as well off as we think they should be or could be. Just because we think they should have been saving, just because we think they should have had RRSPs, just because we think they should be getting more money from CPP or whatever it is, doesn't make it so. Any community you go to in this province, you're going to see people in their 70s and possibly even 80s that are working.

Mr. Speaker, this government needs to be fair to people, and they need to make it as affordable as possible. Thank you.

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

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What an honour it is to rise in the Chamber and speak to this PMB 209, Consumer Protection (Affordability Measures) Amendment Act, 2026. You know, I can honestly say it is an honour every time to rise in this Chamber and speak to bills. In particular this is a well-thought-out piece of private member's legislation from my colleague from Calgary-Currie.

I must say that I was quite disheartened, disturbed to hear the minister of red tape reduction, the Member for Morinville-St. Albert, dismiss and denigrate the member's efforts, you know, saying things like: this wasn't well thought out. He kind of contradicted himself at one point, saying it was like a college student paper or something like that, and then earlier he'd said it was something more elementary. I'm not really sure what he was saying, but the point is that this is the type of measure that's exactly needed for Albertans. I think I can certainly speak on behalf of all members on this side of the House when I say that people struggling to pay their bills is something we hear every single day when we talk to our constituents.

I also want to bring up that that same member who was being quite unfairly critical is the same member who's also dismissing the gas tax, the fuel tax. I can tell you I've had that brought up so many times in my constituency of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Albertans are looking for a break, right? They're looking for tangible measures that their government will put forward to try to relieve the pressure. You know, I've said it many times. I represent an area that is the second-lowest income constituency in the province, so obviously I hear a lot from one demographic, but it's not just low-income Albertans who are struggling. It's folks from all backgrounds who are finding it harder to pay rent, to pay their mortgages, and, of course, to pay for groceries and everything else.

It's incredibly disheartening to hear already from this government that they're not willing to support a private member's bill that has tangible actions. Yes, maybe some of these measures aren't going to save Albertans thousands of dollars, but they will save them dollars where it counts and where it matters. And those dollars do add up, right? I think some folks maybe in this Chamber forget or maybe have never known what it's like to struggle to pay bills, to not know how you're going to pay for your next meal, to not know how you're going to pay your rent.

4:40

You know, that's not me just exaggerating. I see that when I point to countless examples in this Chamber where we have asked the government to consider what it's like to be someone who is struggling. As the Member for Calgary-Currie pointed out, gave a few examples like my bill that I introduced at a time when rents were increasing faster in Edmonton and Calgary than anywhere else across Canada. We asked, we urged this government: let's alleviate some of the pressure on renters who are just struggling. When you can't even budget for the ups and downs, the fluctuations of rents that are allowed in a province with such lax tenant protections, and when every other province in Canada – nearly every other province in Canada; Alberta is the largest province with no caps on rent increases – including conservative provinces that are larger than us has some sort of protections, this government wasn't even willing to talk about it and wasn't willing to offer other relief.

When I see measures like we see in Bill 209 – right? – attacking kind of those hidden fees, those unexpected charges, those unfair practices: this is a great thing that this government can do. I can remember the same government talking about consumer protection with other bills in the past, so it's a bit contradictory for them suddenly to not be in support of protecting Albertans, in support of protecting consumers.

I guess what I'd like to see – I'm not presupposing this House, but I am basing it on what the minister had to say. I'm going to end shortly so I can cede my time to another member, but my question to this government is: if you're not willing to support transparent pricing, easy cancellation, white-label ATMs, ticket reselling fees, addressing all of those pieces, if you're not willing to address each of those tangible pieces that we know impact Albertans, then what are you willing to do?

Are you willing to commit to putting this into a government bill? We've seen multiple times from this government that, you know, they're not willing to ever – ever – in my seven years as an MLA support one of our private member's bills, but maybe if we let them take it as their idea, they'd be willing to support it. I tell you, Albertans deserve a whole lot more support when it comes to consumer protection, and this government has an opportunity to do that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill, private member's Bill 209, brought forward by my colleague from Calgary-Currie, a good piece of legislation, a piece of legislation that would make life better, easier, more affordable for Albertans. But from what we've heard, this UCP government is not going to support it.

Indeed, what we heard from the minister of service Alberta: I had a hard time not just breaking out laughing. What we heard from that minister: he stood here in this House and he said that he cannot support these protections for Albertans, these things that would lower their costs because we already have strong rules; we have a framework in place; you're rewriting rules that already exist. Mr. Speaker, that's his government's bread and butter.

Look at Bill 28. You know who already has rules in place? Libraries. They already have protections. They have rules in place to protect kids. They have rules in place to help ensure that, and you know what? Those rules have been successful.

**Mr. Williams:** Obviously not.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Now, the Minister of Municipal Affairs: we know that he wants to be the mayor for all Alberta. He loves the nanny state, so he wants to impose more rules and regulations like so many others here in this province.

**Mr. Williams:** Will you accept an intervention?

**Mr. Shepherd:** No, I will not, Minister. I will use my time.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that they use incredibly disingenuous arguments to create new rules, regulations, red tape for libraries, but they say: we absolutely have to defend Ticketmaster. We have to attack librarians, we have to attack libraries; we must defend Ticketmaster. I can tell you which of these two bills better serves Albertans, which one Albertans are actually concerned about. Now, the minister can go ahead with his Bill 28, and he can ask for an intervention. He's not going to get it. The fact is that what Albertans need is a government that actually cares about what matters, the real issues in front of them, not trumped-up culture war.

Unfortunately, again, what we see from that minister, the minister of service Alberta: talking about what we need to protect Albertans but respect the other side. He talks about rushed, top-down legislation, failure to consult. They didn't consult with librarians. They didn't sit down and talk to teachers about Bill 25 when they were creating more regulations for them in the classroom. This government does not consult with anybody who's going to disagree with their legislation. They force it through from the top down. That is what this government does, Mr. Speaker, so it is a laugh to hear them criticize this legislation.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from Edmonton-Manning noted: of course this government's going to defend hidden fees because they love imposing them. The Minister of Municipal Affairs is raising property taxes all across Alberta. Because this government doesn't have the guts to do it themselves, they force municipalities to do it for them. They love hidden fees and hidden taxes, and that's why they're voting against a bill that would help remove them for Albertans. That's what they did when they deindexed AISH, deindexed income tax, collecting millions more on the backs of Albertans. They hid that in the fine print because this government lacks the courage to actually stand up and be honest about what it's doing.

Of course, this is a government that loves market monopolies, Mr. Speaker. They're trying to redraw our election maps to give themselves a political one. They love being in a position where they hold more power, to be able to do whatever they want without having to be accountable to Albertans. That is why they support

businesses being in the same position. Now, we're not talking about good businesses, small mom-and-pop shops, folks here in the province that are trying to do right by their customers. We're talking about practices that are exploitative, that are not honest with Albertans, that are taking money out of Albertans' pockets at a time when they have much less to spare. This government has no interest in trying to help Albertans on that front because they engage in so many of those practices themselves.

Of course, this government loves monopolies, Mr. Speaker. They love contracting monopolies. In fact, that's what they love to actually heap on the backs of Albertans. They want to make it harder for Albertans to get out of exploitative contracts. They're voting down a bill that would do that. That's because they love to sign Albertans up for them. DynaLife: a privatization contract. They spent three years putting it together, fell apart in one; cost Alberta taxpayers millions. Turkish Tylenol: we're still out \$50 million on a contract this government signed us into and we can't get out of. No wonder they don't want to help Albertans to be able to cancel a subscription. They don't want that to be clear. This is a government that loves hiding things. They've changed their information and privacy laws to give themselves an easier time doing that.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that we on this side of the aisle actually try to help Albertans. The Member for Calgary-Currie has put forward some practical proposals to help Albertans save money. It is well thought out, it is considered, it reflects what's done in other jurisdictions. But this government, that exists to exploit Albertans, to take advantage of them, to force through badly thought policy and legislation that does nothing to make anyone's life better solely for their own political gain, intends to pull this bill down. It's a shame. Albertans deserve much better. I can tell you that an Alberta NDP government will make sure they get it.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any others wishing to speak?

**Mr. Shepherd:** Oh, sorry. I'll move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Motions Other than Government Motions

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

#### Emergency Care

512. Member Tejada moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly

- (a) recognize that
  - (i) hospitals across Alberta remain underfunded and over capacity, preventing Albertans from accessing emergency and urgent care without excessive delays,
  - (ii) as a result of these delays, Albertans have died before being able to access medical care, and
  - (iii) delays in accessing emergency care discourage Albertans from seeking medical treatment when they need it, increasing the risk of preventable deaths, and
- (b) urge the government to
  - (i) provide transparency for Albertans by implementing regular public reporting of all hospital deaths that occur in emergency departments,
  - (ii) consider providing additional funding to increase hospital capacity, and
  - (iii) consider increasing funding for public health care worker recruitment, retention, and training

to improve wait times and patient outcomes for public health care services.

**Member Tejada:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce Motion 512, and I encourage all members of this House to support it. This motion asks the Legislative Assembly to do three very reasonable things: to recognize the reality of what is happening in our emergency room departments, to recognize and insist on transparency when harm and death occur in those settings, and to urge the government to meaningfully address hospital capacity and the health care workforce crisis driving those outcomes.

4:50

At its core this motion is about accountability, it is about honesty, and, above all, it is about saving the lives of Albertans, because today in communities across this province people are afraid to go to the emergency room. They are afraid that they will wait hours while their pain worsens. They are afraid that they will be treated in hallways instead of rooms. They're afraid that no one will come in time, and tragically, in some cases, that fear has been justified. Mr. Speaker, Albertans have died in overcrowded, underfunded emergency room departments, and that is not rhetoric; that is fact.

Last December a 44-year-old man with chest pain died while waiting to be seen in an Edmonton emergency room. In January emergency physicians reported as many as six other potentially preventable deaths in a single week due to excessive emergency department wait times. Yet to this day Albertans still do not have clear public reporting on how often these deaths occur, what caused them, or what is being done to prevent them. If the government is not willing to count those deaths, we won't get a fix in the system that caused them.

Motion 512 is clear. Transparency is not optional; transparency is a prerequisite for improvement. Mr. Speaker, emergency departments across Alberta are operating well beyond safe capacity. Hospitals designed to function safely below 85 per cent capacity are routinely operating at 100, 110, and even 115 per cent. That means hallway medicine. It means delayed care. It means medical staff forced to make impossible choices under pressure. Alberta now sees more than 2 million emergency department visits every year, driven in part by the fact that nearly 1 million Albertans still cannot find a regular family doctor. When primary care collapses, emergency rooms become the safety net, and when emergency rooms are overrun, lives are at risk.

This isn't limited to urban centres. In rural Alberta, emergency departments are increasingly closing, not because of equipment failures or storms but because there are not enough doctors and nurses to keep them open. In 2024 alone Alberta emergency rooms were closed for more than 34,000 hours due to staffing shortages. Every closure means longer travel times, delayed treatment, and increased pressure on already overwhelmed regional hospitals. When rural emergency departments close, Albertans are forced to drive hours for urgent care, and that is a dangerous gamble in a province this large.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. Health care delivery is a provincial responsibility. These outcomes are not accidental. They are the result of decisions. Instead of strengthening a unified public health care system, this government has chosen fragmentation. It has broken Alberta Health Services into multiple entities. It has pursued privatization doggedly. It has created instability at the very moment when stability is most needed. None of these changes have shortened wait times, none have improved emergency department

safety, and none have reassured exhausted health care workers that help is on the way. In fact, the opposite is happening.

Health care workers are burning out at unprecedented rates. Six in 10 nurses in Canada report experiencing workplace violence in a single year. In Alberta nearly half of nurses report physical violence at work. Violence in emergency departments has been rising for decades, and now it is impossible to separate patient safety from staff safety. Last month Albertans were shocked by a stabbing inside the Royal Alexandra emergency department. One patient was critically injured. Another individual was found with multiple knives. That incident isn't isolated. The United Nurses of Alberta have been very clear about this. Violence in emergency departments across the province is common and it's worsening, yet these incidents only come to light when a witness speaks to the media. There is no routine public reporting, no transparency, no accountability. If a patient had not come forward in this case, Albertans might never have known it had happened at all.

Mr. Speaker, how can Albertans trust a system that does not tell them the truth about what happens inside it? How can families make informed decisions about where to seek care if critical information is hidden? Transparency is not about blame. It's about learning. It's about identifying where resources are failing and directing help where it's needed most. As the government itself often says: if you don't count it, you can't fix it.

Motion 512 recognizes this reality. It calls for regular public reporting of deaths that occur in emergency departments. It acknowledges that increased hospital capacity is necessary, and it recognizes that we cannot fix wait times without addressing the health care workforce crisis driving them.

Mr. Speaker, recruitment alone is not going to solve this problem. The Alberta Medical Association has been clear: retention is the urgent threat. Family physician retention is deteriorating faster than recruitment can compensate. Sixty-one per cent of family physicians are considering leaving Alberta's health care system through early retirement or relocation. Training a physician takes eight to 12 years; losing experienced doctors happens overnight. No amount of short-term recruitment funding can replace the expertise walking out the door if working conditions continue to worsen.

Physicians describe practices on the brink of collapse. Nurses describe violence as part of the job. Paramedics describe off-load delays that leave ambulances unavailable for hours. This is not sustainable. The government's own data shows that Alberta remains below the national average for family physicians per capita and behind provinces like British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec. Despite recent budget announcements, there's still no comprehensive workforce retention strategy, especially for rural and underserved communities.

Mr. Speaker, this motion does not prescribe a single solution, it does not pretend there's an easy fix, but it does demand honesty and it does demand action. It urges the government to consider expanding capacity: real beds, real staff, real infrastructure. It urges renewed investment in recruiting, training, and retaining health care workers. It demands transparency so Albertans can see where the system is failing and where it needs help. That is not controversial. No responsible government should look at overcrowded emergency departments, rising violence, rural closures, and preventable deaths and say that everything is fine, yet that is exactly what Albertans see when the government refuses to report outcomes, refuses to acknowledge harm, and dismisses calls for accountability as political.

Mr. Speaker, health care workers are not asking for praise alone. They are asking for safety. They are asking for staffing. They are asking for transparency and real leadership. Albertans are not asking for perfection; they are asking for honesty and effort. Motion 512 is a chance for this Assembly to stand with patients, families,

and front-line workers. It's a chance to say that deaths in emergency rooms matter, the violence in hospitals is unacceptable, and that underfunding and fragmentation have real, human consequences.

This motion does not weaken our health care system; secrecy does. This motion does not attack health care workers; it protects them. This motion does not undermine confidence; it restores it through truth and accountability.

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

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to provide amendments, sir, to Motion 512.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, did you send the amendment to the mover of the motion by 11 o'clock a.m.?

**Mr. Yao:** Yes, sir.

**The Speaker:** You got that by 11 a.m.?

**Member Tejada:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** Okay. Go ahead.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you so much. Read it out first, sir? All right. I move that Motion Other than Government Motion 512 be amended as follows:

- (a) in clause (a)
  - (i) in subclause (i)
    - (A) by striking out "under-funded and over-capacity, preventing Albertans from accessing" and substituting "under pressure, impacting Albertans' access to", and
    - (B) by striking out "without" and substituting "and contributing to",
  - (ii) by striking out subclause (ii) and renumbering subclause (iii) as subclause (ii), and
  - (iii) in subclause (ii)
    - (A) by striking out "delays in accessing emergency care discourage Albertans" and substituting "as a result of these delays, Albertans may be discouraged", and
    - (B) by striking out "preventable deaths" and substituting "adverse events";
- (b) in clause (b)
  - (i) by striking out subclause (i) and substituting the following:
    - (i) continue to support appropriate internal and independent external reviews of hospital deaths in emergency departments, including public disclosure of reviews of cases that raise serious issues of access to or quality of care,
    - (ii) in subclause (ii), by striking out "consider providing additional funding" and substituting "consider continuing to make increases to funding", and
    - (iii) in subclause (iii), by striking out "consider increasing funding" and substituting "consider continuing plans to increase funding."

5:00

Well, that was a mouthful, Mr. Speaker, but in a nutshell these amendments reflect both the seriousness of these concerns being raised and the responsibility we share to speak accurately, constructively, and responsibly about the state of health care in Alberta. These amendments before us revise the language of the motion to ensure it more accurately reflects the pressures facing Alberta's emergency departments without overstating claims or assigning conclusions too definitively.

Specifically, the motion now describes emergency departments being under pressure rather than declaring them underfunded and overcapacity, and it recognizes that these pressures impact Albertans' access to care rather than suggesting access is outright prevented. This distinction matters. It ensures our debate is grounded in evidence, accountability, and fairness while still clearly acknowledging that significant challenges exist.

The amendments also remove one clause entirely and refine the remaining language so that it reflects the complex realities of emergency care. Rather than stating categorically that delays discourage Albertans from accessing emergency care, the motion now recognizes that as a result of these delays Albertans may be discouraged. Similarly, references to preventable deaths are replaced by the broader, more clinically appropriate term "adverse events." This does not minimize the seriousness of harm, nor does it diminish the experiences of patients and families. Instead, it ensures that the language used aligns with medical standards, investigative processes, and the importance of fairness when outcomes are being discussed.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's government supports the amended Motion 512 because we recognize that more must always be done to strengthen our health care system. For these reasons, I'm proud to support the amended Motion 512 and encourage all members of this House to do the same. Albertans expect us to work collaboratively, responsibly, and thoughtfully on issues as important as health care, and this amended motion does just that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Hoffman:** I'm going to start by acknowledging that this is a proposed amendment, not an amended motion, and that this amendment, in my opinion, is totally counter to the complete intent of my colleague the Member for Calgary-Klein's original motion. The government, I think, is trying to encourage one of its private members, a private member who has worked in emergency services, to say that there's no emergency here, Mr. Speaker, and nothing could be further from the truth.

I am so frustrated to hear the government say that under pressure maybe there are potentially some gentle impacts that could result in – you know, let's just call a spade a spade. There is chaos in our emergency departments. We had at the Royal Alex on Good Friday a patient waiting for emergency care stab another patient violently who was also waiting for emergency care. This is something that front-line health care workers have been raising alarms on for at least five years and asking for more support, specifically in that emergency department but also in many other emergency departments.

The government only responded after one of the witnesses contacted me that evening and asked me to please say something publicly because they were worried nobody was going to know what happened there. I felt confident in sharing what had been reported to me. I'm grateful that the minister did respond to that and that it seems now that there is going to be some action taken. It shouldn't take a phone call to a shadow minister, a member of the Official Opposition to have the government acknowledge when things are going terribly in their emergency departments, when things are in chaos in their emergency departments, and that's why the Member for Calgary-Klein is asking for regular transparent reporting.

For a member of this Chamber to propose an amendment that says everything is fine, that there might be some adverse events instead of preventable deaths – like, we are being very clear in our language. We are talking about atrocious things happening in emergency departments, and the government is calling them adverse events. Like, Mr. Speaker, this is so tone deaf to what's

happening in our emergency departments and what Albertans expect from their government when it comes to responding to these extreme situations, where people are concerned for their own safety and well-being. They're concerned that they are going to die, and the government refers to these as adverse events.

Also, credit to the member who proposed this from Calgary-Klein. She proposed this before that specific event that I'm speaking to today. She proposed this following the death of Mr. Sreekumar, who died on December 22 in an emergency department in southeast Edmonton, who was there waiting over eight hours for help. Over eight hours. And only because other whistle-blowers have come forward and acknowledged that there were other deaths in that same emergency department, we now know that there were three deaths in that emergency department on that same day, people who weren't even receiving admitted care. Not everyone who shows up at the emergency department is going to be able to be saved. I want to acknowledge that. I've heard from many front-line health care workers. It's just not possible. I get it. But, at a minimum, somebody who is in extreme pain should be admitted to a bed and have pain management, should have their family there, should be able to see a doctor and have some comfort in their time of need.

One of the other patients who died that very same day was sitting on a stretcher with a paramedic at their side and that was it. That's not okay. We only know about this because Mr. Sreekumar's family filmed the incident, shared it very publicly, and called on all of us to do better. Called on the province specifically, the minister specifically, the Premier specifically. We are in this place as servants of the people of Alberta, and we have an opportunity as Members of the Legislative Assembly to support a motion calling on the government to do better. This is our chance to honour the wishes of Mr. Sreekumar's family in helping to amplify their voices and calling for more transparency from government.

What's happening in our emergency departments is not okay. These are just two very small examples. There are people arguably everywhere in our province. I've talked before about rural emergency departments. We have rural emergency departments closed almost every day of the year. We still haven't had an official number provided to us – I would welcome one to be reported today – on how many hours emergency departments in Alberta were closed last year. The year before it was the equivalent of having one emergency department shut down completely for a whole year. That's how many hours we were missing of emergency care. It is not okay.

It's simply what is being proposed in this motion, Motion 512. We "recognize that hospitals across Alberta remain underfunded and [are] over capacity." The government wants to cross that off. That is the premise of this motion. We acknowledge that we're asking more from hospitals than what is capable right now with the resources we're giving them. If the government won't even acknowledge that, how are we to accept this as a motion in good faith to amend? Instead, they want to say, "under pressure, impacting Albertans' access to." Give me a break. Under pressure? Yeah, *Under Pressure* is, you know, a great song from my childhood. It's also something that happens when you're condensing gases. We're talking about having 50-plus people sitting in most emergency departments in our major urban hospitals right now waiting for care, and the government doesn't have the staff on the ground to be able to meet that need.

The government did come out with an internal review of the system and what happened in Mr. Sreekumar's death. Acute Care Alberta submitted a report to the minister, and the day after was the first time the minister stood to speak publicly to that tragic and horrific death that took place. Basically, they acknowledged that

there were a bunch of things that were underfunded that were leading to increased pressures. Then the government later came out with a budget and did nothing to actually address those. It was only after the budget that the minister actually released that report, that he'd already received before he spoke publicly in mid-January.

Mr. Speaker, it is not sufficient. Basically, what the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo is proposing is that we pretend that everything is fine with these amendments, to every single section of what's being proposed in (a)(i), in (b)(ii), and it goes on. All of these are for the government to say: everything is fine. It is not fine. I couldn't more passionately encourage all members of this Assembly to vote down these amendments. They, number one, are disrespectful to the memory of Mr. Sreekumar, whose family has been fighting for us to be more active in advocating for greater transparency and to get to the bottom of it. Number two, they don't honour the intent of the original motion as proposed by my colleague the Member for Calgary-Klein. Number three, we are in this place to make things better, and this simply is an amendment to say that everything is fine.

5:10

I will be enthusiastically voting in opposition to the proposed amendment, so we can get back to the meat of what's being proposed in this motion and that we can actually do something to call on the government to improve the health care service and delivery in the province of Alberta. Nothing is more important to me in this moment than saying: let's shine a light on what's happening, let's measure what's happening, let's talk about it publicly, and let's give the province and the current ministers and the current Premier an opportunity to say: here's our road map on how we're going to be more open, more transparent, and we're going to make things better. That is the job of this Assembly, and we have an opportunity here today as private members to call on the government to do their job.

I am very grateful to my colleague from Calgary-Klein for bringing this forward and for having the opportunity here to speak, and, yes, once again, this is not good enough. These amendments are disrespectful to the memory of those who have been lost in emergency departments and to the work that we are called to do in this place. It is not okay. I don't think that there's a single MLA in this place who thinks that what's happening in hospitals is fine today, but if you vote for this amendment, that's essentially what you're saying.

Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe there are a bunch of MLAs who think everything's just fine and would be totally fine showing up at the Royal Alex emergency department themselves right now and having to wait a very long amount of time and maybe not feeling safe while they're doing that. Maybe they're fine with emergency departments in their own rural ridings being closed today. I'm not fine with that. I'm not fine with that at all, and that's why I will be voting against this amendment. I guess we'll hear what others have to say, perhaps even on the record, if they are fine with what's happening in their emergency departments and their hospitals, because they shouldn't be. What's happening is beneath us, and it's beneath the service that we expect for one another.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the members opposite for a thoughtful motion and commentary on the proposed amendment, which I think is an improvement over the original motion.

Before I go any further, our thoughts and prayers to the family and friends of Mr. Sreekumar. The internal reviews were completed. The QAR was released. We are making investments and changes to the system in response to those, and a fatality inquiry has been booked for this fall, later this year, to determine what exactly occurred there.

Now to the motion. The first section of the original motion said, "Hospitals across Alberta remain underfunded and over capacity, preventing Albertans from accessing emergency and urgent care without excessive delays." Now, a couple of issues with this. We fund our hospitals at significantly higher rates than the previous government did, the NDP, so the former minister of health who just spoke, I guess, is saying that their government dramatically underfunded hospitals. I would disagree with that. I don't think they did, but that's what's implied here. We do not underfund hospitals. We balance our investment across the system to maximize the health and well-being of Albertans, of course, while also funding other competing priorities of Albertans, other services like our social supports, our education system. Mr. Speaker, it's not easy, but every jurisdiction has to do it.

The words "over capacity" are true for certain sites, particularly the major urban sites, which have seen massive population growth. The Edmonton area, the Calgary area: our sites are over capacity. We don't diminish that. We don't try to avoid that. We acknowledge it, and we make investments to address it. In truth, we actually have about a hundred sites across the province in varying states of capacity. Some of them are well within the capacity they were built for; some are well below – right? – Mr. Speaker.

I think the amended language, which would be "Hospitals across Alberta remain under pressure, impacting Albertans' access to emergency and urgent care and contributing to excessive delays," is far more accurate because not every hospital is over capacity, and we certainly don't underfund them. Again, if we did, since we're funding them at much higher rates than the NDP government, I would suggest that they believe they underfunded hospitals.

This is the original motion. The second point is that as a result of these delays, Albertans have died before being able to access medical care, and delays in accessing emergency care discourage Albertans from seeking medical treatment when they need it, increasing the risk of preventable deaths."

This one is not broad enough, in my view. We should be concerned about more than deaths at our hospitals. We should be concerned about all adverse events. That's the reason I think the member proposed the language "as a result of these delays, Albertans may be discouraged" from seeking medical treatment when they need it, increasing the risk of adverse events. Whether it's an adverse event or, unfortunately, a fatality, we should be concerned about all of these, not just one category, and we should take steps every day to make the health system better, and indeed we do.

Point (b)(i) talks about transparency. I would suggest that our government has been more transparent on health data than any before. We are releasing public dashboards where you can view our hospital information. It's going to have all the surgical data. It's going to have data on EMS. It's going to have acute-care information. It's even going to have primary care and assisted living dashboards.

Point (b)(ii) is "consider providing additional funding to increase hospital capacity." We agree. We're doing that. No argument there.

Point (iii) is: consider continuing plans to increase funding for public health care worker recruitment, retention, and training. Mr. Speaker, we've added over 2,000 physicians since 2019. We've added over 12,000 RNs, 10,000 health care aides, and 500 nurse practitioners. We are doing this every day and very successfully. Alberta continues to attract the best and brightest, and we continue

to create the conditions where all Canadians want to live, work, and raise a family here.

Our government knows that emergency department wait times are too long. We acknowledge it. That's why we're restructuring the health system, and that's why we're making necessary investments. Albertans expect timely access to emergency and urgent care when they need it most. The amended motion is an important step in reinforcing the need to examine serious outcomes carefully, understand where system pressures or delays may contribute to risk, and apply those lessons to improve care across the province.

The pressures facing our emergency departments affect hospitals and the communities they serve. They reflect system-wide challenges that have been building over time and have intensified with rapid population growth and aging and rising patient complexity. We also have seen workforce shortages and constrained in-patient capacity and previous gaps in primary and preventative care, which our government is now addressing through a dedicated focus on primary and preventative care.

Emergency departments are the front door of the health system. When hospitals are full, emergency departments feel that pressure first, Mr. Speaker. Today many emergency department treatment spaces are occupied by patients who've completed their emergency care but are waiting for an in-patient bed. At Alberta's busiest sites a significant proportion of emergency department spaces are occupied by patients awaiting admission. This reduces throughput and delays care for new patients.

Demand is also rising. Emergency department visits continue to gradually increase year over year and are returning to prepandemic levels, and more than half of visits are for urgent or emergent care. While the most critical patients are always prioritized, longer waits for lower acuity patients are a clear symptom of a system under pressure, not a lack of urgency or effort by our front-line staff, who do incredible work every day. When emergency departments are under sustained strain, it can negatively impact the health and well-being of Albertans, reinforcing why improving access, reliability, and patient flow remains so important to this government.

Improving emergency department wait times requires co-ordinated action across the health system, including in-patient capacity, workforce availability, and access to primary and preventative care beyond hospital walls. To address these pressures, Alberta is taking concrete front-line actions in emergency departments to improve flow and reduce bottlenecks. This includes expanding the use of nurse practitioners, enabling them to act as the most responsible provider in our emergency departments. This supports timely care for appropriate patients, improves coverage, and allows emergency physicians to focus on higher acuity and more complex cases.

Hospitals are also strengthening operational supports by adding additional registered nurses to cover emergency rooms and improving access to diagnostic imaging and lab services. We're doing this in the evenings and weekends, Mr. Speaker. Rapid medicine discharge units have been set up to help admitted patients move more quickly to in-patient care or safely back to the community. In parallel, the virtual home hospital program has been expanded to support patients discharged directly from emergency departments. This reduces avoidable admissions and preserves acute-care capacity for those who need it.

Improving emergency department capacity also depends on effective prehospital and acute-care services. Alberta's emergency health services help to assess patients earlier where appropriate and to connect them with alternative care without transport to emergency departments. Reducing avoidable ED arrivals and prioritizing transport for patients who truly need hospital care

initiatives such as mobile integrated health and our new HELPU units can improve patient flow, preserve emergency department capacity, and support faster access to care.

5:20

Recognizing the sustained pressures at the Royal Alex hospital, one of Alberta's busiest and most complex sites, the government began dedicated patient flow and capacity initiatives in September. The initiatives focus on improving internal patient flow, accelerating diagnostics and discharge, reducing alternate level of care stays, and redirecting patients to more appropriate care settings.

At the same time Alberta is developing a new provincial acute-care workforce strategy to guide recruitment, retention, training, and long-term workforce sustainability across emergency departments. This strategy builds on existing initiatives and is focused on ensuring the acute-care system has the right people with the right skills in the right places, including in rural and remote Alberta.

Emergency department wait times cannot be fixed without addressing in-patient bed availability. Through collaboration with Acute Care Alberta and other health ministries Alberta is accelerating safe transitions for patients who no longer require acute care but remain in hospital due to limited access to continuing care or other community supports. Since Assisted Living Alberta became operational in September, the number of patients designated as alternate level of care has decreased by 20 per cent across our system, even more in the Edmonton area. That progress is freeing up in-patient beds and directly relieving pressure in our emergency rooms.

Budget 2026 includes targeted investments that directly support emergency departments and strengthen our capacity. This includes over \$500 million over three years through the acute-care action plan to add beds, increase surgical volumes, and improve patient flow. By increasing acute-care capacity, hospitals can move patients through the system more efficiently and free up in-patient beds needed for emergency admissions. An additional \$91 million over three years is being invested through the AHS priorities task force to expand emergency treatment spaces, add hospital and surgical capacity, reduce alternate level of care volumes, and expand virtual and out-of-OR care pathways. Budget 2026 also includes \$63 million over two years to rapidly develop shelved and vacant space in existing facilities, allowing hospitals to rapidly expand acute-care capacity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** On the amendment the hon. member for Edmonton . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** Question.

**The Speaker:** Okay. I just don't want to cut anybody off by accident. So not on the amendment. There is nobody.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

**An Hon. Member:** It was close, though.

**The Speaker:** Pardon me? You know, you've got to let me do this, all right?

On the main motion as amended, Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Haji:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Motion 512, the health reporting. I really express my gratitude to the MLA for Calgary-Klein for bringing up and working on such an incredible motion. It's timely, it's important, and it is really, really well thought of. It's called Motion 512, and I would like to call this

motion Mr. Sreekumar's motion because it is so important that we understand and appreciate the reactions and the pieces of policies that we need to put in place when such tragedies happen, and that was tragic. Usually delays in diagnosis cause death, logistical challenges of not reaching the hospital cause death, denial of your condition, of not going to the hospital causes death, but Mr. Sreekumar was none of those three categories.

Mr. Speaker, hospitals across Alberta remain underfunded. They are over capacity, preventing Albertans from accessing emergency and urgent care without excessive delays. The amendment called it pressure. That's why I don't support the amendment. This is not pressure. If it is pressure, it is because of lack of capacity. These delays are not theoretical. These delays and the outcomes they lead to: basically, it causes death. That's what happened to Mr. Sreekumar. He was at the hospital. He waited eight hours, not because the front-line workers were not aware. When people cannot get timely care, as happened to Mr. Sreekumar, they delay or avoid seeking help altogether but increasing the risk of preventable illness and injury and death.

The ongoing health care in this province did not happen overnight. The government has responsibility to do something about it. It's the result of a perfect storm of poor policy and lack of listening to Albertans. As Albertans express every single time, health care is their number one priority. This government is watching worker burnout, underfunding, and infrastructure deficits. When was the last hospital built in Edmonton? That is not accidental and that's not overnight. There was a hospital that was planned, but it was cancelled. That is not accidental. That's planned.

A shortage of family doctors and long-term care beds, a return of communicable disease outbreaks are what we are seeing. End of last year we had seen measles outbreaks as the province became per capita one of the leading in North American jurisdictions. We have seen the return of outbreaks of TB in our inner-city populations. We have seen low immunization rates that have led to a record death toll in the last flu season. In addition to that, the disruption and the fragmentation of our public health care system under the auspices of reorganization. Even a system that still has not yet recovered from the pandemic consequences leads to some of the challenges that we see.

The minister repeatedly mentioned that it's not underfunded compared to when the NDP government was in office. You don't compare it to 10 years. You compare to the demand. That's how you know whether it is underfunded or not. You just don't pick a random year without taking into consideration what leads to the underfunding. It is the demand that requires more health care workers. It's the demand that requires diverse health workers that work together. It's the demand that requires the number of beds needed. It's the demand that requires funding. This government is not meeting that demand, and Albertans need to know. That's what Motion 512 is seeking, Mr. Speaker.

When hospitals operate beyond safe capacity, do you know what is compromised, Mr. Speaker? It's patients. Instead of stabilizing and strengthening the public system, the UCP government continues to push privatization and has broken the health care system into multitude numbers that become very difficult to navigate through. None of these changes are improving access to care for Albertans today. That is what is in debate today.

What we need is to make sure that this motion is considered as it is instead of changing things like "adverse events" or the hospitals are "under pressure," not underfunded. I think the motion has been well thought out. It has been put together as it is. I think it requires, without an amendment, the members of this Assembly to vote as it is.

5:30

Emergency department visits exceed 2 million every year and are rising faster than the population growth. An estimated 20 to 25 per cent of the emergency department visits, Mr. Speaker, should be managed in the primary health care system, but the care simply is not available and is not accessible to Albertans. That is where you create a bottleneck where people have to go to the emergency departments.

Hospitals across this province are operating well above safe capacity, with some reaching as high as 115 per cent. I wouldn't call that a pressure. When you cancel a hospital building, when you don't invest in infrastructure, when you take away those resources from where they are needed, Mr. Speaker, that is not pressure; it is underfunding. I don't think that this motion needs to be amended from "underfunded" to "pressure." We need to call it what it is. We know anything above 85 per cent is associated with hallway medicine, longer waits, and worse outcomes. The 15 per cent buffer is reserved for incidents, whether it is an outbreak or whether it is something else that comes up, so that the hospitals or the health care system can accommodate that, but when you're already 30 per cent more than that, then it's not under pressure; it is underfunded by design.

Alberta needs an estimated 250 to 350 additional emergency physicians just to meet the national staffing recommendations, yet shortages persist across all health care professions. Mr. Speaker, the minister mentioned as well that there is an acute-care workforce strategy. Well, we have seen quite a number of workforce strategies that were put in place, but that is not reflected in the day-to-day operations of our hospitals and across the continuum of our health care system. AHS employs 111,000 people, but still, because of the demand, there is a shortage. There are recruitment bottlenecks. There is confusion over and over that is happening in the system that doesn't attract more workforce. You can develop a strategy, but what needs to happen is some actions that Albertans can see that a difference is being made.

Conditions on the job for those who are working in emergency, because of this underfunding, deteriorate, and 43 per cent of the nurses reported experiencing physical violence. [A timer sounded] Therefore, I ask members to support the motion.

**The Speaker:** You've got to stop when the bell rings.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree with my colleague from Edmonton-Decore that the motion was good as it was. It's unfortunate that we cannot support it now with these changes from the government. It's unfortunate that we heard such incredibly cold and bureaucratic remarks from the members of government, from the member that brought forward this amendment, quibbling with words.

The Member for Calgary-Klein brought forward a motion that reflected the reality of what Albertans are seeing. They are seeing deaths, Mr. Speaker. Albertans aren't at home talking at their kitchen table weeping with their families over adverse events. They are talking about the real things they are seeing in our health care system. It's unfortunate that we have a government that cannot actually speak in real terms to Albertans about what they're seeing on the ground. They fall back on this bureaucratic word salad, on promises of beds that might materialize years down the road, excuses but not one word of actual sympathy, of recognition, of humility to Albertans who, frankly, deserve an apology for what they've had to endure after seven years of this government and the sad state of our health care system under their care.

You know, as my colleague was saying, Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. Our system is underfunded. The minister of hospitals said: well, hey, we're funding better than the NDP did when they were in government. Every year our government provided for population growth and inflation. Every year. This government has not. They have failed. They are below in funding per capita. It has dropped under this government. Under Premier Kenney they ceased that practice. They cut.

Now, they will brag, Mr. Speaker, and they will talk about record funding because if you add \$1 to that budget, that is a record because it is higher than it's ever been before. But the fact is that they are underfunding the system for the level of population growth, for the level of demand, for the number of seniors, for the increase in folks that have complex health challenges. This government is refusing to provide the funding that's needed.

Hospitals, Mr. Speaker, are absolutely over capacity. It's unfortunate that this government, again, is allergic to words that simply tell the truth. They say: oh, there's a bit of pressure. Albertans sitting in the ER at the Royal Alex don't just go: oh, gee, there seems to be a bit of pressure. They see the reality. I've seen the e-mails. I've seen the social media posts. Folks are very clear. This system is broken, and it's broken because this government has underfunded it, has refused to support it properly, and then, on top of that, created four times the bureaucracy. Again, this government has never met an actual crisis they weren't willing to drown in red tape, in bureaucratic bafflelegab. The fact is that they amended this motion because they're afraid of the truth.

The minister talked about, you know, how proud he is of the steps they're taking towards transparency and accountability, sharing data with Albertans. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that Albertans have never had less information about what's happening in their health care system, actual data and statistics, never had less because this government gutted it. They took it offline. They hid it behind closed doors. They buried it.

The information Albertans do get has never been more heavily torqued and twisted, cherry-picked. This is not a government that plays honestly with Albertans about the state of their health care system. They tore apart the accountability that existed, and now they want folks to pat them on the back for restoring a little bit more. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that what we're going to get from this government: I'm not sure I'd trust it.

Though I guess I have to admit that they are at least a little bit honest because they do honestly show that wait times have grown under their government for surgeries. Despite the fact that they claim they are spending record amounts on surgeries, Mr. Speaker, and they brag about all the private facilities they're funding, publicly delivered surgeries are dropping. Wait-lists are growing. Those are the realities, but they don't want to have reality in this motion. They don't want to acknowledge reality with Albertans because they know the health care system has only gotten worse since they took control and particularly in the last three years under their, quote, unquote, refocusing.

The fact is that, Mr. Speaker, we have tried – you know, the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo talked about: well, we want to be collaborative. If they wanted to be collaborative, then they would have met with the Member for Calgary-Klein and asked her if she minded them making these changes. They would have had a discussion. They did not.

Also, Mr. Speaker, if they wanted to be collaborative and truly live up, then they would have passed Bill 201 back in December 2022 when it was brought forward by our then Leader of the Opposition, Rachel Notley. That was a piece of legislation that would have actually delivered on providing transparency and data for Albertans. Bill 201, the Public Health Care Delivery Standards

Act, would have required mandatory public tracking, would have required the establishment of publicly reported tracked service standards for emergency medical services, primary care, and essential surgeries. Emergency room wait times weren't on that list because we didn't have the crisis that we have now. This government created that later.

It would have required a mandatory action plan. If the public targets for those standards were missed, the government would be required to develop a formal, actionable plan to address the shortcomings, not announcements, Mr. Speaker, about beds that they might build four or five years down the road. That's not going to do anything to deal with the real overcapacity or, in the government's parlance, pressure.

5:40

Bill 201 would have empowered the Health Quality Council of Alberta to set those standards through actual consultations with health care workers, patients, and communities. Now, of course, Mr. Speaker, the chair that was appointed at the Health Quality Council of Alberta, Dr. Raj Sherman, quit. He tried to work collaboratively with this government after running for a seat with this government. He quit and walked away, and he is now one of their most vocal critics in terms of the mess they have made of the health care system and, indeed, of the death that we saw in the ER in December. He has been vocally critical of the minister of hospitals for his lack of action, lack of follow through.

The few concrete actions they promised, Mr. Speaker, the minister still has not delivered. It was a simple one: just have ER doctors posted to help with triage. They promised that within a couple of months. Here we are: the month of May. Not one of those doctors is in an ER. We have hollow promises. We have empty words. Albertans have soaring wait times. They have family members that are suffering. They have fear and anxiety about whether the services and the support they need is going to be there when they need it. This government's concern, Mr. Speaker, on that isn't saying: "Yeah. You're right. We need to do better. Let's see how we can do that." It's to quibble with words and emotion so they can feel better.

Mr. Speaker, I don't need this government to feel better. I need them to feel significantly worse, because then, maybe, it would teach them actual, concrete action to improve the health care system for Albertans, to address the crisis, but this is a government that doesn't believe in that. You know, perhaps if every Albertan in an ER room was an Alberta separatist, they might get the Premier's attention. Perhaps if they could couch it in a conspiracy theory about voting machines or vaccines, then this government would consider that something worthy of taking action on quickly, but no. Maybe if it was a library book that they didn't like, then we would actually see some action taken, but no.

What we see is that when it comes to the real things Albertans need, real action to improve the health care system, to address the soaring wait times in our ERs, to ensure Albertans have actual access to primary care, this government drags its feet. They slow walk. They hold pressers. They make empty announcements. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Klein for trying to put forward some truth . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member, it's been 55 minutes, I'm told, since we started dealing with this private member's motion, which means the mover has up to five minutes to close debate should the mover choose to do so.

**Member Tejada:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To say that I am disappointed is an understatement. It is clear to Alberta New Democrats that this UCP government is clearly unwilling to have a crucial

conversation. It's a great book. They should look it up: *Crucial Conversations*. Those are honest conversations, and they are unwilling to have those crucial conversations about our health care system. In this case specifically we are seeing in real time their refusal to even acknowledge the crisis hitting our emergency departments, never mind addressing it. The amendments that the UCP members proposed go directly against the spirit of the motion as I proposed it.

I'll review the key components of Motion 512 that their amendments have undone, removing the part of the motion that acknowledges that hospitals are underfunded and overcapacity. For this round of amendments they refuse to admit long-term neglect by this government. As well as just underfunding in general, they have cancelled the construction of hospitals, namely the south Edmonton hospital, also the children and adolescent mental health hospital. I will say that it is beyond unfortunate and disappointing to see the minister taking a victory lap on the number of alternative care cases in hospital, because what we know is that those cases have gone down because more folks died in long-term care due to a lack of vaccination and the worst flu season in Alberta's history. Denying the reality that Albertans have died. This is another important part of the motion that they've now stricken out. Denying the reality that Albertans have died before being able to access medical care, and instead offering to call them "adverse events."

Here's the big one, Mr. Speaker. They moved to strike out "public reporting for Albertans" and replace it with what I will call weasel words, or nice sounds to make it sound like they might be accountable eventually. Unfortunately, most Albertans have learned not to trust the UCP on health care. Internal reviews instead of regular public reporting sounds a lot like sweeping serious incidents under the rug and not being accountable to Albertans.

The minister opposite also congratulated this government for creating dashboards, and honestly, Mr. Speaker, it is on brand for this

UCP government to tell us about dashboards, informational websites that don't acknowledge a crisis and don't actually solve the problem. Albertans deserve a health care system that puts people first. They deserve a government that is transparent, and I would recommend radical transparency from this government, although I don't have high hopes for that. They deserve transparency when things go wrong, and they deserve a government willing to face hard facts and fix what is broken.

What this government would like to do now with these amendments is for Albertans to continue to suffer through their deliberate undermining and underfunding of the health care system and run far away from accountability on patient deaths on their watch. It is disrespectful to our health care workers. It is disrespectful to the memory of that father who deserved to feel safe in an emergency room, deserved to be seen in time, and deserved to spend the rest of his life with his family.

For this reason, Mr. Speaker, I urge all members of this Assembly to vote against Motion 512 as it was amended by the UCP members, as it essentially undoes the entire motion, and I encourage all members of this House to do the same.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, Motion Other than Government Motion 512 as amended is before us.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 512 as amended carried]

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

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the work that we've done today in private members' business, I move that the Assembly be adjourned until 1:30 on Tuesday, May 5.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:49 p.m.]



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