

Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

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Day 71

The Honourable Ric McIver, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 31st Legislature
Second Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m. Monday, November 23, 2026

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading
Bill 41
Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (No. 2)

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

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Great to see everybody this evening. I rise today to move second reading of Bill 41, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (No. 2).

The legislation proposes practical, targeted changes to laws governing pensions, securities, insurance, taxes, and government programs. Together, if passed, these amendments would provide more choice for retirees and their pensions, expand access to flexible insurance options, implement stronger protection for investors, and create more tax and policy certainty for industries to keep Alberta the best place to live, work, and invest, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I'm happy to move it. I hope it will enjoy the support of the House, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Ellingson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to speak to the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (No. 2). Regrettably, I'm going to have to change the first couple of lines because I thought the minister was going to say something, but he didn't. [interjection] Well, no. I will just say that I was going to make a comment about how ministers of Finance normally introduce their bills, but he completely changed the page. So we'll talk about how the bill amends 15 pieces of legislation.

I will say that I'm becoming accustomed to that financial statutes amendment acts do tend to wade into many other pieces of legislation and many amendments. I will say, Mr. Speaker, that this government has kind of made a habit of, you know, fixing and cleaning up their own legislation as a mainstay of the legislative process here in Alberta. I'm also starting to lose track of the legislation and amendments of legislation that this government has consumed to advance their no-fault insurance scheme. That's what half of this bill is. Out of those 15 amendments, seven of them have to do with no-fault insurance, amendments and cleanups for this new automobile insurance scheme, a scheme that they kind of came up with on their own. As is typical with this government, not a ton of broad-based stakeholder consultation when it came to all of the changes in insurance. I mean, the government did commission reports to understand what the alternatives were to deliver low insurance premiums to Alberta, and those studies returned pretty clear findings.

Mr. Speaker, the least cost auto insurance across several jurisdictions was public auto insurance, like that found in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia. Regrettably, this government doesn't pay attention to research or independent reports, kind of like ignoring the majority report of the independent boundary commission earlier this year. Unfortunately, after all these years, commissioned studies, innumerable legislative changes, this government still isn't delivering cheaper auto insurance for Albertans. Insurance companies have already started to advertise how rates for Albertans are going to go down in 2027, once the no-fault system really starts to come into play. Interestingly, those ads don't mention the years of increases to auto insurance that this government built up leading up to this moment, increases that have moved Alberta into a special club in Canada. Along with Ontario, Alberta and Ontario are the most expensive auto insurance jurisdictions in this country. The promises being advertised, that will presumably come in 2027, won't make up for the year-over-year increases since this government was elected in 2019.

Mr. Speaker, in case we're wondering why we're talking about all of this, I'll just go back to the bill itself, that seven of those 15 amendments are moving things around between one act and another to further enable these changes needed to be made to finish the enablement of the no-fault auto insurance.

This government loves to step back in time, so I'll take a moment to step back in time. When the Alberta NDP were in government, we placed a 5 per cent rate cap increase on auto insurance in 2017 and 2018. The UCP removed that cap in 2019, and then when it appeared that increases and premiums were getting out of control and they were hearing a lot from Albertans about how expensive auto insurance was, they introduced the good driver rate cap in 2024; 3.7 per cent. Insurance companies were not happy with the amount of profit that they could make, and so that rate cap was increased to 7.5 per cent in 2025 and a further 7.5 per cent in 2026. The result is that rates have increased by approximately 25 per cent under this UCP government.

The UCP manufactured an auto insurance cost problem that they then needed to fix. Enter no-fault insurance. Some drivers may see a decrease in premiums. Not enough of a decrease to make up for those previous increases, and to get those supposed savings, Albertans are sacrificing service. They will no longer have the legal right to pursue just recovery from damages in an accident, unless of course, Mr. Speaker, the at-fault party is found to have broken the law in causing the accident. Now, there is a tribunal, but the members of that tribunal are government appointed. Albertans don't get a say, and so here we are. Countless hours spent on innumerable bills and amendments, and Albertans are no better off. And after this bill Albertans are no better off.

I'll make a final comment on those ads promising lower rates. They don't include the rate cap increases that were approved for 2027, so while there's lots of talk and bluster about how insurance premiums are going to go down, insurance companies are approved to increase rates by 5 per cent across their entire book of business, and they're also approved to increase rates by up to 10 per cent for any individual driver. Promising decreases while also securing the right to increasing premiums, to me seems interesting. Driver beware, Mr. Speaker. Some Albertans may experience increases in 2027.

Mr. Speaker, with this box checked – auto insurance, check – the UCP can return to really important things like counting the number of flagpoles in front of schools. I mean, gosh, I hope they're going to go back and amend the design budgets for the promised schools yet to be built to include funding for flagpoles and all the gymnasiums that are going to be needed now that every student is mandated to take phys ed through grades 10, 11, and 12.

This bill also makes changes to several other acts, including the Employment Pension Plans Act, the Income and Employment Supports Act, and the Provincial Health Agencies Act. The changes to the employment pensions act increases access to variable life annuities. We've actually talked about this in the House at a previous time on another bill. On the surface this appears to be a good thing, kind of like matching longevity and the risk factors to

longevity and the recipients receiving payments for life, but there's a give and take here, Mr. Speaker.

7:40

In doing so, pension payments might go up and down with the markets or the value of the funds of that pension, so a retiree living through a market downturn as we experienced in 2008, again in 2021, might suddenly find themselves living with much less. Instead of having a predictable payment that's the same every month, it may move up and down with the markets. A sudden decline in pension payments for a retiree living on low income and relying on those benefits might be financially catastrophic.

Let this bill debate be a cautionary note to those who are approaching retirement in Alberta. Everybody should research and understand the options before them, the options being represented, and consider the pros and cons and maybe seek advice from others before you make any decisions about your own personal pension payouts.

Now, let's also remember that – so we're talking about retirees with these pension payouts – at the same time this government abandoned families and retirees living in life lease buildings that went bankrupt. Let's also remember that this government has increased the copay amount for prescription drugs and made the government the last payer and the private plans the first payer. So seniors may be worse off with the government paying worse off as now their own benefits plans may be exhausted six months into the year. Then, because the government is the second payer now, the retiree has to be the first payer because their plan is exhausted.

The government isn't making life any easier for seniors. This bill doesn't make life any easier for seniors. And the changes to the Provincial Health Agencies Act, in the words of government staff, simply remove duplication in auditing when a provincial health corporation is auditing statements that are also audited in the consolidated statements of the parent health agency.

So let's pause for a moment here. A government that somehow lets a $5,400 booze cruise receipt go through as a taxi expense is now removing the need for health corporation financial audits. A government that missed their own self-imposed deadline for financial reporting by four months is reducing the need for oversight in financial reporting. Let's be reminded that the deadline was missed because of all the time that the government needed to figure out what was happening with all the deck chairs moving and all the changes in health care in Alberta. Now we're reducing financial oversight for health care.

These changes in Bill 41 aren't making wait times in emergency rooms shorter, so while Albertans are struggling to get access to public health care, the government's response is to create two-tiered American-style health care and reduce the oversight required for financial reporting as we see in this bill.

Mr. Speaker, the government is blind to the needs of Albertans. This government is blind to the fact that Albertans don't trust them. That lack of trust came through loud and clear in the referendum, especially in questions 6 through 9. The voters of this province voted against the Premier's request to abolish the Senate. They voted against the Premier's request to opt out of federally funded programs, letting them spend the money on whatever they please. The voters voted against provincial laws taking priority over federal laws, and they did so because they don't trust this government. A government that is not trusted by the people should not be reducing financial oversight reporting by health corporations.

Instead of actually dealing with the affordability, they spend years on an auto insurance scheme that doesn't save money for Albertans. Instead of helping seniors with the costs, they actually make costs more expensive and on the sidelines with this bill tinker with pension plans.

Again, I will say, Mr. Speaker, that all retirees out there should pay attention to changes and tinkering with their pension plans and be very well aware of what they're being offered and what that means for them in the rest of their life. Instead of actually improving health care, Mr. Speaker, this government dismantles it. They implement two-tier, U.S.-style private health care and remove some of the oversight and financial reporting. I'm sorry for all the staffers that put in so much time and effort on this bill because it doesn't make Albertans better off. With everything we do in this House, we should be thinking about making Albertans better off.

Albertans deserve better, and they will get better with an Alberta NDP government. Thank you.

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

Member Gurinder Brar: Onion, Mr. Speaker, if you try to remove every shell of an onion one by one, and you try to find onion somewhere in the onion by removing the shell, you won't be able to find it because the shells were the onion. Just like that this UCP government is removing the shell of public health care. They're removing the shell of public education. They're removing the shell of pensions, and they're trying to find Alberta somewhere in there.

These things are Alberta, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is about public health care. Alberta is about public education. Alberta is about making sure there are strong public services available to every single Albertan whenever they need it, but this government is trying to remove the shells one by one and making life unaffordable, bringing in a two-tier, American-style private health care system.

Not building schools. Kids are travelling 45 minutes one way every single day just to get into overcrowded complex classrooms, Mr. Speaker. That's the state of public education in this province under this UCP government.

Two years back, Mr. Speaker, myself, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall were in Skyview, a community in my riding. There were cameras, media all over. We were not walking into the press conference that we organized. We were walking into a press conference that the community members organized on their own. When we went there we heard one young lady speaking, and she mentioned that an insurance company had quoted her and her family $21,000 a year. This is the same community that went through three consecutive hailstorms. People's homes were shattered. Their cars were shattered.

On top of that insurance companies were forcing people to either pay insurance premiums that were completely unimaginable and unaffordable or just to be homeless. When I say homeless, I mean when you don't have insurance and your mortgage is up for renewal or you're planning on changing your house and you don't have insurance, you end up being homeless. This is what insurance companies were doing in my riding. That's the story that we heard from that woman. All media outlets covered that story. That's not just one story, Mr. Speaker. There are countless stories in my neighbouring riding of Calgary-Bhullar-McCall, Calgary-Falconridge, Calgary-North, Calgary-North West as well. These are the people who are working hard, paying their fair share, doing everything that they can to afford groceries, to pay the rent, and to pay for other life expenses.

7:50

Young students, I have talked to many of them. One of those young students is my niece. She works at McDonald's right across

the street. She works double shifts sometimes because she needs to pay the tuition costs. She's taking a year off because she said that she wants to pay for her education on her own. She's working shifts almost every single day, sometimes in Cityscape, sometimes she travels to Deerfoot mall McDonald's to work there. She works hard. The problem is that this government lowered the minimum wage for young students. This government has increased the tuition costs. This government has increased the insurance costs. She can't afford to buy a car, so she takes my uncle's car to go to work. Sometimes we have to go there and exchange the cars when my uncle needs that.

This is what young students are going through in this province. It's not their fault. They're working hard. They are working honestly. They are just trying to get the basic things that this province has always promised: education. Not all the students, not all the young people in this province were born with silver spoons. But they had one promise from this province, that this province will offer them the best education in the world that they will be able to afford. But that seems like a distant dream for those young people. It's hard.

My colleagues and our leader, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, were in a meeting with students from Mount Royal. They were sharing their life stories. They were sharing how affordability is impacting the mental health of students. In speaking the other day, I also raised this in the Assembly. When students are dealing with mental health issues, because they are unable to afford education, they are unable to afford insurance, they are unable to pay the rent at the end of the month, it's hard for them to concentrate in the class, to be good at the studies. If they are not good at what they're supposed to be good at, it impacts their future, it impacts their lives, it impacts their livelihoods, Mr. Speaker, and that further escalates into their mental health issues.

While the government continues to say that when they will have more money, when they will get revenue, that means better education, that means better health care, that means a more affordable life, we are not seeing that. This government has money. It's not that they don't have the money. The only problem is their priorities. They do not plan. They do not want to invest in public education. They do not want to invest in public health care. They do not want to invest in the future of future generations, Mr. Speaker. All the bills that are related to financial statutes should be about making life better for all Albertans. This is not the personal money of any of us. It's the money of Albertans. It's their taxes that they pay. It is the royalty that we get from oil and gas. It is Albertans' money. What is stopping us from investing in Albertans? What is the use of a rich government when the citizens are poor?

Mr. Speaker, a woman came to my office last week, and she is dealing with disabilities. She has two kids, single mom, and she is working hard, as much as she can, to put food on the table for her kids. After meeting me, she was supposed to take her elder son to a soccer game, but as she was sitting right in front of me, she was sharing that she doesn't have enough money to pay the rent at the end of the month. She was telling me that she has cancelled the Netflix subscription that was the only source of entertainment she had for her kids and for herself. She told me that she is unable to afford insurance, and she has just one car. That's the life that people are going through. It doesn't matter how many billions of surplus we have. It doesn't matter how many billions we have sitting in investments or in our bank accounts. If it doesn't help Albertans, those billions are just numbers.

What is suffering are the real lives of people, Mr. Speaker, and lives are always more important than the numbers. Affordability is not the luxury that Albertans are asking for. When young people ask that they need to be paid fairly, they're not asking for 200 bucks an hour. They're asking for a minimum wage that they can live by. When they are asking that there should be lower insurance, that doesn't mean that they don't want to pay insurance. They just want it to be affordable. When they're asking that they want education to be affordable, they're not asking for free education, even though it is not a bad idea. It is a good idea to give free education because members from the other side always say that it is European-style health care that they are bringing. Why not the European-style university system in Alberta? When those young people ask for affordable education, they're not asking for some luxury. They're asking for basic needs, basic help from this government.

Freedom is what they're asking for, because affordability is not just about saving money. It's about freedom. When you make a decent wage, when you can afford the lifestyle, you are free from poverty. When you have a roof on top of your head and insurance that will cover that roof in case something happens, like a hailstorm in my riding, you are free from homelessness. When you have freedom, Mr. Speaker, you have a better future. If this government loves to talk about freedom, give people the freedom that they're asking for. A strong public health care system, a strong public education system, and a strong system that protects people from natural disasters: that's what makes people free. That's what brings freedom to the lives of the people.

I'm not sure what kind of freedom they talk about, because when they talk about freedom of speech then they introduce time allocation motions, which is contradictory to what they talk about. If you're really serious about freedom, free people from poverty. Free people from homelessness. Give people the freedom to choose a better future. That is the freedom this government should be focused on.

Is it possible, Mr. Speaker? Of course it is possible. There are many jurisdictions in the world that have eradicated poverty with good policy. There are many jurisdictions that have strengthened the public education system and are producing the world-class minds. There are jurisdictions in the world which have invested heavily in the future of their future generations, and they have freed people from poverty. They have given the people freedom.

8:00

Mr. Speaker, I come from that part of the world where people live in – I've seen people living in misery. I have seen people working 14 to 15, 16 hours a day, yet not able to afford food, yet not able to afford the roof on top of their head. Travelling to even a nearby city for them is a distant dream. They are not free people, but here I have seen people working minimum wage jobs or a little bit better than minimum wage jobs and still able to save some money and travel the world, travel across the world, meet new people, discover . . . [Member Brar's speaking time expired]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Ms Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise and discuss a few things in terms of my thoughts and concerns, quite frankly, about Bill 41, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (No. 2). As was mentioned previously by my colleague from Calgary-Foothills, this is a bill that amends something around the area of 15 different acts, so it is indeed quite the omnibus. While I certainly do understand that some of those changes are fairly simple changes to language ensuring wording is consistent, that one current act doesn't supersede another one inadvertently or that the tenets of one don't contradict another, the fact of the matter is, though, this bill does indeed have some consequential implications.

That's what I'm going to focus on today, some of those consequential implications, in particular, about those sections of the bill which deal with Alberta's new care-first auto insurance. That's something which, as my colleague also referred to, takes up the majority of space in this lovely 259-page omnibus.

We know that care first is going into effect in a matter of weeks, we know this is the final bill in a suite of bills, and we know that there have already been a number of regulations that have been released behind the scenes, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we should also know that the folks at the centre, Albertans who drive, are talking about what all of this will mean for them. They're talking about auto insurance prices in the middle of an affordability crisis. We also know that insurance companies are getting ready for this new way of doing things, as they should because, indeed, it does mean a full-scale change to the way in which all Albertans and those who serve them go about dealing with auto insurance.

As my colleague also talked about, we know that our NDP government, years ago, put a cap on insurance rates. That was a cap that helped out Albertans, that helped them to manage when insurance prices just kept going up and up and up. We also know that cap was lifted, Mr. Speaker, and we also know that rates have since skyrocketed.

Certainly, all of us who talk to constituents on a regular basis understand how much of an issue those rising insurance rates have become because when you take those rising insurance rates together with all the other things that have gone up – food, utilities, the buying of a car, whether it's used or new – the fact that those insurance rates have skyrocketed – I think we're something like second-highest in Canada at the moment, but also I believe we're actually the winner in terms of the actual percentage in terms of how much our rates have skyrocketed over the last number of years. That certainly isn't a competition I would want all Albertans to win. Unfortunately, it does appear that at the end of the day our insurance rates have done nothing but go up.

As a result, Mr. Speaker, Albertans are having to make some really tough choices. When they go to buy that new car or that used car, perhaps for themselves or their child, they have to think about: do I opt for the simplest of all choices? Do I opt just for that $1 million or $2 million liability? Can I afford to add some or all of those comprehensive items? It's a hard thing when you have to make choices like that because, after all, it is about safety, safety for you and safety for your family and safety for those around us.

Right now the average auto insurance in this province is something like $1,903 per year, and it's estimated, we hear, that the new plan will save Albertans somewhere between $200 or $300 in its first year, but of course we don't really know. We don't know if that's about basic or comprehensive insurance, Mr. Speaker. Those are estimates because this is a completely, entirely new way of doing things.

There is, however, still room for insurance premiums to rise and because of that, even if you are saving that $200 or $300, to my mind, that actually means that that $200 or $300 savings can be wiped out relatively quickly, which means little to no real savings for Albertans in that first year despite claims otherwise.

Right now what's underpinning all of this, Mr. Speaker, is that because it's so new, we don't really know what the implications of this new system will be. We know that it's a made-in-Alberta approach. We know that there's nothing to compare it with in this country. We also, of course, know that there are some similarities between the B.C., Manitoba, and Saskatchewan public insurance.

However, there are also many differences, Mr. Speaker, in terms of both of what's included as well as what's left out. What that all means is that none of this is without risk, particularly for the Albertans that we are here to serve. With those year-over-year increases since the UCP formed government, will Albertans really see a rollback worthy of celebration? I'm thinking probably not.

Albertans deserve better. I'll remind folks here that at the moment there is just so much we don't know about this new form of insurance, how it will actually roll out, what that will actually mean, how it will affect Albertans in two months, six months, a year from now, and also what it will mean for insurers and the way in which they do business.

Because of that, I think that there are some important considerations that we all need to keep in mind, Mr. Speaker, because we don't know who is likely to see the most in terms of savings. We don't know what this will mean for different types of drivers; if you're a new driver, or if you are a senior driver. We don't know what this new way of doing things will mean for differing geographical areas, Grande Prairie versus Edmonton versus Calgary versus Cardston versus Lacombe.

We don't know what effects continuing changes in weather patterns and climate change might have on those underwriting that insurance for us. We don't know if they can actually fulfill what they've promised us they will. We don't know what this will really mean for folks who are catastrophically injured, if it will be an easy process, a hard process, or somewhere in the middle. We don't know what it will mean for folks a year or so out of retirement or who are in the middle of retirement but who may suffer a serious injury.

We don't know whether the tribunal will work as it should, and I have in my head the fact that the teaching commission took well over a year to actually get things into gear, Mr. Speaker, before it started hearing from its first applicants. We don't know that just because we might see some savings in January, that savings will continue to grow over the next number of years for all Albertans.

We don't know if we can trust what the government is saying, Mr. Speaker, and particularly in the case of care first, it seems that the scale might be tipped a wee bit in favour of insurers rather than in favour of Albertans.

Certainly, if we're going on past performance, Mr. Speaker, I think we are right to be wary because this is a government that refused to follow its own law and provide gas relief for Albertans months ago and, instead, pursued their own $100 rebate scheme.

If e-mails to my office are any indication, Mr. Speaker, that one went down like the proverbial lead balloon plummeting to earth. That's because far too many folks had to give out far, far too much personal information, and not only that; there were very many folks who had trouble even accessing the application itself, so many folks gave up.

Though I will admit – and this is where I'll deviate a little bit from care first – it is appropriate to see legislation from refundable tax credits directly from the CRA in this legislation. You know, one knows that had this been in place, I imagine things would have gone much more smoothly where that rebate was concerned. Folks wouldn't have missed out.

But then, again, Mr. Speaker, the UCP government could simply have decided to follow their own rules in the first place and remove the gas tax months earlier when they were supposed to. That would have solved this particular issue as well, something that would have benefited every single Albertan at the pump.

But as I said, this new model, which differs from other models in other Canadian jurisdictions, is untested. It's new. That's why it comes not only with uncertainty but, as I alluded to earlier, Mr. Speaker, risk.

8:10

That affordability crisis is one that is felt by Albertans every single day. It is important that government thoroughly address this

crisis, particularly when Albertans' rates are the second-highest in the country, particularly when that percentage, that year-over-year increase, and that idea that right now the average Albertan is paying something like $1,900 a year. In 2020 it was something less than $1,500; a $400, $500 increase. Between 2019 and 2020 alone it rose around $100. That means, Mr. Speaker, for that average Albertan without any claims – without any claims – and assuming the insurer doesn't take that maximum allowable increase, from 2019 through this year, the UCP government – that makes for an average increase of something like $600-ish per year per driver. That's a lot. And that's the average driver. We don't know, as I said earlier, if that includes only the most basic of insurance or if it's comprehensive. What that means is that Albertans, even if they do in fact receive some savings in early 2027, are still further behind than they should be. So I'm wondering, as are my constituents, how exactly this government is planning on mitigating all of these things, all of these concerns, all of these risks.

I've got some questions, Mr. Speaker, about what the plan might be for dealing with the very real issue of allowing insurance companies to have increased determinative powers in terms of what's covered or allowed and what isn't, having to do with medical assessments and how people are cared for medically. From what I understand, insurance companies will be able to choose a third-party provider rather than work with a person's family doctor, perhaps a specialist. So what will that mean in real terms for that individual? We know that there are already, for instance, some instances within the WCB system where third-party providers missed something when they're doing that review of all of those medical files, and that's because – it's quite simple – they might simply not have the full context of that person and their life before the injury, before what oftentimes is a life-altering injury. I worry that this opens the door to care first replicating and mirroring what we know is presently happening in the U.S., which we also know can be absolutely devastating for folks. We have far too many examples from the States in terms of what happens when for-profit companies have anything at all to do with health care. That is really what we're talking about. We're talking about health care and the way in which it's delivered to Albertans who happen to have been in an accident where they were injured.

Section 57 of the bill goes into great detail. It talks about different medical assessors. They have to be health practitioners. We know that there are regulations that have already been established about who it can and cannot be. Section 57(2) under medical assessments notes that an insurer may in accordance with the regulations require an insurer to undergo a medical assessment

> (a) when and as often as the insurer reasonably requires, or
> (b) following a request for a medical assessment made by or on behalf of an . . . [insured], if the insurer agrees that a medical assessment is warranted.

But that's the thing: if the insurer agrees it's warranted. What if there's a difference of opinion between that person's family doctor, their regular health care practitioner, and the insurer? This is where many Americans find themselves right now.

The assessor prepares a report and then sends that on to the insurer. But Mr. Speaker, what if that assessor, no matter their field – and I note that there are certain medical fields that are established in the regulations in terms of who can and cannot be an assessor – what if that person lacks specialized knowledge to truly judge whatever that diagnosis might be? What if that person lacks understanding of what might transpire days, weeks, months, years following that primary assessment? We all know that sometimes things take a very long time to actually show up, but that causality can absolutely be traced back to whatever that event might have been. What if that assessor determines that because of a pre-existing condition, perhaps something like many of us probably in this Chamber have, high blood pressure, was actually the problem? That's actually the reason why they get injured a little bit more than they might otherwise have been. What then for that patient that suffered that injury? Perhaps, again, life-altering.

We already know there are gaps from time to time in terms of what a person's regular practitioner sees. Certainly, when we look to the U.S. for examples, I'm wondering, aside from the reality of the tribunal which, as my colleagues have noted, the minister appoints, where is the legislation that will for sure deliberately protect the patient, Mr. Speaker? There are horrific examples that come out of the U.S. almost every day. Now, certainly, what we're talking about has a much more direct link to health care, but nonetheless their examples are, I believe, relevant if for no other reason than they point to the need to plan for all eventualities.

From a report done December 9 a couple of years ago, there's a person who says: "I was in a motorcycle wreck in which I badly damaged my femur and my knee. I was on the waiting list for a cadaver replacement. When there was finally a match and I went for clearance, I had a cold. My doctor found out it was pneumonia. Given that the surgery from the donor part was time sensitive, my anesthesiologist used a combination of sedatives that were safe given the pneumonia. My health insurance company insisted the anaesthesia was not medically necessary during a surgery in which my knee was being cut open and my femur was being operated on. I appealed, but I lost, and got stuck with an $11,000 bill."

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's only one of very many examples that give me pause and that should, quite frankly, give this government pause. There are limitations with the tribunal, limits in terms of time. There are issues with the need for folks to find their own lawyers. Well, what if they can't afford their own lawyer?

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

Mr. Ip: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 41, Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2026. As my colleagues have remarked already, there's a lot in this bill, this omnibus bill. It amends 15 different pieces of legislation, and certainly there are aspects of this bill that are relatively routine, but I also want to take the opportunity really to highlight some of the patterns that I consistently see in this House by members opposite and by this government. The irony, I have to say, having gone through this piece of legislation, is that the considerable portion of this bill and what it addresses is about fixing the problems that were created by this very government. You know, this is a pattern that I've noticed with this government. What this government likes to do is it likes to take away things from Albertans, give a little back, and make Albertans feel like this government actually cares about them and actually is on their side, when it is this very UCP government that takes away from the most vulnerable Albertans.

It's a classic example, Mr. Speaker, of something called trauma bonding. I'm going to reference a famous Stanford prison experiment because I feel like this is kind of the world that we're living in right now, and I think it will underlie a pattern that is, in fact, quite familiar to members of this House in terms of what we're seeing from this government.

In 1971, there was a very famous psychological study led by Philip Zimbardo. Philip Zimbardo and his team led a six-day simulation of a prison cell. What they did is the first day they took away everything from prisoners. They took their clothes, took away their beds and their blankets, and forced the prisoners to sleep on concrete, and then the second stage of this experiment, they started giving a little bit back. Instead of punishing absolutely every prisoner, guards set up sort of one special privilege cell for at least

three prisoners that were involved in the revolt that had happened because they took everything away. They gave some prisoners back their clothes, and over time gave back some of their privileges.

What this experiment found, interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, is that it actually broke solidarity. It used sort of human psychology and giving back basic human comforts as rewards, and they were able to turn prisoners against each other, breaking their unity. Eventually some of these prisoners saw their captors and saw, frankly, their abusers as folks who would benefit them or who cared about them. Frankly, I reference this particular study because I think there is a pattern here that is very similar to what we're seeing with what's happening in the province right now. I'll reference education funding in particular.

8:20

Over the last seven years we have seen this government consistently make deep cuts to public education, from reducing one of the best funded public education systems in the world all the way to the worst funded in the country. What this UCP government did is they took one of the very, very best early childhood intervention programs anywhere, not only in Canada but the world – if you look at PUF funding, program unit funding, it really was a model that many educational experts had referenced in terms of producing very good outcomes. It took that model program and made deep cuts, so much so that program unit funding is the shell of a program that it once was.

What this government did is they made deep cuts successively over the last seven years, and then they would gradually put some back. They would say: "Oh, well, we're going to address classroom complexity. Here's a little bit of money back. We're going to address class size. Here's a little bit of money back." What the government doesn't actually tell you is that the money that's actually reintroduced in the system is not nearly enough to make up the successive deficits over the years of their weighted moving average formula, for example, and the lack of funding that we've seen relative to growth that we've seen in the province over the past seven years.

The official messaging from the government is, "You know what; we are funding education adequately; we do care about kids," but if you look at their track record, that isn't the case at all. It's this sort of classic example of that experiment I just referenced of taking away from Albertans only to introduce a little back and somehow trying to convince Albertans that this government cares about their well-being. In fact, we know that it's this very government that perpetrated those deep cuts that are targeting vulnerable Albertans, that are not focused, frankly, on the everyday concerns of Albertans.

Having established that pattern, let me talk a little bit about automobile insurance and what I think this bill fails to, frankly, address. You know, I'm sure there are many members of this House that have heard from constituents about the cost of auto insurance over the last number of years. Certainly, in my constituency of Edmonton-South West, it's one of the issues that come up quite frequently when I'm out talking to folks.

I represent a growing part of the city, in fact, one of the fastest growing parts of the province, and many of the communities I represent are what we call new builds in which there's relatively little infrastructure by way of public transit or public transportation. Certainly, the amenities have not kept pace with developments, and so many families who move into new neighbourhoods in Edmonton-South West really have no choice but to own a vehicle. In many cases they actually have to look at two vehicles to be able to get by. Mr. Speaker, it's quite apparent to me, when you look at the policies and the bills that this government have introduced, that they're very much out of touch. They don't seem to really know what everyday Albertans are going through.

I'm going to explain it to them, you know, from the perspective of my constituents. When you're a family with, let's say, two working parents who work in different parts of the city, and you've got to get your children to school and – mind you, many of the children and the families that live in Edmonton-South West are not able to go to the school closest to them because there aren't enough schools. There aren't enough schools that are built in those new and growing neighbourhoods. As much as they'd like to announce schools not once, not twice, but three times and reannounce them and reannounce them over and over again, the reality is that this government is not getting schools built.

In many cases families have to drive their children far away to be able to access school or in some cases child care, so, unfortunately, many of the families in Edmonton-South West do have to drive. When we're looking at the astronomical costs of auto insurance and how much it's risen over the last few years, it is taking a toll on many, many families, particularly in ridings like Edmonton-South West where there are new and fast-growing neighbourhoods.

You know, many families as well in Edmonton-South West have teenagers. We know how incredibly expensive it is for a young person who just got their licence to be able to drive. In fact, for so many young people in this province it has become prohibitively expensive to drive.

I just want to remind this government that I think they have lost sight of just how much a household's income is being taken up by these fairly basic necessities. Right? If you think about, you know, some of the basic expenses that the average family needs, it's your housing, it's your utility bills, it's your mode of transportation. In many cases in Edmonton-South West it's folks who drive. You have your mortgage or your rent, and of course you have the cost of groceries. You have the cost of putting gas in your vehicle, and on top of that, imagine paying thousands and thousands of dollars a year just to insure your vehicle.

I spoke to a young man recently who – and there are multiple cases like this – shared with me that, in fact, he pays about a little over $5,000 for his truck that is worth about $2,000. It actually costs more for the insurance of his truck than the truck itself, and he's not alone. There are many, many young people, you know, in that particular position.

For many families in Alberta there just isn't much discretionary income left at the end of the month. Just imagine receiving a notice from their insurance company that their premiums are going up again despite not having gotten into an accident. I've gotten lots of those e-mails as well, people who have really clean driver abstracts for the last 20 years, and despite not making a claim, despite being responsible drivers, their insurance costs are going up.

I'm saying all of this, Mr. Speaker, because I think it's important to remind members of this House how we got to this point. When the Alberta New Democrats were in power, and my colleagues have referenced this previously as well, the Alberta New Democrats put a cap on auto insurance increases. I think this was one of the critical decisions that this government made that, I think and certainly in hindsight, is an error, continues to be an error. That is that the government made the decision when they came into office in 2019 to remove that cap. For several years it was this government that allowed insurance rates to get out of control.

Between 2019 and 2024 we know that auto insurance rates in this country have gone up by approximately 35 per cent. In some communities, for example in northeast Calgary, those increases were even more significant. In communities like Redstone and Skyview Ranch premiums went up by almost 50 per cent between 2019 to 2023. Certainly, I think I would venture to guess that very,

very few people really anywhere in Alberta would have seen their wages having gone up by 50 per cent over the same period of time. So the reality is that this government made some critical mistakes by removing the cap, and right now what they're doing is they're trying to introduce a bill to fix problems that, frankly, are of their own making.

8:30

It, frankly, wasn't until January 2023 that the UCP government finally brought in a pause. Let me just remind this House that they brought in something called a good driver rate cap at 3.7 per cent in 2024, then increased that cap to 7.5 per cent in 2025 and maintained it at 7.5 per cent this year. You know, again it's a little bit analogous to that experiment I referenced and to the example I gave around education funding. After so many years of allowing auto insurance to go up the way it did, now this government is telling Albertans that they're providing protection to good drivers by allowing their rates to increase only by 7 per cent, which, let me just add, Mr. Speaker, is higher than the rate of inflation.

Let me also remind this House that it was almost about a year ago that I brought forward Motion 504 in this House. Some members may recall that motion in which I asked the government to limit increases in auto insurance premiums to the rate of inflation. You know, it was a very sensible proposition. It was a very reasonable compromise, recognizing that, of course, with a new system that is about to come into effect on January 1, there are increased costs associated with providing insurance but that there also needs to be some protection for the consumer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

No other speakers?

[Motion carried; Bill 41 read a second time]

Bill 40
Electoral Divisions Act

[Adjourned debate November 19: Member Kayande]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Ms Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to move an amendment, please.

The Speaker: Okay. Go ahead.

Ms Wright: Thank you. I'm moving a motion that the motion for second reading of Bill 40, Electoral Divisions Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

> Bill 40, Electoral Divisions Act, be not now read a Second time because the Assembly is of the view that the electoral divisions proposed in the bill would dilute citizens' right to effective representation, which is protected by Section 3 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are many reasons why this act should not be read a second time, not the least of which is that voters should pick their politicians; politicians should not pick their voters. When that happens, I would argue that indeed the end result is a real dilution of representation.

This is at its heart, Mr. Speaker, the process that we are embroiled in in this Bill 40, Electoral Divisions Act, an illegitimate process. We shouldn't be here. We shouldn't be debating this attempt to rig the next election, and that's because this UCP government should have done what all governments before them did: accept the findings, the determinations, the recommendations, and of course the maps of the independent boundaries commission. That is what should have happened. That's what previous Premiers did because they knew that it was not just about tradition; they knew it was about doing the right thing on behalf of all Albertans.

During 19 – my goodness. I've dropped a century. Okay. During 2025-26 our most recent Electoral Boundaries Commission was a commission that spent months, Mr. Speaker, asking Albertans from all across this province what their views were, what they thought, where their community should be, what their concerns were, what their suggestions were. They dug deep. Thousands of Albertans did contribute between the boundary commission's original ask, the commission's interim report, and then that final ask for additional submissions. They spoke with commissioners in public hearings and hotel rooms all across this province. Some provided pictures and full-on presentations. They provided written submissions, too.

The voices of those thousands of Albertans along with the commissioners' expertise, experience, knowledge, and all the other folks they consulted and, I will add, consulted in public: all of that went into the final report that was submitted to this Legislature just a few months ago. That's important.

The Electoral Boundaries Commission was a unique opportunity for Albertans to get involved in what some might think of as a bit of a boring thing, future elections and their maps. But, Mr. Speaker, thousands got involved, and that is absolutely to the credit of all Albertans. It would have been simple, appropriate, and the right thing to do for this UCP government to simply accept its report of what Alberta's boundaries should look like. That was the case under the Alberta NDP and Progressive Conservative governments under Premiers Klein, Stelmach, and Notley. In fact, that's the case in other provinces and territories, too. It's also the case with the federal government.

Here's what Elections Canada has to say about Electoral Boundaries Commissions, Mr. Speaker. I imagine it will sound pretty familiar to all of us here in this place. What they say is:

> The role of the electoral boundaries commissions in the federal redistribution process
>
> Ten independent electoral boundaries commissions – one in each province – are established to revise the electoral district boundaries in their province.
>
> Each commission is composed of three members. It is chaired by a judge appointed by the chief justice of the province and has two other members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Each of the commissions work separately to

> propose a new electoral map for their province by considering [different] criteria [including] average population numbers . . . historical patterns . . . and geographic size of electoral districts. [They] consult with Canadians through public hearings. [They] submit a report on their considerations and propose [an] electoral map to the House of Commons. [Later they] consider objections from members of the House of Commons.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, they

> prepare a final report outlining the electoral boundaries for their province.

As I said, very similar to what our independent Electoral Boundaries Commission did just a few months ago.

Their job, Mr. Speaker, is to propose a new map. Their job is to consult widely and in public. Their job is to submit an interim report based upon what they've heard. Their job is to allow for additional submissions. Finally, their job is to submit a final report based on all of that, and I will emphasize again in particular public submissions. Their job also is to do all of this as transparently and

as publicly as possible. That way Canadians or, in our case, Albertans can see not only their government in action but in a very real sense can in fact see democracy in action. It's the job of government to accept the recommendations even if they don't like them. There's nothing more democratic than making sure that every vote matters and that every Albertan, in this case, is fairly represented in this Legislature.

But that is not what this UCP government decided to do. Instead of accepting the recommendation from the independent boundaries commission, this UCP government decided to pursue an illegitimate process. They created a panel and, I might add, they created not only just the panel but a process that has never before been seen, Mr. Speaker, in this country. That is outrageous. Because they have done this, Albertans' votes are in danger of being watered down. The maps provided by the panel, not the independent boundaries commission, do a disservice to far too many Albertans. This new iteration simply protects the UCP and their cabinet ministers. As I began my address tonight, voters should pick their politicians; politicians should not pick their voters. This is honestly the most basic and fair of all statements, Mr. Speaker. Politicians shouldn't pick their voters.

8:40

We see all too well what happens in other jurisdictions when boundaries are changed by politicians when they are considering their own political self-interest. They are protecting themselves. We only need to look south of the 49th to the United States, to states like Florida, Texas, and Tennessee, but we can also look to other countries as well, Mr. Speaker, countries like Hungary. Following the 2010 election the government of the day very clearly changed the rules and changed their maps to ensure what ended up being four continuous majority governments. That Orbán government did not at all make a secret of what they were doing. But in choosing to manipulate the rules to suit itself, they in a very real way damaged Hungary's democracy, and no doubt along the way they damaged the trust voters might have placed in their government. We shouldn't want that here. Albertans should be able to expect better from the government that they elect.

We have a government that often talks about the culture, the values of Albertans, yet when given the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, decides to act in opposition. What I'm going to talk about is I think a value that almost all of us as Albertans share, and that's one of fairness, the importance of doing things in a fair way. I'm thinking particularly of my grandmothers at the moment. I can see my grandmother, my dad's mom, who was a teacher. She would know exactly what this is, an attempt to circumvent not only the rules which have served Albertans for decades but also thoroughly and completely an example of doing the wrong thing for personal and political gain.

Both my grandmothers had an extraordinarily keen sense of ethics, Mr. Speaker, an extraordinarily keen sense of right and wrong, and they had no trouble at all telling us all when they thought we were doing wrong. They were both extraordinarily strong women. My mom's mom was a person who decided to flip houses before that was cool, and my dad's mom was a teacher in central Alberta. My eight-year-old self knew just how smart both of them were despite the adversities they faced in both their lives. They knew right from wrong, and I know that Albertans do, too. Albertans can see this, all of these actions, this Bill 40 for what they are.

This new map that we're presented with and that we are debating here means that the average urban constituency has about 7,000 more people than rural constituencies do, Mr. Speaker. That's a 14 per cent difference, and that's unfair. Even in some of those gerrymandered districts in the United States they couldn't go above a 5 per cent difference. That means in very real terms a weakening of the value of a vote in very many municipalities in our province.

Again, I know exactly what my grandmothers would have to say about this process. I can see my Grandma Wright sitting straight backed in her wooden chair with her ankles crossed and her lips pursed. She would not appreciate the basic unfairness of what we're discussing here today. That sense of fairness, shared by my grandmothers, is a value shared by all Albertans. That's something that should be respected by this government.

In this instance, it is patently clear that this government, in fact, doesn't respect Albertans enough to provide them with fair electoral maps. If they did, Mr. Speaker, we wouldn't be here. This UCP government – again, it was simple – should have accepted the original boundaries commission report. We should have been done with all of this months ago. Elections Alberta should already be preparing new maps. Instead, the UCP decided their initial recommendations didn't work. So here we are in the midst of something that didn't need to happen and shouldn't have happened.

This new process, as I said before, has never before seen in this country. One does have to wonder if it's what we've heard in debates past, if it's just about making sure we have a couple of extra seats to ensure that things are equitable, for instance, between rural and urban seats. However, when one does look at the maps that we are now discussing, it also does include the seats of UCP cabinet ministers, too, so one does think, Mr. Speaker, that it might have also been about protection of those seats, which is an entirely too cynical and disingenuous approach to a process which is supposed to be wholly independent of the politics of the day. Yet here we are.

Contrary to the work of the independent Electoral Boundaries Commission, we have no idea of so many things in terms of the work of the panel that was struck. We don't know how much it cost. We don't know who they looked to for advice. We don't know the cost to government, much less to Albertans, and that comes after an $85 million plus referendum, Mr. Speaker, in the middle of an affordability crisis. We don't know when we'll know some of this information. We don't have a breakdown of costs.

The fact that Albertans, as I say, have to be looking at this and wondering just what is going on with their democracy is, quite frankly, something shameful. Instead of what was expected – as I say, we shouldn't be here – instead of a truly independent Electoral Boundaries Commission, as Albertans have come to expect over a period of decades, we get this wholly new, created-by-the UCP process.

As one of my colleagues said in a debate earlier, we got a committee for politicians to pick their voters in which we participated in the process because Albertans deserve to see someone fighting for their rights. What we got, Mr. Speaker, was a panel where attempts at transparency were rejected, where cost details were not provided, where knowledge of who was consulted during that entire process was not at all clear. This process that the UCP created was anything but transparent.

Again, we need to contrast that to what actually happened with the Electoral Boundaries Commission all those months ago. If you go on to the Elections Alberta website right now, that's where all the transcripts live. On the Elections Alberta website you can easily find the list of written submissions for both rounds, presentation locations, all of the transcripts for those who presented to the commission in person and all of those thousands of written submissions. That is transparency, and that is what Albertans deserve.

Again, and I cannot stress this enough – honestly, I feel like I'm a teacher in about a grade 1 classroom – it should have been easy to follow the lead of so many other governments that have come

before. The UCP government had the opportunity to do the right thing and simply pass . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, the amendment as introduced by the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview will be referred to as RA1. Are there any other speakers wishing to speak to the amendment? The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In this place we are sent here to represent people. That is a privilege, and it is something that we should value deeply. The act before us contains maps that are a thumb in the eye to that privilege. This UCP government has flagrantly disrespected Albertans, going so far as to strip them of their rights, attack public health care and education, and worsen their cost of living. Their stated reason for this in every case: democracy. It's okay for them to strip away the rights of their citizens, they say, because of democracy. At the end of the day, the right to vote is exactly that. It's a right. If you are a government who is willing to strip away people's rights, you're apparently also willing to strip away their democracy. That is exactly what we see before us today.

So here we are. This amendment suggests that we not proceed with this bill, which I think is absolutely the right course of action, that we should not proceed with this bill because it is a violation of the rights of the citizens of this province. It dilutes the votes of certain people very intentionally to protect certain UCP cabinet ministers.

8:50

This bill ultimately does something we should never do, and that is violate the right to vote. No political party should ever be able to infringe upon the very right which holds them accountable. Voters have the right to fire their representative. In law school we used to say that your solution is the ballot box when the law was written badly, and what that means is that your solution is to find a better government that will write a better law. Mr. Speaker, that is certainly not what we have today. Democracy is supposed to work when the voters pick us and they send us here. We are here today because the UCP wants to do the opposite. They want to pick their voters, and that is wrong. I will not support this bill, and I will support this amendment for exactly that reason. No political party should pick their voters.

With this government, Mr. Speaker, this is a theme. It's a theme to centralize power. They override rights. They cut funding from anyone that doesn't toe their ideological line. They cut funding from anyone that disagrees. They want to control judges. They want to control municipal politicians. They want to control teachers and librarians. The very foundation of our children's learning they want to control. They don't believe in debate, at the end of the day. They don't believe in everyone getting to have their voice and their vote. They believe that they should govern with absolute power. This is a government that thinks they're – I don't know – any sort of autocratic ruler, I guess, and that is incredibly problematic.

And if people stand up for themselves, if they disagree with this government, if they criticize them, even lately this government is so fragile that they will trump up a bogeyman and tell kids to be afraid of them, of teachers, of librarians. I think a government that is telling you to be afraid of those who can help you to think for yourself, can help you to access information, can help you to find out what your values are and how to reflect them as a young person is a government we should be very afraid of.

Let me be clear. The government has signalled its intention to do anything to stay in power for years. In this very Legislature the Minister of Justice amended the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act to remove the legal requirement to respect municipal boundaries. Why? Because the government hoped that doing so would result in a map that diluted the votes and voice of urban and rural Albertans to preserve their partisan advantage. It's a very problematic aim. I might note just for the interest of the Legislature that that was also the moment at which that minister and this government picked 89 seats. When we end up at the end of this, you know, they're very aggrieved about the 89 seats, but they're the ones who picked it. It was their act.

Ultimately, their aim worked in the end, after much procedural hijinks and other problematic behaviour from this government. On average the maps proposed by the UCP panel have 7,000 more voters in urban ridings than rural. That's 14 per cent more, meaning those votes matter less, and it is very targeted. It is very targeted to ensure that certain people's votes are diluted.

The government's own aims in the first instance were thwarted. Despite them removing that, Albertans turned out before the commission in overwhelming numbers to advocate for their rights. In Lethbridge they advocated to keep their two urban ridings. In Calgary, in Edmonton, in municipalities across the province, in many rural areas people came out and advocated for representatives to represent communities of interest. That's how our system works. We come to this place to work it out. The interim report from the commission reflected this input. It wasn't perfect for either side, but it was fair, and ultimately it doesn't matter what either side thinks of it. It's a map for Albertans, for them to feel that they are voting in their neighbourhoods and in their communities, to feel like their vote matters and for their vote to actually matter.

But it's clear that this government didn't love the map, Mr. Speaker, because suddenly something changed. At the second round of public hearings the UCP ministers began presenting hybridized maps and making submissions in favour of hybridized ridings, and the commission began receiving hybridized maps that appeared to originate from the government of Alberta because they were marked with protected codes from the government of Alberta. These maps taken together covered the entire province, and one even appeared to project the expected election results. That's not suspicious at all.

The commission suddenly came back split. The UCP minority delivered their own set of maps which did not reflect the public submissions. One might ask whose opinions their maps did respect, Mr. Speaker, and certainly the government had the most to benefit from here.

Second, the chair of the majority of the commission, Justice Dallas Miller, voiced deep concerns regarding the constitutionality and administrative law problems of the proposed minority maps. Remember, Justice Miller was a UCP appointee. He was so concerned, in fact, that he penned his own addendum and proposed a recommendation with the explicit purpose of preventing the minority maps from being implemented. He proposed that the Legislature increase the number of seats to 91. Well, Mr. Speaker, the government jumped on that and threw out the outcome of a fair process.

I think it's worth noting at this moment that, you know, this has been a slowly evolving thing, as these are so often with the UCP. They start in one place, and then they move, and then they move, and then they move, and they pretend that they don't remember what's happened before.

So we started a sham process. My colleague the MLA for Edmonton-Mill Woods and I tried to bring transparency. We tried to safeguard the most sacred right Albertans have, the right to vote. We tried to make sure the chair of the UCP panel was selected by the normal process, in consultation with the Chief Justice, to avoid partisanship. And it wasn't just us. It was the courts, the Canadian

Bar Association, and the Law Society that all intervened to say that they weren't interested in this irregular process.

We tried to question the compensation that was outside anything a panel like this has seen before. We tried to get access to the costs for Albertans. We tried to make the process more public, more transparent. We tried to ensure that the public could see the deliberations. We moved motions to ensure that when panel members spoke to people, they were required to disclose that. That turns out to have been a very important motion, Mr. Speaker, because the UCP voted it down, and later we get a UCP panel saying that they regret that they weren't able to make other changes because the arguments reached them too late. It's very curious where the arguments came from in light of the fact that this panel did no public consultation and, clearly, did not have reference to the record that the original commission had. Their communities of interest appear to be based on golf courses and other trumped-up considerations that are clearly strained arguments designed to achieve a specific result.

And this panel wildly exceeded its mandate. The majority of the panel went well beyond the mandate given to them by this Legislature. Government Motion 37, which started this whole illegitimate process, was based on recommendation 5 from Justice Miller, a recommendation that, I might add, Mr. Speaker, despite the UCP's vociferous objections, was made only by the justice alone and did not form part of the decision of the commission. The decision of the commission was maps, the fair maps that the commission drew. The UCP are now trying to pretend that they have no idea what the addendum is or what recommendation 5 is or what they said about it.

9:00

To take just a few examples, here is the Government House Leader from – sorry; let me get the date here – April 21 of this year.

> Albertans across [this] province have effective representation . . .

Well, that's certainly the case currently.

> . . . which is done with the proper number of seats. That is why the commission and the judge of the commission . . .

Notice the wiggles there.

> . . . recommended going to 91 . . .

The commission didn't recommend that; only the judge did.

> . . . which was in the addendum. We're following those recommendations. That's why we have a motion on the floor today.

So a very clear statement by the Government House Leader of what they intend to do.

It gets even more intense. On April 20 we hear from the Premier, and she says:

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

That is the Premier saying in this House that the judge was very clear, which he was, to maintain the bulk of the majority report.

This is the government stating over and over again that that's what they're going to do. Now we have the panel that has come back. It has not done that. It has flown wildly outside the lines of Motion 37 and addendum 5, which state extremely explicitly that nothing is to be changed south of Airdrie. So the changes that are being made to Calgary's northwest, to Lethbridge, to Banff-Kananaskis, to basically anything south of Airdrie are inappropriate and outside the bounds, and there is the Premier stating before this Legislature that that's all they're going to do, just what's in the addendum. That is not what we got in the end.

Again, Mr. Speaker, you see this slow sliding, right? First they say that they're going to respect the majority of the commission and the outcome. Then suddenly they're not respecting that, and instead they want to do this addendum 5. Then they get up over and over again, saying that it's only about inserting two rural seats. Suddenly we get back maps that don't respect that addendum at all and insert three rural seats. And here we are.

I will be voting for this amendment, Mr. Speaker. This is a terrible bill.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

On amendment RA1 are there any others? I will recognize the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to this important amendment brought forward by my colleague the MLA for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview urging the Legislature that this Bill 40 not be read a second time because this bill would violate Albertans' rights to effective representation, Albertans' rights that are protected by section 3 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

There are a number of things that are fundamentally wrong with this bill. First and foremost, in a democracy free and fair elections are the fundamental premise of democracy. Without free and fair elections you cannot have a functioning democracy. Part of that free and fair election is having a fair map that respects Albertans' rights to effective representation and doesn't dilute the votes of one group over the votes of the other. There is the rule of law. But what we have seen from this government: when they do not like something, they will change the rules of the game midway. That's exactly what they did in this instance as well.

There was an independent panel led by Justice Miller, who was appointed by the UCP government. We have two appointees on that independent commission. That commission for months travelled across this province and gathered input from Albertans, from organizations. Anybody who was entrusted was able to provide them with their input. The government members certainly participated in that process; we participated in that process. Personally, I went before that commission twice. As a result of that participation of thousands of Albertans, their participation in person, their written submissions, they came up with a report, the final report, which was fair, which was a result of public consultation, and which was a result of a process that was fair.

The government rejected that report. Out of that quite thick report, government just took to heart one line that was added by Justice Miller as an addendum to that report. That was not the opinion of the majority of the commission. That was just Justice Miller's opinion. Pursuant to that they passed a motion, Government Motion 37, and appointed a UCP majority panel to redraw those maps. Even that Government Motion 37, if we believe and take this government at their word that it was based on Justice Miller's recommendation – when we look at Justice Miller's recommendation, that was that if they were to add any rural seats, the new panel was not supposed to touch anything in Airdrie or south of Airdrie.

In creating this map, the UCP panel even exceeded the mandate that was given to them with Government Motion 37. When we look at, for instance, Lethbridge, they have carved up Lethbridge into four ridings, four hybrid ridings, and 4 out of 5 people who presented to the independent commission before the UCP panel

opposed those hybrid ridings. All those Albertans who initially thought that they're presenting to a commission whose work will be honoured, respected by this government, took time to prepare those submissions, took time to come before that panel, took time to write to that panel: all of that work was disregarded, disrespected by this government. The bill they're moving forward, Bill 40, is essentially telling all those Albertans that your opinion doesn't matter, your work doesn't matter, and this government is willing and prepared to do anything to win, including gerrymandering the election map to favour them and their cabinet ministers.

Essentially, three major concerns I can outline with this piece of legislation. First, as I said, the UCP panel has exceeded the authority they got from Government Motion 37. That's the first reason. When we look at the map produced by the UCP panel, that does exactly the opposite of what Justice Miller's addendum asked them to do, not to touch anything in Airdrie and south of Airdrie.

9:10

When we look at even in Calgary, I think most of the ridings that have been stretched into Springbank, into other neighbouring areas are just to benefit UCP cabinet ministers. After the Calgary-Shaw by-election they know that things are not looking up for them, so now they're just trying to carve up their own ridings, pick their own voters, and that's a no-no in a democracy. People pick their members; members don't pick their voters.

The second thing that my colleague from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has outlined in this amendment is that this map violates the Charter right to effective representation. Mr. Speaker, section 3 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms gives every Canadian the right to vote. That right to vote has been the subject of debate at the Supreme Court, and courts have consistently explained or ruled that that right includes the right to effective representation. What that means is that an Albertan exercising that right from Lethbridge to Calgary to Edmonton to Red Deer and all the way north: their vote should carry equal weight. But when we look at this map, we cannot say, based on this UCP map, that a single Albertan vote in Lethbridge to all the way north will carry the same weight.

What they have done here: they have diluted representation in cities to give themselves an edge in the next election. That's gerrymandering, plain and simple. I'm pretty sure they know by now that their map violates Charter rights. The good thing is that section 3 is not subject to section 33 override – otherwise, they might have tried that as well – so at least that option is not open for them. We have heard from Albertans from all walks – subject matter experts, constitutional law professors, legal experts – that their process is unfair and their map is not in line with the section 3 requirements of effective representation.

This amendment gives that off-ramp to the government members that they can vote in favour of this amendment and think about these important issues, section 3 rights, effective representation, and essentially go back to the commission's majority recommendation. That map may not be ideal, but that map was a result of extensive public consultation, and that map was drawn through a fair process, and at least Albertans can have trust in that map. Otherwise, the map as it stands now is nothing more than an example or an instance of the worst gerrymandering in the history of not just this province but the entire country.

The third thing I would say: this map dilutes voter parity, in particular of urban voters. The way it's created, I think the four largest cities in this province will be underrepresented in this Legislature.

Many times the Premier and ministers have talked about increased population. When we look at the population growth that's happening in our largest cities, that's happening in our smaller centres, instead of making sure that all those people moving into those cities, in those centres are effectively represented, the UCP government has put their political interests, their political future ahead of Albertans' constitutional right to fair representation. When we look at the variances between the lowest and highest population riding, that's pretty telling. For instance, Central Peace-Notley: that's at minus 47 per cent, 28,715 votes. Leduc-Beaumont is 63,434 votes, 18 per cent higher. That is the case with many ridings in Edmonton, that's the case in many ridings in Calgary, where we will have 7,000 more people on average. That's a huge difference in how these ridings are distributed by the UCP panel. Clearly, it represents a significant weakening of the value of the vote that is cast in Edmonton, that is cast in Calgary, or smaller centres compared to rural Alberta.

Drawing boundaries is a challenging task. Albertans will only have faith and trust in that if the process followed by the government is fair. By rejecting the original commission's recommendation, majority recommendation, government has thrown all the good work and Albertans' trust away. They're trying to replace it with a UCP panel recommendation that no one believes the process was fair, that no one believes respects section 3 constitutional rights, and that no one believes it gives equal voice for cities and rural Albertans in this Legislature. This map is essentially to protect the UCP and its cabinet ministers.

I urge members to vote in favour of this amendment.

The Acting Speaker: On amendment RA1 are there any others that wish to speak?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment RA1 as proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

[Motion on amendment RA1 lost]

The Acting Speaker: We are back on the main bill. The Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

Dr. Elmeligi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 40, the Electoral Divisions Act. Like my colleagues, I am opposed to this bill. I'm disappointed in the decision around the amendment. I think that we could have done so much better to serve the people of Alberta than we just did in the last 30 seconds. This bill is the UCP's attempt to rig the next provincial election, and now it's public for everybody to see.

Last spring we saw the results of the Electoral Boundaries Commission majority report, which was based on a standardized process and included broad-based public consultation. That consultation is important, Mr. Speaker. One of the objectives of this process is to group communities of similar interests. I don't really expect anybody in this room to really understand all of the communities in Alberta. In fact, I don't really expect anybody in this room to be involved in the Electoral Boundaries Commission in the first place, but I digress.

9:20

It is critical to understand Alberta's communities and how they fit together, and that's what the public consultation is for, Mr. Speaker. It's a very important part of effective representation. The map from the independent advisory panel that is part of this bill, that Bill 40 is proposing we accept, was not based on any public consultation, and that is evident if you read the report from the independent advisory panel.

This map gerrymanders ridings in southern Alberta and wildly expands Calgary ridings outside city boundaries. It waters down the votes of both urban and rural voters, and it's all really to protect the UCP and their cabinet ministers, which I just feel is so egregious

and wrong and inappropriate. The people who live in the current riding of Banff-Kananaskis and Highwood are disrespected by these maps, which chop up both Banff-Kananaskis and Highwood and sew them back together in some very creative formations, one being Banff-Canmore-Diamond Valley, another being Calgary-Bow-Springbank, and another being Calgary-West-Springbank.

Rather than use the maps where thousands of Albertans weighed in on what they thought Alberta's electoral maps should look like, this advisory panel has proposed a series of Frankenstein ridings that disregard Albertans and mischaracterize communities across my current riding of Banff-Kananaskis. This report speaks disparagingly about Banff and Canmore, saying that Banff and Canmore are "two high-end vacation home communities." I find this language disrespectful and awful, and it ignores the fact that Banff doesn't have vacation homes, Mr. Speaker, because it has a right-to-reside clause, which means that in order to own property in Banff, you have to live in Banff. In addition, Canmore has a population of over 17,000 people. They don't own vacation homes in Canmore; they live there full-time. The fact that this report from an independent advisory panel suggests that Banff and Canmore are two high-end vacation home communities is insulting, and I cannot let this pass without bringing that to the attention of the members here.

This report uses the existence of these "two large upscale and prosperous towns on the TransCanada Highway" as a reason to recommend "against conferring Section 15(2) status on . . . any electoral division which contains them." Section 15(2) status, Mr. Speaker, is the section in the bill that allows for population variance. Basically, what that's saying is that because these two towns are large and apparently affluent, we can't have population exceptions for Banff and Canmore in any electoral division that contains them. Seems like a weak justification to me, but I'm not a lawyer.

To increase the population of this new proposed riding, the advisory panel then drew the map south to include Longview, Diamond Valley, Millarville, and Priddis. Priddis and the northern half of Millarville are currently in the riding of Banff-Kananaskis, so that is not a significant change, but Longview and Diamond Valley and the southern half of Millarville are in the current riding of Highwood.

The problem here is that in two rounds of public consultation conducted by the Electoral Boundaries Commission, not one person from Diamond Valley asked to be in a riding with Banff and Canmore. Rather, they stated a case to be in a riding with Okotoks. In a recent CBC report one Diamond Valley business owner said: I don't know why we should be lumped in with Banff; we're much closer to Okotoks. Another Diamond Valley local said: we just have no connection; it's a long ways away. Even the mayor of Diamond Valley expressed concern: we're like the little brother, little sister of Okotoks, and we have been working with them for a number of years. It would seem to me that Diamond Valley, as is evident in all of their public consultations and in this media report, sees themselves much more closely aligned with Okotoks.

This underscores the reason why public consultation and an independent process are so important when deciding electoral boundaries. Albertans should feel like their riding makes sense, that their votes would count equally across the riding, and that is not what they are feeling when they look at these maps. That's not what I'm hearing, and that's not what my colleagues are hearing. Whether you're in Banff or Diamond Valley or anywhere in between, people want to know that their votes matter, that their votes are equal. But there are real concerns being raised by business owners, mayors, and locals that this map won't guarantee that their votes matter. Politicians should not be picking their voters. Voters should be picking their politicians.

Turning attention to Springbank, which has been split into two Calgary ridings justified by golf courses amongst a few other things, Calgary-Bow-Springbank and Calgary-West-Springbank. As the MLA for Springbank, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to tell you that Springbank is a very special community. It's been an honour to get to know them over the last three years. Splitting Springbank into two ridings makes little sense to me.

The advisory panel says that Springbank, as Calgary generally understands it, "consists of a number of suburban and acreage subdivisions west of Calgary on both sides of the Trans-Canada Highway." The words I find most fascinating in that quote are "Springbank, as Calgarians generally understand it." What about the residents of Springbank, Mr. Speaker, and how they see it? They're the ones that actually live there.

As the MLA for this area, one thing I continually hear from Springbank residents as a genuine concern is a feeling that the city of Calgary is encroaching on Springbank, that the city of Calgary puts constant development pressure on Springbank, and that the people who live in Springbank purposefully chose to live in Springbank and not live in Calgary. It's a very intentional choice that Springbank is making. Then for this independent advisory panel to just pretend like that sentiment doesn't exist just demonstrates that they did no effort to conduct any kind of public consultation, because I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, you just have to spend five minutes in Springbank to get a sense of how Springbank actually feels about the city of Calgary. It's nothing against the city of Calgary. It's just how the city of Springbank feels.

This is why public consultation is so important, because people in Springbank live in Springbank. They don't live in Calgary. Grouping Springbank with Calgary weakens the voices and the votes of Springbank residents. The advisory panel report also says that "South Springbank is also the location chosen by the province for its $850-million Springbank off-stream dry storage reservoir built to protect communities in the city of Calgary from flooding." And it uses SR 1 as an evidence of connection between Springbank and Calgary.

An Hon. Member: Oh, boy.

Dr. Elmeligi: Oh, boy is right. In truth, the fastest way to get chased out of Springbank with pitchforks is to go into that community and tell them that SR 1 was a good idea. You go into Springbank, Mr. Speaker, and I guarantee you within five minutes, somebody will tell you how much they hate the Springbank dry dam.

It's just a very tangible example, Mr. Speaker, of how the people of Springbank do see themselves as being separate from Calgary. The Springbank reservoir and all of the controversy that came with it when it was created is still highly contentious in the community. People still talk about it, and they still have concerns about it all the time, which the panel would have known if they had consulted with literally anybody or shared any of their consultations publicly.

Hundreds of public submissions and oral presentations were made during the first round of consultation to the Electoral Boundaries Commission. Hundreds of Albertans donated their time, expertise, and perspectives to have input into the electoral boundaries around their communities, and this government ignored them outright. They said: "Thank you for your time. No, we don't want to do that because we want to win, so we're going to do something different." Then this government undertook a totally created process out of thin air, just made it up on the spot, because they didn't like the map that was created, and that's what

gerrymandering is. This proposed map is a product of the advisory panel exceeding their mandate.

9:30

As my colleagues have mentioned, Government Motion 37 directed the independent panel to implement recommendation 5 of Justice Miller's addendum to the final report of the 2025-2026 Electoral Boundaries Commission. That recommendation said to leave ridings south of Airdrie alone, to stick with the majority report from the Electoral Boundaries Commission for ridings south of Airdrie. This proposed map by this independent panel does the exact opposite of that, Mr. Speaker. It changes ridings all around Calgary, including Calgary-Bow Springbank, Calgary-West Springbank, Banff, Canmore, and Diamond Valley. All of these changes can be linked to benefiting a UCP cabinet minister, and that is also what I find particularly egregious here.

These decisions are not about any of us in this room. It's not about who wins. I've had several ministers come up to me and say: "Oh, but your riding is great. You should like your riding." It doesn't matter how I feel about my riding, Mr. Speaker. I will be the best MLA that I can be for whatever the shape of my riding is. It doesn't matter what communities are in it. I will do the best job that I can do. What matters is that the people in my riding see themselves as connected to each other. They see themselves as having something in common, which makes it easier for me as their MLA to represent them. It's not about me and how I feel. None of this is about me. As soon as we start making it about us in this room, we've allowed our egos to influence the conversation, and that's not why we're here. We're here to serve Albertans. This is supposed to be an ego-free space, especially when it comes to electoral boundaries.

The UCP has changed the ridings, and they have no good explanation for doing what they have done. The explanations in the independent panel report are a joke. They're evidence of no public consultation having occurred. They mischaracterize communities, they misrepresent people and their issues, and it's embarrassing, frankly. This has never been done in Canadian history. This is not a made-in-Alberta solution that I want to see.

This map will violate the Charter right to effective representation. It's foundational to democracy, Mr. Speaker. The proposed map violates the right to vote, guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, by significantly and unjustifiably underrepresenting urban electors and not representing communities of interest. I've already shown how not representing communities of interest is impacting the communities that I know best in Alberta, but that's happening all throughout the province with these maps.

Section 3 of the Charter protects the right to effective representation, and this cannot be overridden. The notwithstanding clause that this UCP government is such a fan of cannot apply here. You cannot take this right away from people. No political party should ever be able to infringe upon the very right which holds them to account. We should not be able to influence who votes for us by the shape of the riding. If you want to win, campaign and convince people to vote for you. Don't cheat to win.

This is the worst instance of gerrymandering in Canadian history because the UCP abandoned the standardized process and chose to put partisan ambitions over democratic rights of Albertans. If you're so great, convince the people you're so great and get them to vote for you. This map dilutes voter parity of urban voters as well.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Acadia.

Member Batten: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to join debate on Bill 40, Electoral Divisions Act. I want to start by asking a question. Have you ever agreed to play a game only to discover that the game is rigged, that it is made to favour one player over another? Kind of feels gross, eh? Yeah.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Albertans are talking about provincial politics, and that's fantastic. However, they are not pleased. The electoral boundaries aren't a normal conversation that you would hear most Albertans discussing. Of course, around here we're all kind of a little bit policy geeky, so it's a common conversation for us, but not so much for the typical Albertan. You know, again, it's great to have Albertans engaged and actually paying attention to what's going on and making sure that their elected officials are doing their job. That's fantastic, but there's a lot of confusion and, honestly, a lot of frustration. I reference back to when I opened referring to a rigged game. That is how Albertans are feeling right now. That is what we are hearing, that they are displeased with what is going on and confused.

I recognize that throughout debate this evening we have heard, kind of, the chronological story of how we ended up here, but I think it's really important that it is explained slightly differently for folks to understand because, honestly, it is a complex issue, and it's been ongoing for years now. It's no wonder that Albertans might be a little confused about what the heck is going on.

At high level every 8 to 10 years the boundaries need to be adjusted. This is to account for population and migration, because of course as we know, Alberta is now over 5 million people, and the map that we were all elected on is the same map that was used in 2019. We have definitely seen population changes, so a map review makes perfect sense. There is a legislative process, and it was followed. A new map was presented, and the UCP rejected it. That's not traditional. We've heard it said a couple of times this evening that at no other time in Canadian history has this happened, because traditionally the government, the sitting government, respects the legislated commission's report, but for whatever reason this government decided that it was going to go down a different road.

The government claims that the map they have produced is beneficial for both parties, but redrawing the electoral boundaries is not about parties; it is about people. The Member for Banff-Kananaskis was discussing how specifically, you know, a community: how they felt about this map. That's what matters. It matters what Albertans feel about this map. Do they feel this is a fair map? Do they feel like they're being respected, like they are being effectively represented? Overwhelmingly, Madam Speaker, we are hearing: no.

I recognize that the members on the other side, they also are receiving the same correspondence we are, indicating that Albertans are not pleased with what's going on, well, in here and specifically with the boundaries. Every single member in this House represents thousands of Albertans, and it's actually quite insulting to have heard the Premier and a few of the ministers being delighted with this map that's been put forward which completely disregards all of the efforts that Albertans put forward through the various testimonies or submissions they provided the actual commission.

Okay. How did we get here? In 2024 this UCP government started to make a path to this map by changing the rules. For instance, they decided that we no longer needed to consider municipal boundaries. Given that the whole purpose of redrawing the boundaries is to account for population and migration, and

Edmonton and Calgary are the two cities with the fastest growing population, then would it not stand to reason that that would be something to be considered here? Apparently, even though the UCP claimed to be the voice of rural Albertans, they don't seem to care that people who choose to live in rural areas are not interested in living in the city. Albertans make choices, and when this government decides that Albertans' choices don't matter as much as theirs, that's a problem, Madam Speaker. Their map that they are presenting dilutes the rural vote. That is simply unnecessary and it's undemocratic.

The other thing they did is they changed it so that we no longer need to consider community boundaries within Edmonton or Calgary. As I mentioned, those cities are growing at amazing rates. The point of the boundary redraw is to ensure effective representation. It doesn't matter where the population happens to be, that is where you would then draw to accommodate for them. It's as simple as that.

9:40

Now, the legislated Electoral Boundaries Commission started in 2025. They followed the legislation. We had two members appointed from the government; two members appointed from opposition; then the chair, Justice Miller, was appointed by the UCP cabinet. Part of the legislated process is that they allow for public submissions, so we had hundreds of in-person and written submissions that were provided by really engaged Albertans. These are folks who have very strong feelings about democracy, about what they value and what they want to see in the future of Alberta. It was really quite something that all of that engagement really allowed the commission to hear Albertans' voices: again, what they value and how they want Alberta to grow.

The first draft was then provided to the Assembly in November 2025. This was unanimously proposed, meaning all members of that commission were happy with it. They said yes. They put it forward, which is, again, phenomenal because that tells us that Albertan voices were heard, that the entire commission had heard Albertans, took it into consideration, and put it forward, something they were very proud of for consideration.

After the interim report or the draft report it was opened back up to public submissions, and Albertans eagerly jumped on that: over a thousand additional submissions written and in person because Albertans are truly engaged in this process. I want to give props to everyone who took time out of their day, who maybe took time off work. I know our capacities are all stretched incredibly thin, so to ask someone to engage in a process like this, let alone engage twice – a lot of folks, you know, were part of both. They provided submissions to both. To stay engaged and value democracy like that: like, Albertans should be praised. That is amazing engagement, and that needs to be valued and respected.

Now, the final report was released in March of this year. A majority map was delivered: 89 seats per the UCP's legislation. Weirdly there was another map that was kind of snuck in there, the minority map, which seemed to be kind of an extra stream of consciousness from the two UCP-appointed members. As per Justice Miller, this stream of consciousness seemed to have come about, you know, mid-January, which departed substantially from the goal, so it's a little weird, Madam Speaker. Like, it is a little weird. The minority map wandered very much off course from what the commission had put forward – extensive hybridization of the rural and urban ridings. Albertans, really – why was there suddenly this one-eighty on this? Where did this come from?

Justice Miller did put in an addendum, including the majority map submission, where he kind of shared different thoughts he had on what could be; however, he also explicitly said that these dreams, aspirations, whatever, are not meant to detract from the majority, meaning the majority map is still what the commission put forward, is still what Justice Miller put forward.

Of note of Justice Miller's recommendations there was a suggestion of additional seats, as we've heard already this evening. I will remind the House that the number of seats that are put forward to the commission was a decision by the UCP government. That was their decision, so they had an opportunity before to ask for more seats. They did not, but now they've gone ahead and kind of circumvented, well, the House.

The reality, though, is that the Legislature was never provided a chance to vote on the majority map, so not only did the UCP reject it, but they effectively silenced almost half of the province. It's incredibly insulting, Madam Speaker. They had thousands of Albertans come out and provide their very important input, then they just decided: "No. You know what? I didn't really like the result, so I'm just going to move on, do something totally different." That's what they did. They decided, well, to cheat.

Their UCP do-over panel: unprecedented. They took a second swing at the seat number, as I've mentioned. They pushed through legislation changing the number of seats, so currently 87. The majority report map shows 89. The UCP's new map shows 91. Don't get me wrong, Madam Speaker. Mistakes happen, right? You know, perhaps additional seats make great sense given our growing population. However, there is a way to do that. There is a way to amend legislation – jeez – instead of doing it all sneakylike and pretending that you're behind some advice from Justice Miller when that's clearly not what he intended. So the question is: why did they reject the majority map to start with? Maybe they thought that Albertans wouldn't mind being cheated out of effective representation.

Mr. Yao: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo on a point of order.

Point of Order
Allegations against Members

Mr. Yao: Under 23(h), (i), and (j.) She keeps on referring to folks on this side of the House as cheating and all sorts of references to that. That's absolutely ridiculous. She needs to apologize and withdraw those comments. If she wants to just poke and prod and look for a fight, I can give that to her. We could talk about some of the things they've done over there. My God, your government destroyed this province. Destroyed this province.

Ms Ganley: Okay.

An Hon. Member: Enough.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.
The hon. . . .

Ms Ganley: If she's looking for a fight?

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms Ganley: That's a threat.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.
The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think the member may not agree with what we are saying, but the Member for Calgary-

Acadia was exactly talking to the bill, and this is exactly what we feel, that with this bill it's happening. We believe, and many Albertans agree with us, that it's rigging the map, it's cheating the next election, and nothing was directed individually at any member. I think this has been used frequently in this House and outside this House. The way the member is raising a point of order: I don't think that's proper. He was just raising his voice, uttering threats across the aisle, and he should be very much ashamed of that. It's not a point of order.

An Hon. Member: Sorry. I should be ashamed?

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Hold on. Hold on. I didn't hear any threats across the aisle, so that's not helpful conversation.

On the point of order in particular, I won't find this as a point of order. I do think that the member is speaking generally to thoughts about the bill. Not one member is cheating in particular. They feel the government may be. I do think we're going to end up – knowing y'all, we're going to end up in a spot where this is going to become a point of order in the future as we move through this debate process, so I'll just provide caution to everybody when we're in this territory.

Order. Order, hon. minister. No. You can have a seat. That's maybe more helpful.

Anyway, let's have a good, respectful debate. Carry on with tonight's events.

The hon. member may proceed.

Debate Continued

Member Batten: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd appreciate some emotional regulation in here. That was intense for absolutely no reason.

The Deputy Speaker: That's not helpful.

Member Batten: I want to give kudos to this side of the aisle, to the members for Calgary-Mountain View and Edmonton-Mill Woods, for the incredible work they did on the UCP do-over panel. These folks: they're professional, they were responsible, and they were respectful – respectful, Madam Speaker – members who brought forward different motions to guard against the erosion of democracy.

9:50

The reality is that the UCP panel bumbled their way through the map we're debating today, and the members from opposition brought forward motions that were trying to ensure nonpartisanship, asking for disallowing of a chair who had political affiliations, motions like increasing transparency so that Albertans could actually know what's happening. I recognize that this seems to be a constant theme from this side where we continuously ask for transparency and we don't see it, so I'm not particularly surprised that that's something they put forward. And our opposition members put forward a motion simply asking them, giving them an off-ramp, to just accept the majority map. Mistakes happen. They had a long time to consider. They did not. They voted them all down.

These government members, however, did bring forward their own: the use of a pollster, an external influencer. Albertans didn't have any say in this – zero – but they brought in an external pollster. This government values the input of an external pollster over the people who elected them. That's what they're sharing. That's what this is.

Now, aside from the disrespectful conduct towards Albertans and the disrespectful conduct towards opposition members who were bringing forward motions that shouldn't have had to come forward anyway, there is a decorum in this space, or at least there's supposed to be, and that's also in committee and everything else. To have to remind folks that when you have an obvious or a potential conflict of interest and we're talking about something as incredibly important as boundaries for the next election . . .

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

Dr. Metz: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to speak to Bill 40. It's a very sad and unfortunate bill for the people of this province. People living in Alberta, people living in Canada want to know that they have a government that is there to look after them, a government that is there to be honest with them, and a government that is there that is not going to bring in bills that will rig the election to keep them in power. They're not just in government; they're in power. This bill proves that the UCP as a collective, all of them, plan to cheat to win the next election.

The Deputy Speaker: Hold on. Hon. member, I'm just going to provide some comments at this moment. When you say that all of those members are going to cheat, that is a point of order, and that is not allowed.

Dr. Metz: I apologize and withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker: I think what you're probably trying to say is that the government is aiming to cheat. While that's not helpful, that would be a better way to say what you're trying to say.

Dr. Metz: I apologize and withdraw my earlier comment. I do intend to say that the government is planning to cheat to stay in power.

Mr. Amery: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Point of Order
Insulting Language

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise on 23(j), using "abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder". Now, you provided comments just a few minutes ago and you provided a caution to the member, but this section 23(j) doesn't refer to an individual member like (h) or (i) would. It is simply to say that insulting or abusive language is inappropriate in this House. Now, that member in the opposition may not like the process. That is fair. But to allege that just because they do not like the process or do not agree with the process, the government is cheating is highly inappropriate. I would ask that you ask that member to apologize and withdraw. There is no blanket coverage here by simply saying, "The government is doing X, Y, or Z" when that language is abusive or insulting. That is abusive and insulting language, and I would ask that the member exercise a little more decorum in this Assembly and use appropriate wording in her debate.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think it's rich, coming from the minister, that he finds that language insulting after introducing a piece of legislation that is insulting to all Albertans, that is insulting to our democracy, that is insulting to every process

that we have seen here. Essentially, what we are saying here – we are making the case that this bill disrespects Albertans' right to effective representation. This bill replaces the independent commission's recommendation with the UCP panel recommendation, and it is our view that that is designed by this government to rig the next election, to cheat the next election.

Again, we are not saying that any individual is cheating here, but the process is unfair, and the result and outcome is a rigged election. That's why we are using this, and it's not just us. There are many Albertans out there who are using this language.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, members outside of this Chamber using language has no bearing on what language is used inside of this Chamber by members. I have provided caution. We're going to go down a path where saying that the government is cheating is going to become a problem, and it will become a problem if this language is persistent. In this debate it will be ruled out of order.

I'm not going to do it this time. This is a caution, but this is actually a caution this time. Please choose your words carefully. If we proceed down this road in persistent repetition in disparaging the motives of the government, we're not going to get to any high-quality level of debate. Thank you for comments from both sides. Well taken. We're coming to that moment, but we're not there yet.

I know the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity is going to do a great job with the rest of her debate. You may continue.

Debate Continued

Dr. Metz: By moving forward with this bill, the UCP is telling Albertans that they will do anything they need to do to win, and now they are silencing debate to make this happen. For months the UCP has had the opportunity to do the right thing, to pass the independent and transparent map created by the majority of the actual Electoral Boundaries Commission. Unlike the map proposed in this bill, the Electoral Boundaries Commission was the product of significant public consultation, not polling.

We do not support or agree with the UCP map, that violates Government Motion 37 by gerrymandering ridings south of Airdrie. This would have protected the people of Alberta. Instead, this bill protects UCP cabinet ministers and is straight out of the MAGA handbook. Instead of defending this decision in the Legislature, they're ramming through this gerrymandering bill. This is the worst instance of gerrymandering in Canadian history. There is nothing that comes close. No politician before has had the audacity to bring in something like this so blatantly.

First, the government threw out the map that produced an independent process because they did not like the outcome. Then they created an unconstitutional process to produce a map to help them get what they want in the next election. They could have gotten what they wanted if they had served Albertans, but no. That's not what they have been doing. This map shows what this government will do when cornered, putting politics over people.

UCP MLAs are worried that their constituents will fire them for doing the terrible job that they've done in running this province. Now they will be hiding from voters rather than being accountable to the population.

10:00

Now we have a map where all Albertans lose. These maps are not good for Albertans. They're not good for rural Albertans, and they're not good for urban Albertans. They're only good for this government, and help them cling to power. Voters should be picking their politicians; politicians should not be picking their voters. Albertans have the right to choose who they vote for at the ballot box.

This new map carves up Lethbridge into four ridings. It waters down the vote of people in many places. It protects the UCP and cabinet ministers. It used an illegitimate process to produce this map where Albertans lose. Albertans need the right to vote.

The key things are that in creating this map and by putting this into legislation by an illegitimate panel, the UCP have disregarded recommendation 5 from the majority panel. The illegitimate panel that they put together appointed a group that redrew electoral boundaries, which was not the way it was meant to be in legislation or as recommended by the panel. Government Motion 37 directed the independent advisory panel to implement recommendation 5 from Justice Dallas Miller's addendum to the final report of the '25-26 Electoral Boundaries Commission. Recommendation 5 says, ". . . restoration of the two electoral divisions should have no impact on any electoral division in Airdrie or containing [any] territory south of Airdrie . . . [except for] Drumheller-Stettler." This map does the opposite. There are massive changes to the edges of Calgary and to Lethbridge. All of these changes can be linked to benefiting UCP cabinet ministers.

The Premier and the ministers told this Legislature and the media that they were only adding two rural ridings back in and using the recommendation 5. Now we see that this new panel that they've appointed did the exact opposite, and they're bringing in massive changes. They have provided no good explanation for this other than what we can see, that it brings in marked partisan politics.

This map will violate the Charter right to effective representation. The electoral boundaries proposed by this new map, proposed by the UCP and within Bill 40, violates the right to vote which is guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms by significantly and unjustifiably underrepresenting urban electors and not respecting communities of interest. Section 3 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the right to vote and protects the right to effective representation. This section 3 cannot be overridden by parliament or a provincial Legislature using section 33, which is the notwithstanding clause.

The process for drawing boundaries should be fair to protect Albertans' section 3 rights, and no political party should ever be able to infringe on the rights of every voter. They must be accountable.

With this, I would move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 39
Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (No. 2)

[Adjourned debate November 19: Mr. Schow]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview on Bill 39.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to add my voice to the debate on Bill 39, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (No. 2), and of course we're having again another omnibus bill before us which actually amends eight pieces of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Sorry, hon. member. My apologies. I have it on record that you've already spoken to Bill 39 in second reading.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Member Ellingson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise and speak to Bill 39, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (No. 2). As my colleague was just starting to say, this is an omnibus bill. There's a lot here. It covers a lot of ground; several amendments to several pieces of legislation. There are maybe just a couple of areas that I kind of want to focus on about how this bill is problematic.

This bill allows the minister to grant authority to create self-insured arrangements and designate the categories of services that would be funded by those arrangements. The UCP, when they're in conversations with the public, are going to have to do some creative work on their messaging for the public to, somehow, not see this as further facilitating the privatization of health care delivery, Madam Speaker. The privatization of health care in Alberta is something that Albertans have been pretty clear about. They don't want it, they didn't ask for it, but this government continues to go down this path.

Madam Speaker, in 2023 the Premier promised Albertans that they would not pay out of pocket to see a family doctor, but this bill, combined with previous bills, puts that promise into question, and I know we've said this before. However, this bill opens provisions for patient-charge clinics and puts publicly funded activities side by side with private pay and potentially allows all services in that facility to be designated as private pay even though they are services that should be publicly funded.

Already today we've seen some challenges with family physician services shielded from public access behind the walls of patient-charge clinics. Already today we have family physicians working in patient-charge clinics, and while the services that they provide are paid for through the public system, only those with memberships to that clinic have access to those physicians, so we've already been creating this enabling environment to put physician services and medical services that should be publicly provided and paid for behind a paywall. Madam Speaker, that is problematic. This bill takes what has already been enabled to another level.

10:10

I want to speak for a moment about patterns, a couple of patterns that we have seen from this government. Very clearly this UCP government is moving Alberta into a U.S.-style, private pay health care system. We have seen from this government Bill 55, that allowed private entities to operate public hospitals. We've seen it, Madam Speaker, from Bill 11, that permits physicians to work in both public and private at the same time. Bill 29 permits self-referral and private pay diagnostic services. You can't ignore this pattern. It's pretty clear: U.S.-style private health care. Public health care, affordability, access: those aren't the priorities of this UCP government. Private, for-profit health care: that's the priority of this government.

There's another pattern that we've seen, the centralization of decision-making into the hands of a minister. We've seen this time and time again over the last couple of years. Bill 18, provincial priorities, allows ministers and the Premier to determine what federal funding is allowed to be used by provincial entities, including municipalities and postsecondary institutions, so now those entities that are governed by the province are no longer allowed to make their own decisions about getting federal money. This government thinks that they can do a better job.

Bill 20, municipal governments, gives the minister oversight into the very function and operations of municipalities. What we hear day after day about the federal government and their overreach into provincial jurisdiction – we can see this government's overreach into municipal jurisdiction. Bill 21 further provided this province jurisdiction over municipalities in directing services during emergencies. Bill 22 restructured the health care system, giving more decision-making powers to the health minister. Bill 39, Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, gave the Justice minister a veto over grants provided by the Alberta Law Foundation. So not-for-profit organizations in this province: they can't even decide where they're giving their grants to. This province, the Minister of Justice decides. You can't ignore this pattern.

The list goes on. Privatization, concentration of power: Albertans don't want this. Albertans don't trust this government with more power. They don't want this government to have more power. They sent that message to this government in voting no to all of the constitutional questions in the referendum. It's unfortunate that while this government talks day after day about how they want the citizens to be able to make those decisions, the citizens did decide, and now they clearly are ignoring that decision.

Albertans need to pay attention to this bill, Madam Speaker. Albertans need to pay attention to the clear intent of this government. This bill leaves Albertans worse off. This bill moves Alberta further down the path of privatization. This bill further places power and authority in the hands of the minister. I urge everyone in this House to pay attention to what this bill is about. I urge everyone in this House to listen to their constituents and Albertans. Hear what Albertans are telling us about this. They don't want it; they didn't ask for it. I urge everyone in this House to vote no to Bill 39.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others to second reading of Bill 39? The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

Dr. Elmeligi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (No. 2), Bill 39. Like my colleagues, I am also opposed to this bill. This bill builds on previous pieces of legislation and creates a legal platform and more opportunity for more privatization in the future in our health care system, and I think that that's going in the wrong direction. Albertans love public health care. They love to have access to it when and where they need it. They need a health care system that they can trust, that they can access when they need it, not based on how much disposable income they have or how much money they have in their wallet at the time.

For three and a half years Albertans have had to bear witness and deal with the chaos in health care caused by this government's poor decisions. I hear about it regularly in my constituency. Seventy-six per cent of Albertans are concerned with the UCP expanding American-style private health care. I would be one of those 76 per cent, Madam Speaker. I think that public health care is the greatest gift we give each other, and it's definitely something we shouldn't take for granted. Steps to privatize health care are not about serving Albertans; they're about making health care into a business. There's something about that that I find so fundamentally offensive and wrong and really disappointing. This bill creates the potential to make our health care system worse. It's not helping.

The biggest problem with this bill for me is the shift of future policy decisions to ministerial orders or regulations, allowing the minister to make substantial policy changes without any legislative debate. I've spoken to that pattern of this government in previous debate around other previous pieces of legislation that put a lot of power in the ministers' hands. Arguably one of the ones I'm dealing with every day right now is the power the minister has in the All-season Resorts Act. I get e-mails about the Silvertip gondola daily and concern around all of the power being in the minister's hands. I debated that three years ago when we passed that act, and here we are again.

I don't like pieces of legislation that put so much power in the minister's hands. It's basically, like, the ultimate time allocation because the time allocated for debate is zero because it doesn't make it to the House. We don't get to discuss it, and that's a pattern with this government. We saw that in the Water Act, recent changes to wetlands regulations the minister has done through ministerial order, and even a health care directive that was sent to clinics last January out of nowhere that basically asked clinics in the Bow Valley to not offer care to people who weren't citizens. There was no notice that that was coming. It was just sent out. I had all these people in my riding freaking out, health care professionals and visitors alike. Eventually that order was rescinded because it was administered so poorly and nobody even knew that it was coming, but the repercussions from that order are still affecting people in my community.

If people can't talk about the changes, if we can't talk about them in this House – if people can't talk about changes, they can't question them. They can't hold the government accountable because they don't even know what's happening. That's why transparency and accountability are so important.

This bill expands the minister's authority to regulate, enable, and oversee physician services, health care insurance, diagnostic services, health information management. I just don't think a minister should be overseeing and regulating all of those things without there being a broader conversation. In this House we come to these roles with the experience that we have from our past lives before we were politicians. We don't know everything. We need to rely on experts in their field to guide us, to inform us. We need to be able to talk about those things. We all bring different skills and perspectives into the House, and that's part of what debate is supposed to be, sharing that expertise and perspective. It can't all be up to the minister.

10:20

While this bill doesn't immediately create a two-tiered system, it gives the minister the authority to start that work through ministerial orders. Those don't have to be debated. Albertans don't even know half of the ministerial orders that are passed. That's just inappropriate for a health care system that is in crisis and a system that is so important to the overall health of our society and communities.

The minister will be able to authorize self-insurance arrangements and designate categories of physician services that may or may not be funded. That could expand private financing arrangements in the future and if services are designated categories to be funded through the employer or self-insurance plans. But what happens to people who don't have benefits? What happens if your benefits run out? What then? I mean, I run out of benefits all the time, and I think we have a pretty good plan. But what happens if you don't have benefits? Do you have to pay for those services if they're not on the list?

CBC reported that this bill could save money by removing lab work associated with cosmetic procedures, hormone testing, and wellness. And I have to say, Madam Speaker, as a woman in perimenopause that you start talking about removing hormone testing, and I get very concerned about what that might mean. Last month – I'm not even joking; I'm being serious – I attended the Canmore Hospital Foundation's annual luncheon. It was a luncheon about women's health, and I learned some things that I think are a good example of how this bill could influence many, many people if hormone testing was not included in free health care.

Perimenopause and menopause are a big deal. Unmanaged menopause symptoms cost the Canadian economy $3.5 billion and 540,000 lost workdays per year. It's a lot. Women absorb the vast majority of financial and time toll, losing $3.3 billion in income per year due to reduced work hours or stepping into lesser roles. And women seeking medical help often face significant delays, including specialist wait-lists ranging from 18 to 24 months. Perimenopause is not a walk in the park, Madam Speaker. It is the most annoying thing I've ever had to deal with for a decade in my whole entire life. It's more annoying than having teenage children. And if I couldn't have access to hormone testing and some of the procedures and efforts that I've gone through – I've actually had to pay privately for a lot of it. It's expensive, and if we didn't have a benefits plan, I would just be suffering but not even knowing how to fix it. Women suffer with this; some women more than others.

So, you know, if the minister can just decide what is important or unimportant – male ministers and male politicians have been deeming women's health not important for over a century, Madam Speaker, and it's why we are where we are today with women's health, because it was never a priority. That kind of decision shouldn't be left in a minister's hands. It's too subjective. Health care is supposed to serve the whole population, and knowing what we know now about the complete lack and gap in women's health research and the impacts on our economy, I don't think a minister should be able to decide whether or not that's a priority, especially without bringing it into the House for debate.

Bill 39 also establishes patient-charge clinics. I don't like that either. I don't like anything that says "patient charge" in it. This is providing noninsured health care services, which will be determined, again, by a minister without debate. The minister just says, "These are the services that you get to charge for," and we don't even get to talk about it. It enables third-party insurers and private physician service market to run alongside publicly funded physician service sector. That's a huge problem for rural health areas where capacity is already limited. In rural settings it's not about space availability; it's about people. Canmore has an empty OR that sits empty most of the time because we don't have the staff to run it.

In rural settings we have the spaces to have more people and to do more procedures and do more surgeries; we just don't have staff. Establishing patient-charge clinics runs the risk of pulling even more staff from the public system into these private clinics, thereby weakening our public system even more. It's just not good, Madam Speaker. It doesn't serve the people. It doesn't help people have better access to health care when and where they need it, and that should be the underlying premise of all health care debates and discussions we have in this House. It should be about: how do more Albertans get access to public health care when and where they need it?

With that, I'll adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 37
Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2026

The Chair: Does anyone wish to join debate on the bill?

Seeing none, I will call the question on Bill 37, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2026.

[The clauses of Bill 37 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report Bill 37.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 37. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. So carried.

Government Bills and Orders
Third Reading

Bill 37
Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2026

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

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to move third reading of Bill 37, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2026, moved by myself.

Now, Madam Speaker, this bill contains a number of consequential amendments to a number of bills. I will not go through them all, but I think that now is a great time to remind members of a parable. I know members opposite love to use them as well, so I'll begin just by simply recapping the importance of the story of the good Samaritan and how it teaches us all that, regardless of background and regardless of what we believe, it's important to be kind to each other.

I think that's what this bill is really about. It's about coming together and recognizing that even if it's a government bill, it could be supported by members of both sides of the aisle. Regardless of background, be it members of the government caucus, the United Conservative Party, members of the opposition, the New Democratic Party, we all want what's best for this province. Now, we disagree on how to get there. This path may be different, may have many different avenues and side quests. What I do know is important is that this bill, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, is about coming together.

In the words of Jackie Moon: ELE, everybody love everybody. For that reason, Madam Speaker, I think it's important that I encourage all members of the Assembly to vote in favour of Bill 37, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2026, because it's that important and we support it as a united front in this Assembly.

With that, I move third reading of Bill 37.

The Deputy Speaker: Is this the come together part of the night?

Does anyone else wish to join the debate? Seeing none, the minister to close.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise again to close debate on Bill 37, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, and that is all.

[Motion carried; Bill 37 read a third time]

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

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. We've had some wonderful progress here in this Assembly, but it is 10:30 p.m. at this point in time and I'd like to move that the Assembly be adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:31 p.m.]

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