



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, November 6, 2024

Day 66

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA,
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)
Batten, Diana M.B., Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
Boitchenko, Andrew, Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Boparai, Parmeet Singh, Calgary-Falconridge (NDP)
Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)
Brar, Gurinder, Calgary-North East (NDP)
Calahoo Stonehouse, Jodi, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
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Chapman, Amanda, Calgary-Beddington (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy Assistant Whip
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC)
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de Jonge, Chantelle, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)
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Deputy Premier
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Eremenko, Janet, Calgary-Currie (NDP)
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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC),
Deputy Government Whip
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)
Vacant, Lethbridge-West

Party standings:

United Conservative: 49

New Democrat: 37

Vacant: 1

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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 6, 2024

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have a number of visitors joining me in my Speaker's gallery today. Seated in the Speaker's gallery is a friend of the province of Alberta and a friend of mine. She is the consul general of Israel, Idit Shamir. Earlier this afternoon I was honoured to co-host a ceremony which commemorated the October 7 attacks with her. While it was a sombre event, I cherished the opportunity to renew our friendship. We also had the opportunity to discuss a number of issues facing the Jewish community, including the rise of anti-Semitism and violence against our Jewish friends and neighbours. Sadly, this does continue to be a major problem. Albertans, regardless of their religious, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds, deserve to live in peace and safety. I would invite the consul general to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Also joining the consul general, that I had the honour of co-hosting at that ceremony this afternoon, were family members of one of the Canadian victims of October 7, that victim being Tiferet Lapidot. While only 23, she had the heart of serving and helping at-risk youth during her national service before volunteering in Africa, where she worked with children and taught English. She had returned to Israel to celebrate the holidays with her family and attend the Nova concert with her friends.

The Lapidot family has strong connections including Alberta and Saskatchewan. I'd like to thank her uncle Harel Lapidot, aunt Galit Lapidot, and her grandmother Shoshana Lapidot for participating in the ceremony. Her grandmother proudly served the people of Alberta at a Jewish school in Calgary some 45 years ago and spent five years teaching at a Jewish and Hebrew school in Regina. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly. [Standing ovation]

Hon. members, I do have another visitor in the gallery today. It's my great pleasure and honour to introduce to members of the Assembly Mr. Kendrick Cardinal. He is the president for the Fort Chipewyan Métis Nation. Mr. Cardinal has previously served two terms with the board, one as vice-president and one as director on the board. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: I do have a number of guests also joining us, largely members of the Jewish community, in various galleries. They were an incredible help in organizing today's commemoration, including Stacey Leavitt-Wright. I also have a group of students from the

Talmud Torah School that are visiting the Legislature here and will have the opportunity to meet with the consul general as well. They are joined by teachers and chaperones. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The hon. Member for St. Albert has a school group.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce you to the wonderful students of J.J. Nearing elementary school in St. Albert. They're here with their teacher Annette Goode. I ask them all to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Haji: Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly grade 6 students of Glengarry elementary school. Established in 1983, the school is the first Arabic bilingual school in Alberta. I say [Remarks in Arabic] and I ask the students and educators to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Ms Lovely: What an honour it is for me, Mr. Speaker, to introduce to you and through you the grade 9 Viking school class along with their outstanding teacher Trudy Josephson. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Chamber.

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

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to join you also in welcoming 16 students and two staff chaperones from Talmud Torah School in my riding on this very special day, and I look forward to speaking with you at the school about your visit today. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you 47 special guests and good friends from Team Lethbridge. I'd love to read all their names out, but I don't have time for that. This outstanding group includes local elected officials, educators, business leaders, volunteer groups, and many other dedicated community leaders. I am proud to have them here with us today and thank them for all they do and all the work that they do to make Lethbridge a better place to live. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Ip: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you members of the Chinese community whose families have been directly impacted by the head tax and Chinese Exclusion Act. Please welcome Fred Locke, Stephen Tsang, Dorothy Tai, Wei Wong, John Yee, and Kevin Dons. Please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Ms Pitt: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour and a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the new executive director of the B.C. Conservative Party. They went from the shadows to the spotlight, a major shift in B.C.'s political history, a real Cinderella story, from 2 per cent to almost forming government. B.C.-ers were frustrated with unaffordable B.C. NDP policies. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Boitchenko: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you Gabriella Kaplan. She is a long-time family friend and a university student and a strong conservative. I would like to ask her to stand up and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

Dr. Elmeligi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I'd like to introduce Ren Lavergne, Sarah Jackson, Finn St Dennis, and Carly Moore, who enjoyed their time listening to our respectful debate so much yesterday, they've come back for more. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

1:40

Electric Power System

Mr. Rowswell: Mr. Speaker, Alberta has a deregulated electricity market that is unique in Canada and something that I'm incredibly proud of. It provides Albertans with choice, attracts investment, and is yet another example of Alberta's free-enterprise spirit. However, the NDP and its activists want nothing more than to introduce socialist economic policies, this time yet again demanding Alberta's electricity system be appropriated and communized. This isn't surprising; the NDP hate free enterprise. They have repeatedly praised the NDP government's failed plans for a capacity market.

Mr. Speaker, not only is nationalizing our electricity system a laughable, ill-advised idea, but it is dangerously misleading. NDP activists claim the regulated system would magically save Albertans money. This is not correct. The truth is that nationalizing Alberta's power grid would cost taxpayers billions if not trillions of dollars. Their claims that a government-owned electricity system would save ratepayers money casually neglects the fact that taxpayers would simply pick up the tab. Without private competition and investment, those costs can be exponentially higher.

Our competitive free market has made Alberta a primary destination for investors. Forgoing Alberta's energy-only market would be forgoing billions of dollars in private investment. Alberta currently has new power projects under construction worth an estimated \$5.8 billion, funded entirely with private investment, not by taxpayers. We are the only province free of debt on power plants, which frees up public dollars to directly support Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to our deregulated electricity market. The benefits are clear: more competition, more choice for consumers, and more investment driving innovation and economic development across the entire province. We won't entertain any socialist policies promoted by NDP activists.

Thank you.

Borealis Gallery Exhibit on Chinese Canadians

Mr. Ip: Just a little over 100 years ago and well into the 20th century the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923 prohibited nearly all forms of Chinese immigration. Families were torn apart, fathers and daughters, husbands and wives separated across oceans. If I were alive then, I would not be standing before you as a member of this Assembly. Government-sanctioned discrimination, even after the act was repealed in 1947, legitimized racial stereotypes and continued to shape the way Canadians of Chinese descent were viewed and treated.

But in the midst of what was a dark time in Canada's history are countless examples of resistance and courage from Canadians. In the gallery today I want to recognize Wei Wong, John and Dorothy Yee, and others whose fathers paid the head tax and were separated from their families for decades, stories like Vivian Jung, the first public school teacher of Chinese descent, whose courage and defiance, along with support from her friends, sparked the desegregation of public spaces in Canada.

Her remarkable story and many others like it are featured in the special exhibit being hosted in the Borealis Gallery called *Eating Bitterness*. The fact that this exhibit is hosted in the seat of provincial power is significant. It honours and recognizes the contributions of all Chinese Canadians, but, more importantly, it ensures that stories that have so often been omitted from the canons of Canadian history endure. The exhibit reminds us that the journey towards justice does not end and that we all have a collective responsibility to advance a more inclusive and kinder Canada.

I want to thank ACCT Foundation, Senator Vivienne Poy, Chinese Graduates Association of Alberta, and to the Speaker and his office for making the special showing possible.

Broom Tree Foundation

Mrs. Johnson: Lacombe-Ponoka is full of the spirit of resilience and support, and we wouldn't have this without the impact of healthy supports throughout. The Broom Tree Foundation is one of many examples of these significant organizations. This not-for-profit dedicates itself to supporting women and their families who are faced with challenges through comprehensive community initiatives, empowering them to overcome obstacles and reach their full potential.

One of the many programs offered by Broom Tree is bridges. It helps women build connections, identify resources, and meet specific needs like diapers, groceries, food, clothing, fuel, shelter, and more. Bridges also offers immediate support for addictions and/or domestic violence and mentorship opportunities. These are provided through another of their programs, Broom Tree sisters, which provides confidential, one-on-one support with a trained mentor. Some of their other programs include the blessing bags project, providing care bags to those who are homeless; the Noel Project, providing help at Christmas to families struggling with bills, gifts, fuel, and groceries. The token program confidentially offers food from their café to families in need, and the Broom Tree Table offers delicious, nutritious home-cooked meals to families.

Transitional and temporary housing has always been an important part of their needs. This housing is meant to bridge the gap between homelessness and permanent housing for those who find themselves in a major life change, crisis, or catastrophe, whether from losing a job, a mental health issue, divorce, domestic or sexual abuse, and more. None of this would be possible without the efforts of Donna Abma and Tammy Noordhof and the rest of the Broom Tree staff, who work tirelessly to make central Alberta a better place.

When we lift each other up, we create a space where everyone can thrive. Not only are we empowering each other; we are building a community that can face challenges, embrace opportunities, and grow stronger together.

Government Policies and Cost of Living

Ms Ganley: The gap between the rich and the poor is getting wider, and it's worse in Alberta than anywhere else in the country. The top 40 per cent of earners take in 75 per cent of the income in Alberta; the bottom 40 per cent: just 11 per cent.

Now, I know what's coming. The UCP will blame anyone but themselves: it's municipal politicians; it's federal politicians; it's immigrants; it's the U.S. government and their chemtrails. They will do anything to shift blame from where it belongs. The UCP would much rather play the victim than lift a finger to help the people of this province. They do nothing to control costs. They won't act on price gouging in the electricity system or take any real steps. In some areas they're actively making it worse. In 2019 the

UCP cut all investment in affordable housing, forcing prices up and people out onto the streets. In the past five years inflation is up over 20 per cent. Minimum wage hasn't gone up a dime. Alberta has the lowest minimum wage in the country, and those under 18 earn even less.

Now, again, I know what the UCP's sad response will be: oh, but the minimum wage causes unemployment. Except that it doesn't. It's been studied extensively, and we can call that one thoroughly debunked. Affordability is consistently a top issue for Albertans, but the UCP are consistently focused on which kids can play soccer together, what vulnerable groups they can target, protecting antivaxxers and conspiracy theorists. It's shameful.

Meanwhile working Albertans fall further and further behind under this government. Albertans deserve better. It is time for the UCP to stop punching down and start governing.

Job Creation and Economic Development

Mr. McDougall: Mr. Speaker, Albertans and this government have worked tirelessly to make our province a leader in productivity and quality of life. Albertans earn Canada's highest average wages, produce and export more, and make the largest per capita contribution to both provincial and federal government revenues, revenues that sustain important government expenditures like health, education, and social services. Despite having only 12 per cent of Canada's population, Alberta accounted for 42 per cent of net private-sector job gains over the past 12 months in Canada. We also lead the nation in population growth and the construction of new rental and family homes.

Productivity per capita is a key determinant, arguably the single most important determinant of average incomes and our overall quality of life. We should be concerned that nationally GDP per capita is now 7 per cent below its long-term trend, and according to the Numbeo quality-of-life index Canada has fallen from ninth to 33rd globally since Justin Trudeau's government was first elected in 2015. To address these trends, Canadians must focus on producing more goods and services per worker.

The primary drivers of productivity are capital availability, entrepreneurship, technology, and workforce skills. Our government's economic plan allows us to keep taxes low, reduce regulatory barriers, and stimulate an environment in which both families and businesses thrive. We are also global leaders in clean, efficient energy development through technologies and innovation like carbon capture and sequestration, ensuring Alberta remains a reliable provider of clean energy to the world.

While Canada's economy struggles under federal policy, Alberta continues to thrive, but now the federal government seeks to impose more of its antiproduktivity policies through a production cap on Alberta's oil and gas industry. Alberta's government will not accept such policies that sabotage our productivity, economic freedoms, and . . .

The Speaker: Order.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition has question 1.

Family Physicians

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, in Lethbridge today if you need a new family doctor, you can't find one. There are no family doctors in Lethbridge accepting new patients. The closest family doctor

accepting new patients is in Coaldale, and it's been that way for way too long. The UCP can pick fights with other orders of government all they want, but health care is their responsibility. This is a problem of the UCP government's making. Why under their watch can a family in Lethbridge not find a family doctor?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're continuing to make great progress to get physicians, particularly family physicians, right across this province. In fact, since January 2024 AHS has recruited more than 125 physicians to rural Alberta, seven in the Edmonton zone, 31 in the north zone, 56 in the central zone, and 31 in south zone. We're going to continue to work on that to make sure that we have more family physicians, particularly in areas such as Lethbridge. That is a priority for us, and we're going to make sure that every individual has a family practitioner in that city.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, someone going online today to search for a family doctor will get no results in Lethbridge, and this shortage is a problem all over Alberta. There are a million Albertans who do not have a family doctor. As a result more people end up in emergency rooms for ailments that could have been preventable. Why has the government failed to recruit new family doctors to Lethbridge and ensure that everyone in the community has access to one? The minister talks about it being her priority. They have been in government for six years, and the problem has never been worse.

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that more and more people are coming to Alberta because we are on fire. Our economy is on fire. It's a great news story. Unfortunately, it does put a strain on our health care services. In fact, we're looking to have a multipronged approach. We have, in fact, increased our pharmacist-led clinics. That is the first of its kind in all of Canada. We have the greatest scope for our pharmacies. We have a nurse practitioner program where nurse practitioners are able to have panels independently. We're going to continue to work on this.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, the cornerstone of primary care, the very basis of our health care system, is to have a health care professional who can provide prescriptions, checkups, vaccinations, and referrals to specialists. But this UCP government has made recruiting family doctors in Lethbridge one of their lowest priorities. Right now today if a doctor considers coming to Alberta, what do they see when they google? Oh, this government hasn't signed the latest contract for months after promising to do so. Why would doctors come here under that environment? Instead the Premier chases conspiracies and chemtrails. Will they listen to Lethbridge . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Doctors want to come to Alberta because it's the best place to practice with the lowest taxes. In fact, when the members opposite were in office, there were only approximately 10,500 physicians in the province. Now we have 12,126 physicians as of September 30. More are coming. They know that we are going to have a primary care compensation model that will in fact compensate doctors and deal with complexities of patients. We're on it.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I failed at 1:46 to note the point of order that was raised by the Government House Leader during Members' Statements.

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

Airdrie City Council Concerns

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, Airdrie is a growing, thriving city that deserves respect for their local municipality, but this government has not respected Airdrie city council. In response to this government's attack on municipal decision-making known as Bill 20, Airdrie council did not mince words. They said that they were frustrated with what they call, quote, the lack of consultation with municipalities on behalf of the province, end quote. Why has this government shown communities like Airdrie so little respect?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, the opposite is actually true. I've actually been out to Airdrie a couple of times in the last few months, and we've had respectful conversations on a number of things out there. For one, the celebration of a new sports field that this government helped them get done. So what the hon. member says, essentially, is not true. We have a great working relationship with Airdrie. Do we agree on everything every day? Of course not. That's part of any working relationship, but we work closely with Airdrie, and we'll continue to do so.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, in Airdrie's own words: lack of consultation with municipalities before legislation was introduced. This Premier has spent more time studying up on conspiracies like vote tabulators than listening to local Alberta community decision-makers. Airdrie city council told the minister that they were concerned with the UCP's plans. They told the minister Bill 20's requirement to count their council and school board election ballots by hand instead of using tabulators would cost the city an additional \$160,000. Will this Premier respect Airdrie city council?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. McIver: Yeah. Mr. Speaker, we do respect Airdrie city council, and they, like all municipalities, will obey the law. The municipalities have always been responsible to pay for elections, and that hasn't changed. I'm sure that Airdrie will find an efficient and effective way to run their election, to count ballots, to report the results. I have tremendous confidence in Airdrie, and that is part of that good relationship that we have.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, this minister and that government have imposed new costs on Airdrie city council, and I know that Airdrie could find better things to spend \$160,000 on than hand counting ballots. The city council also told the minister that Bill 20 will cost the city at least another \$200,000 to prepare and maintain a permanent elections register. They suggested, perhaps, the list of eligible voters from Elections Alberta could be used instead of wasting \$360,000 in Airdrie on this faulty legislation. Will the government listen to Airdrie leaders, scrap these provisions of Bill 20?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess the answer is yes. Part of Bill 20 is that we will provide municipalities with an electors list, so the answer to the question I guess would be a hard yes.

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

Provincial Pension Plan Proposal

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve to have pension security. The Canada pension plan has always been here for us. It is stable. It is reliable for seniors across this province, but this Premier wants to gamble with your CPP, setting up a much smaller provincial pension instead and letting the UCP interfere with investments that finance retirement. It is a plan for chaos, and Albertans want nothing to do with it. Why, when so many Albertans depend on the CPP to securely finance their retirement, would this Premier gamble on an unproven, untested, smaller, riskier scheme to take away their CPP?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, there's a lot wrong with that question. Let's just start there, but I would say that all we've done is ask for more information. We released the report that we didn't build, by the way. It was built by the former company of Bill Morneau, former Liberal Finance minister of the Trudeau government. I would say that what we're looking for: we've reached out to our federal counterpart. They've reached out to the office of the Chief Actuary. They promised us in the spring that they would have interpretation of the legislation for us and a number in the fall. We've just reached out this week to see where they're at.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, Albertans do not want their pension plans messed with, and this Premier knows it, although the government has chosen to not share the information they have. They've refused to release the report that they have around the data of what Albertans want and how it has been surveyed. Albertans depend on the CPP. They're sick and tired of the games and gambling with pension security. Will the Premier commit to rip up her plan to gamble with the CPP and leave Albertans' safe and secure retirement pensions alone?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I'd remind the members opposite we passed a bill on this just last fall to show Albertans how committed we were to the fact that, if we ever were to consider this, it would have to be supremely beneficial to them. It would have to increase benefits while lowering contribution rates, and we promised that we would only ever proceed after a referendum. That is totally inaccurate, the way it was described by that member. We're doing this for Albertans. Not to mention the impact it would have on our overall economy and well-being and standard of living.

2:00

Ms Gray: The minister skipped over the promise they made in the election to not mess with the CPP. They've ignored that one. Across the province Albertans have told the Premier: hands off our CPP. Under the UCP utility prices have skyrocketed. Car insurance is the most expensive in the country. Rents keep climbing. During all of this, the last thing Albertans need is a risky UCP gamble with their hard-earned Canada pension plan. Why is the Premier ignoring Albertans and her own election promise, doubling down on the risky bet to gamble with the CPP pension benefits?

Mr. Horner: As I said, Mr. Speaker, there's absolutely no gambling happening. We've reached out to see their interpretation of the legislation, how it compares with the report that we released to Albertans, to continue that conversation.

When it comes to the other items that the member mentioned regarding auto insurance, happy to speak to that. You're a little wrong. We're the second-highest in the country, behind only Ontario; that being said, still too high. So we're doing the work on short-term reforms and long-term reforms, and we'll have more to

say about that this fall. Unfortunately, you know, potential for system change takes time.

Pharmacy Services Funding

Ms Sigurdson: Effective November 1 the UCP unilaterally cut fees and services offered by Alberta pharmacists at a time when nearly a million Albertans do not have a family doctor and our medical system is overwhelmed. This decision will cause further chaos. Pharmacists are valued partners in the health team. They decrease the demands on doctors. To the Health minister: why are you attacking the pharmacy profession at a time when their services are needed more than ever?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health has the call.

Member LaGrange: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question. In fact, we're not attacking pharmacists. We work with our pharmacists and with the RxA, which represents pharmacies across this province. We have an agreement with them that if the costs get above \$670 million, which is the allocated number for this year, we have to do something to address it. We are very close to that number. We have to do something, and we have consulted with them, and we are actually just lowering a compensation piece that we can lower just a little bit so that we can meet that demand.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that pharmacists provide important services to continuing care facilities – cutting annual care plan fees from \$100 to \$70 and follow-up visits from 12 to four means that vulnerable seniors will be put at risk – and given pharmacists provide life-changing care through medication reviews, care conferences, transitions of care, and sharing expertise regarding the appropriate use of antipsychotic medications, why is the Health minister putting vulnerable seniors in continuing care at significant risk due to these ill-advised cuts to pharmacy services?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, these are not cuts to pharmacy services. These are, in fact, an alteration of the fee structure so that we can have a pharmacy system that is sustainable. The care plans and follow-ups are the fastest growing clinical pharmacy services, accounting for the majority of expenditures, more than a 65 per cent increase in '23-24, and since 2018 that has grown by 79 per cent. We have to make sure that we stay within that \$670 million envelope, but that means that Albertans still can have those care plans provided for them.

Ms Sigurdson: Given the Alberta seniors demographic is growing faster than that of all others and given this government has now admitted the vaccines they were supposed to deliver to doctors' offices have now been permanently cut off and given this leaves pharmacists scrambling to be the primary providers of vaccinations, which burdens them with this responsibility while also taking on more health care services, was the UCP simply incompetent when they said that they couldn't get a delivery truck to ship vaccines, or did they have this ulterior plan all along?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, there was so much misinformation in that question that I'm not even sure where to begin. First of all, the comprehensive care plans are still available for every Albertan who needs one. The follow-ups are there as well. We are looking to continue to work with the RxA. In fact, we start negotiations here

in November for the upcoming contract, which ends at the end of March. We're going to continue to provide pharmacies with the dollars that they need to provide services. In fact, there has been no change to their immunization fees.

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

Lethbridge Postsecondary Funding

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's postsecondary institutions have faced the worst cuts in their history by this UCP government. It should come as no surprise that institutions like the University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge Polytechnic are facing uncertain futures because of this UCP government. These spaces should be where bright futures for thousands of Albertans begin, but without adequate funding this is impossible. Why have this government and this minister failed to understand how important Lethbridge postsecondaries are to the city of Lethbridge?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, Advanced Education's budget is \$6.4 billion, and the portion that the government of Alberta is responsible for: 90 per cent of it goes to postsecondary institutions in the form of a base operating grant. We also fund the postsecondaries with targeted enrolment expansion dollars. That's \$225 million over three years. We work very closely with the postsecondary institutions to make sure that we are meeting their needs.

Mr. Eggen: Well, for example, given that the University of Lethbridge had a 21 per cent cut to its operating grant between 2019 to 2022, given that they only increased funding this year by an embarrassing 1.5 per cent – with inflation this is just another cut – and given that Alberta has seen huge growth in the K to 12 student population and a need for more, not fewer, postsecondary training spaces, why is this minister actively making it harder for young Albertans at the University of Lethbridge and at Lethbridge Polytechnic?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to work with Lethbridge Polytechnic, which used to be Lethbridge College – we just announced that they've converted to a polytechnic – and the University of Lethbridge. In fact, in Budget 2024 we announced \$42 million in capital funding for the rural medical health program. We are investing in Lethbridge, and I've got more to say about that.

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that students are struggling to make ends meet between tuition and rent increases, the cost of food, car insurance and given that the price tag of a postsecondary degree or a college diploma is now already out of reach for many people, given that Lethbridge relies on the postsecondaries in its city for a stable economy and to attract and to maintain its young population, why is the government starving out Lethbridge Polytechnic and the University of Lethbridge just when the city of Lethbridge needs them the most?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, we know that the cost of living challenges are real for students, and that's why we've capped tuition at 2 per cent, we've increased the interest-free grace period for students, and I recently rejected exceptional tuition increases as well from institutions because we know that we need to support our students. In fact, \$1.4 billion is available in student aid to make sure that students get that quality education that they so deserve.

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

Electric Power System

Mr. Wiebe: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has a deregulated electricity market that is unique in Canada. It provides Albertans with choice and attracts investment and is yet another example of Alberta's free spirit. However, our electricity system has undergone a great deal of change over the past three decades and needs to be modernized to ensure Albertans have affordable and reliable power for generations to come. To the Minister of Affordability and Utilities: what are you doing to ensure that our electricity grid is reliable and remains affordable for Albertans?

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

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our UCP government is doing the work the NDP failed to do and making long-term market reforms to ensure that power is affordable and reliable while maintaining Alberta's free-market system and values. What we are not doing and will never do is taking advice for electricity policy from the NDP. After all, it's the NDP who caused transmission fees to skyrocket, cost Albertans over a billion dollars by stranding assets and suing private businesses, and made our grid and power prices as volatile as the weather.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that since deregulation in the 1990s Alberta's unique electricity market has attracted roughly \$40 billion in private investment and given that our competitive retail electricity market gives Albertans the power to choose the best energy provider to fit their needs and given that our deregulated system has served Albertans very well over the past three decades, to the Minister of Affordability and Utilities: what are the dangers of moving away from our deregulated system?

2:10

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

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for that excellent question. Nationalizing Alberta's electricity system is a foolish and preposterous idea that would cost Albertans billions if not trillions of dollars. Some may claim that it would save ratepayers money but fail to acknowledge that the taxpayers would just end up footing the bill, not to mention that without private competition and investment those costs could be exponentially higher. Our government strongly opposes any attempts to appropriate and socialize or communize our electricity system.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the NDP's reckless coal phase-out and attempts to nationalize our electricity system drove up power prices and given that the NDP-Trudeau alliance carbon tax is driving up the cost of everything, including electricity bills, and given that the latest CPI data shows that Alberta's electricity prices are down 36 per cent year over year, to the Minister of Affordability and Utilities: what has the UCP government been doing to lower the cost of Albertans' power bills?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for another great question. Lowering the cost of everyday essentials like utility bills is a top priority for our UCP government. That's why we are modernizing Alberta's electricity system to be affordable, reliable, and dependable. We've introduced new

legislation to prevent power price spikes. We've lowered and stabilized local access fees, saving Calgarians over \$30 million next year alone. And there's still more to come. This has already made a measurable difference, with the default power rate down nearly 70 per cent from its peak last year.

Municipal Funding

Ms Ganley: The president of the Rural Municipalities of Alberta said that, quote, in the next five to 10 years, if things are status quo and do not change, you will see municipalities go bankrupt. End quote. That is the reality after five years of the UCP government. They've piled on costs and refused to pay their grants in lieu of taxes. The notion that municipalities could go bankrupt: it should be shocking, so will the minister acknowledge how serious this crisis is, or will this government continue to wash its hands of the crisis it created?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, there is no crisis. In fact, it happens on a fairly regular basis that a municipality dissolves and goes into the surrounding municipality. This is not unusual. The fact is that we're dealing with a couple of different municipalities on the possibility of that right now, and that's not extraordinary. It's something that happens from time to time, and we have programs there to assist the receiving municipality and the one that may choose to dissolve. We are aware that we need to support municipalities. We do that with many funding streams that help.

Ms Ganley: Given that, far from being a normal occurrence, municipal bankruptcies would be unprecedented, throwing local governments into chaos and threatening crucial services that Albertans throughout the province rely on, will this Premier listen to rural municipalities, pay up on their grants in lieu of taxes, and stop putting this crisis in jeopardy?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, I have a lot more confidence in municipalities than the member opposite does. They are not in chaos. They do a great job. We have predictable funding like the LGFF, which they actually asked for and we said yes, where they know the funding they're going to get on capital for the next two years. They know before they even have to set next year's budget. They already know. Just this morning the minister of public safety acknowledged that the federal government was going to add 39 per cent next year to policing costs, and that minister – and we're co-operating with them – is going to relieve them of that pressure. We work closely with the municipalities every single day and continue to work hard with them.

Ms Ganley: Given, Mr. Speaker, that that's not what municipalities have to say about it, the president of RMA having described the relationship as strained, and given that the UCP has driven family doctors out of the province, especially in rural Alberta, and they've downloaded costs and slashed funding to local municipalities and given that they dictate how rural communities should police themselves and even impose laws like Bill 20, that no one wants, my question to the Premier is simple: what will it take for her to do her job and start listening to these leaders?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, Grande Cache went into Greenview when the NDP was in government, just as a little reminder to the other side of what they accomplished when they were here. But the LGFF: based on what the municipalities asked for, they're going to get 18 per cent more next year in funding, which is up with the provincial revenue, and, in fairness, 3 per cent less because they asked for the revenue to go up and down with the provincial revenue

and we said yes. Again, we just this morning announced that we're going to protect them from a 39 per cent increase on the RCMP costs foisted upon them by the RCMP with no additional officers, no additional services, and we're working with them on that.

Music Industry Support

Member Ceci: Mr. Speaker, musicians across Alberta are struggling with changing audience sizes, fewer ticket sales, and increased costs. The current wages for musicians have not kept up with inflation, gig payouts for musicians have not increased in 20 years, I'm told, and streaming services pay pennies per spin. In some extreme cases some musicians are experiencing homelessness, and others are being forced to leave Alberta or leave the profession they love altogether. What specific steps has the minister taken to provide supports for Alberta's musicians?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Much like the film and television sector, Alberta's music sector is poised for continued growth and offers opportunities for both economic development and job creation. Over the last three years our government has invested an average of almost \$15 million into the music sector each year. In 2020 Alberta's music scene contributed \$1.7 billion to the province's GDP and supported more than 20,000 jobs. Our government is developing a provincial action plan that will ensure Alberta's music sector keeps growing.

Member Ceci: Well, on that note, given that reports from Calgary Arts Development and West Anthem show that the music industry contributes a significant amount of money to Alberta's GDP and presents an opportunity to grow and diversify our economy and given that the minister recently met with music industry professionals to discuss the opportunity to create a music commission in Alberta to support this industry, can the minister tell us what the timeline to create this commission is and what tangible actions the government is taking to achieve this goal?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta music action plan builds on areas identified by West Anthem, a music-sector advocacy group. And, yes, at a recent round-table meeting with music-sector leaders I shared potential actions, including establishing a government-led music commission, options for improving existing grants under the Alberta media fund, and expanding partnership opportunities. I also shared details on the new women in technical arts scholarship, which supports women pursuing opportunities beyond just the talent on the stage.

Member Ceci: Given that prior to the pandemic nearly 600 venues presenting music were reported across the Edmonton and Calgary areas and given that as of February 2023 about 1 in 7 of those venues have permanently closed – others have temporarily closed or pivoted to a new focus – and given that for the first time ever FACTOR, Canada's music industry funder, just created a grant that will support music venue owners who showcase Canadian musicians presenting their original music, will this government consider copying FACTOR-type grants for Alberta music venues so we can develop more of Alberta's great musicians?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My ministry is proud through many grants within my ministry, particularly CIP, the community initiatives program, and CFEP, the community facility enhancement program. It's open to all sorts of community groups, nonprofit organizations, including music organizations, to be able to apply for grants within my department. We also have our crowd-funding application. Another great outlet that shares Alberta music is CKUA, and I would encourage the member opposite to advocate for federal funding for CKUA, not just for the CBC. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

SCAN and FASST Units

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, the establishment of specialized Alberta sheriffs Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods units, or SCAN as it's better known, is busy shutting down drug houses right across the province. Through SCAN Alberta's government has established another mechanism to fight crime and keep unwelcome illegal activity out of Alberta communities. Alberta's government is committed to ensuring the safety of all Albertans, and safety remains a top priority for our government as residents deserve to feel safe no matter where they live. SCAN has had a number of new units begin operating over the past year. To the Deputy Premier: can he please share an update on the work and where the teams are located across Alberta?

2:20

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I just want to thank all the men and women who are in uniform keeping Albertans safe right now. Thank you so much.

Since May SCAN completed the closure of seven problem properties, including three in Calgary, two in Lethbridge, one in Spruce Grove, one in Medicine Hat. Since SCAN's inception in 2008 it has investigated more than 9,800 properties, issued 129 community safety orders. The message is simply clear in this province. If you are an organized crime member, if you are an offender, if you are wreaking havoc on this community, let me be clear. You are not welcome in this province. Full stop.

Mr. Yao: Thank you to the minister for that fantastic answer. It's given that it's not uncommon for these drug houses to be situated next to schools, playgrounds, and the homes of law-abiding Albertans as criminals try to hide in plain sight, all places where personal safety should never ever be in question, and further given that the reality is that crime knows no boundaries, can the same minister please explain to this House the key benefits of having a SCAN team in their neighbourhood?

Mr. Ellis: Well, Mr. Speaker, as we continue to augment and support all of our law enforcement throughout the community, some of these SCAN files are quite complex, requiring a lot of work not only through warrants and the work that they do with within their organization but, of course, working with the Crown prosecutor's office to tackle those problem crimes. We're going to continue to do that work. We're going to continue to free up more boots on the ground for folks in rural Alberta, for folks within Calgary and Edmonton, and where calls to service, as we know, are the most important. We're going to continue to augment and support all municipalities and jurisdictions in this province and keep Albertans safe.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, it is given that the evolving criminal landscape is growing because of failed policies in Ottawa as repeat violent offenders continue to get bail and out of jail, given that our

new Fugitive Apprehension Sheriffs Support Team, or FASST, plays a critical role in improving public safety, ensuring that individuals wanted on warrants are brought to justice, can the same minister please explain to this House how many outstanding warrants there are in Alberta and how FASST is effectively bringing offenders to justice?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There is no doubt. I thank the member for realizing that the NDP-Liberal catch-and-release program is in full effect right here in the country of Canada, and of course that is not excluding here in the province of Alberta. We have over 82,000 outstanding warrants in the province of Alberta. We can't expect all of our police officers to do this, so, again, we continue to augment and support and provide all those additional resources, including our folks within the FASST team. I can tell you that just over the recent time they've executed over 1,993 warrants in this province, again, trying to keep Albertans safe and augment and support all of our police services in this province. Thank you.

Unemployment and Job Creation

Member Hoyle: Mr. Speaker, Alberta has the second-highest jobless rate in Canada, the highest west of Newfoundland. Financial experts point out that we don't have enough jobs for people moving to Alberta. There's also no sign it's going to slow down. During the first three months of this year our population increased by 204,000, the biggest year-over-year growth rate since the early 1980s. This government continues to say that Alberta is calling, but what's the minister's plan to create job opportunities for those coming here to strengthen our economy?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Infrastructure has the call.

Mr. Guthrie: Yeah. Mr. Speaker, you know, this is not my file, but with the week closing out and all the trash talk here from the NDP, I wanted to list off some of the good news here. There are 73,000 more people working in Alberta today than 12 months ago. Employment increased 3 per cent compared to 1.5 per cent nationally. Average weekly earnings: up 3.9 per cent. At the end of September there were 71,000 job vacancies in the province, and GDP is forecast to grow by 3.3 per cent this year and remain strong. Alberta's economy is consistently showing resilience and strength.

Member Hoyle: Given that Alberta has the highest unemployment rate in the country outside of the Atlantic provinces at 7.7 per cent and given that Edmonton's unemployment rate hit a high of 9 per cent this year, the second-highest in the country, and given that Albertans deserve good-paying jobs to support their families, put food on the table, heat their homes, keep a roof over their heads, when will this minister step up and make sure we have good-paying jobs in Alberta?

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, more good news. Alberta is the best place to invest in Canada because of low taxes, red tape reduction, and business-friendly policies. In fact, in the first half of 2024 Alberta raised \$383 million across 41 venture capital deals. Calgary's tech ecosystem grew more than 200 per cent. The five-year growth rate for venture capital is 48.5 per cent, more than triple Canada's rate. In the first three quarters of this year alone over 33,000 new homes were under construction. That's a 35 per cent improvement over last year. People are flocking to Alberta for good reason, a strong job market, opportunity . . .

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

Member Hoyle: Well, given that Albertans need good-paying jobs to support themselves and their families and given that the rapid growth in the province has made it so that the housing market can't keep up, driving rent up, home prices higher and higher, and given that Albertans' wage growth lags behind other provinces – I've heard from hundreds of constituents in Edmonton-South and across this province who are still struggling to make ends meet, despite those statistics – Albertans deserve to know: why is this government not focused on growing our economy in a sustainable way?

Mr. Guthrie: Okay, Mr. Speaker; I'll take more positive news for \$1,000. Since the launch of the 2020 film and television tax credit Alberta has funded 267 productions. This has translated into \$1.5 billion invested here at home. Film, television, music, books, and magazines contribute in the order of \$3 billion plus to Alberta's economy yearly, and it's continuing to grow. Alberta has the lowest corporate tax in Canada, no sales tax, highest personal tax exemption rate, and a tax cut on the horizon. You know what I say? Not too shabby.

Technology Industry Investment in Alberta

Mr. Ip: Mr. Speaker, words matter. I'm hearing directly from innovation leaders who say that this Premier's comments promoting conspiracy theories like chemtrails are harming Alberta's reputation on the global stage. This government talks big about wanting to be an innovation hub for health care delivery, yet they actively destroy our health care system and drive away doctors. They talk of becoming a leader in the life sciences but sideline scientists and industry experts. These contradictions drive away investment. Does the Premier not understand that her words have consequences and are harming Alberta's reputation?

Mr. Glubish: Mr. Speaker, the member is in no place to comment about what's going on in Alberta's innovation ecosystem. When those members were in government, Alberta was only seeing \$30 million a year invested in Alberta's tech ecosystem. You know how much was invested in 2022? Seven hundred and twenty-nine million. You know how much was invested into Alberta's tech ecosystem in 2023? Seven hundred and nine million dollars. And that was at a time when the Canadian market as a whole declined by 30 per cent. The NDP have no idea how to create a strong, thriving, and growing tech ecosystem, but we do.

Mr. Ip: Given that an innovation leader recently asked me, and I quote, "What the heck is happening in Alberta?" and that they're succeeding in spite of this government, not because of this government, and given that it's clear that industry leaders expect forward-thinking leadership from government, not pandering to fringe conspiracies or careening from crisis to crisis, but given that the Premier's chemtrail remarks among other conspiracy theories, on top of this government's mismanagement of major projects, are leaving Alberta's business leaders wondering if this government is serious about economic growth, very simply, how does the Premier plan to mitigate the impact of her comments and gain the trust of . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Technology and Innovation.

Mr. Glubish: Mr. Speaker, the member talks about talking to one innovation leader. I talk to hundreds of innovation leaders. You know what they tell me? Alberta has never been a better place than

it is today to invest in tech, to build new technologies, to commercialize those companies, and to build new tools to solve new problems. We are proud to be partners with Alberta's tech ecosystem. We have, of course, Alberta Enterprise as our venture capital funded funds, which has been a key part of attracting investment into Alberta's tech ecosystem. We have Alberta Innovates, which is our grant programs to help commercialize early-stage technology companies. We invest in research with our postsecondaries. What we are doing is working.

2:30

Mr. Ip: Given that Alberta's global reputation is at stake and given that this Premier has a well-established record of promoting unsubstantiated claims such as warning that the federal government could replace the loonie with a digital currency or once suggesting that smoking cigarettes could reduce cancer risk, how does this Premier plan to correct this? Or what conspiracy theory will the UCP push on Albertans next?

Mr. Glubish: Mr. Speaker, when I travel around the world to brag about what's happening in Alberta, folks are so excited to hear what we have to say. You know what? When I talk to venture capital funds all over the world and I tell them what we're developing here, they say, "I need more Alberta; tell me more about what's going on in Alberta," and when I tell them, "Hey. Come to Alberta. I'll make it worth your time," they're taking me up on that. The members opposite like to try and go on rabbit trails about things that aren't really relevant to Alberta's tech ecosystem, but over here we know what to do in order to drive investment, to bring investors into Alberta, and to build technology companies here in Alberta. That's why we have more technology companies today than ever before, and they're growing faster than ever before.

Highway 53

Mrs. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, no one likes driving on bad roads. Potholes, loose crumbly asphalt, and misshapen bumps are a dangerous combo in even some of the best conditions. This is the state of highway 53, a vital east-west route in the Lacombe-Ponoka constituency. The highway is host to consistent year-round traffic for many daily users. Its role in supporting residents and businesses, especially during peak periods, is beyond invaluable. To the minister of transportation: how is Alberta's government planning to address the needs of highway 53 to ensure it will be a safe and effective highway?

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

Mr. Dreeshen: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to commend the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka for being such a fierce advocate for projects in her area. When it comes to highway 53, there are two projects currently on the books. There will be an intersection improvement near Forestburg, just three kilometres east of highway 856 and highway 608. As well, on highway 53, right beside the Ponoka Stampede grounds, there'll be paving and lighting improvements. These are two really important projects that will be in that member's constituency, and the construction on both of those projects will start next year.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and, through you, to the minister for that great answer. Given that highway 53 is a crucial route for the many attendees of the Ponoka Stampede, with Mayor

Ferguson even nicknaming it Rodeo Drive, and given that this event has a major cultural and economic impact, with the professional bull riding event being the largest single-day bull riding event in the world, and given that this is an event attracting international talent and attendees, bringing in thousands of spectators, could the same minister explain how highway 53 will be supported and maintained through a long-term plan?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of transportation.

Mr. Dreeshen: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm a huge fan of the Ponoka Stampede, and we'll do everything that we can to make sure that, again, it'll be safe by next year.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting. Just three days before this year's Ponoka Stampede was the NDP's leadership race, where Nenshi got 5 per cent less approval than our leader did. You'd think that the NDP would be unburdened by what has been, but their former leader is still here, and their current leader is missing in action. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and, again through you, to the same minister. Given that homelessness is increasingly becoming a critical issue around highway 53, with the homeless settling even under the town sign, and given that this presents a risk not only to them but to the commuters along the congested two-lane system that is highway 53, can the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services tell the Assembly how the issue of homelessness around highway 53 will be addressed to support a growing and safe community?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, as the NDP leader, No-show Nenshi, continues to hide in the Alberta Legislature gallery, watching his caucus fumble around, confused that there's a whole world outside of Calgary and Edmonton, this caucus knows that rural Alberta exists, that it matters, which is why we continue to invest significantly in homelessness supports all across the province, unlike the NDP; \$212 million this year alone just for emergency homeless supports.

We're working very closely with Ponoka. I want to thank the hon. member for her advocacy on this issue, Mr. Speaker. We just recently met with the mayor, and we're going to be going forward with some really excellent rural plans, that are based around Ponoka, to be able to care for the homeless.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington has a question to ask.

School Construction

Ms Chapman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta schools have been bursting at the seams for years now, and if you listen to the UCP, you would think that this was the marker of some kind of great success. In reality, it's a huge failure. It is emblematic of this government's failure to plan, failure to do anything but careen wildly from crisis to crisis. In this case it's a crisis of their own making. Will the minister please explain to parents why this government is so proud of bungling school constructions for years?

Mr. Nicolaidis: Well, Mr. Speaker, in 2021 and 2022, coming out of the pandemic, we had zero enrolment growth or very flat enrolment growth, but of course our government took serious steps to reignite our economy coming out of the pandemic and get our

economy back on its feet, and it's worked incredibly well, which is why we're seeing hundreds of thousands of people move to the province. We're going to make sure that they have the schools that they need, which is why we've announced one of the largest school construction programs in recent history to build over 200,000 spaces in our communities of greatest need.

Ms Chapman: Given that the Education minister reported that construction at Diefenbaker high school in my riding of Calgary-Beddington is under way and given that Diefenbaker is a school well over 100 per cent capacity and given that the modernization of this school was approved in 2023, the only CBE project that was funded for construction that year, but this work has yet to begin nearly a year and a half later, can the minister explain why Alberta parents should trust this government's ability to build 30 new schools a year when he can't even start construction on one?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, we're moving forward on all projects as quickly as possible, and, in addition, we are implementing new recommendations from the Auditor General to ensure that projects are able to move forward as quickly as possible. Now, as I mentioned before, the NDP never had to worry about building schools at such a rapid pace because when they were in government, they closed businesses; they increased taxes; they drove investment out of the province; they even went so far as to tell people to leave Alberta and find jobs elsewhere. We are proud of the fact that Alberta is back and booming again.

Ms Chapman: Well, given that the UCP has a long record of broken promises to parents, given that they've broken their promises before on building and retrofitting the schools we already have and given that without classroom funding for more teachers, EAs, and support staff there will be no one to educate the students in these new schools, does the minister believe that kids will figure out how to teach themselves, or will he commit to staffing the schools that Albertans desperately need?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, we are providing more investment and more dollars to our school boards so that they can hire more staff. Just as recently as July we announced \$125 million in new funding to our school divisions so they can hire more staff. In addition, \$44 million is going out the door this year alone so that school boards can hire more EAs, psychologists, and other specialized staff. We will be there to ensure that our school divisions have the funding that they need to accommodate this unprecedented enrolment growth. Our government will make sure that every student receives a world-class education.

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

Continuing Care System

Mr. Lundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The establishment of four specialized provincial health agencies – primary care, acute care, continuing care, and mental health and addiction – is an important step in creating an effective health care system across the province. Our government is committed to ensuring that all Albertans, including valued seniors, are supported with comprehensive services that meet both their medical and nonmedical needs. Can the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services please explain to this House how our refocused health care system will lead to improved health outcomes for seniors?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're working to refocus the health care system on many different areas, including on continuing care, to make sure that we come forward with plans that have true wraparound services, including health supports around our seniors in the community, but also to be innovative in the way that we provide those supports as we go forward with our aging population to be able to make sure that Albertans can age in the community that they want and they can continue to enjoy their senior years. We're investing \$654 million over the next three years in new capital initiatives, including focusing on Indigenous types of supports and culturally different appropriate supports and a billion dollars just specifically on transformation.

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

Mr. Lundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and, through you, to the minister for that answer. Given that seniors are the backbone of our communities and deserve our appreciation and support and further given that many seniors wish to stay in their communities so that they can continue to contribute to their betterment, can the same minister please explain to this House some of the key benefits of continuing care, including the role that continuing care can play in helping seniors maintain their independence and quality of life where they live?

2:40

Mr. Nixon: Well, we know, Mr. Speaker, that not all seniors need to go into a permanent facility or a government-subsidized or private facility to care for them, that they may need just some care service inside their own home in our communities, which is why we're continuing to focus on innovative ways to be able to invest in either upgrading seniors' homes, providing medication in different ways, providing transportation and our mental health services or other things along those ways that can make sure to help seniors be able to live in their own homes as long as they want, be able to contribute and participate in our communities.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and, through you, to the minister. Given the evolving landscape of health care and the growing emphasis on prioritizing the needs and preferences of patients and given the critical role that patient-centred care plays in improving health outcomes, ensuring that individuals feel valued and heard within the health care system, can the same minister please explain what strategies will be implemented to provide patient-centred care effectively in the continuing care system?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're going to be very focused on increasing appropriate beds for those who need to go into continuing care so we can make sure that we get people into more appropriate places for their circumstances and not in acute care. To do that, besides adding beds, we will be working on innovative technology that will bring all of the health care system together to be able to provide input to the social services system so we can make sure that we bring true wraparound supports around each individual, work with their families, and get them to the appropriate place. Most importantly, as a rural Albertan we will be continuing to make sure that the damaging policy of the NDP to directly attack continuing care in rural Alberta will stop.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will continue with the remainder of the daily Routine.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has a statement to make.

Cost of Living

Mr. Haji: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are facing a growing affordability crisis, grappling with the highest electricity costs among comparable provinces and the second-highest insurance rates in Canada. These burdens come when the province is having the highest unemployment rates outside the Maritime provinces and the lowest minimum wage nationally. Rising costs are increasing impact on food security, a critical issue for many. According to Food Banks Canada Alberta's food insecurity rate is 27 per cent higher than the national average, with 47 per cent of Albertans reporting that they feel worse off financially compared to last year.

The Calgary Foundation's report on quality of life sheds light on how deep this crisis runs, Mr. Speaker: over a quarter of Calgarians struggle to afford healthy food and there's a notable 28 per cent increase in Calgarians visiting the food bank. Similarly, Edmonton's Food Bank has seen a 37 per cent increase over the past 12 months. High living costs paired with stagnant wages and rising unemployment are pushing many Albertans to the brink, forcing difficult choices between paying for utilities, affording basic insurance, or putting food on the table.

Mr. Speaker, when 1 in 5 Calgarians cannot afford to eat without community support and over a quarter can't maintain healthy diets, these are not isolated struggles but symptoms of a growing affordability crisis across this province. Instead of prioritizing affordability for struggling households, this government has allowed costs to climb, resulting in provinces where everyday living is increasingly out of reach for average citizens. This isn't just about numbers; it's about real families falling behind, forced to endure unnecessary hardships due to poor policy choices. The government needs to take action.

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, is this a petition that's been approved by Parliamentary Counsel?

Ms Hoffman: Yes.

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

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In line with the more than 20,000 online signatures that I tabled yesterday, I have a number of formal Legislative Assembly drafted and approved handwritten signatures in relation to the Royal Alberta Museum as well.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Technology and Innovation.

Bill 33

Protection of Privacy Act

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 33, the Protection of Privacy Act.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year I announced my intention to implement a series of initiatives to deliver for Albertans the strongest privacy protections in the country and the strictest

penalties for privacy violations in the country. This act is the next step in that plan. I look forward to healthy debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 33 read a first time]

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

Bill 34

Access to Information Act

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce Bill 34, the Access to Information Act.

The proposed act is one of two pieces of legislation created to replace the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, or FOIP. The modernization of the FOIP Act will allow Alberta to fall in line with policy from every other province in the country as well as the federal government. The need for cabinet confidentiality is recognized unilaterally by governments across the country as well as the Supreme Court as essential to good governance.

I therefore move first reading of the Access to Information Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 34 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Are there tablings? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, followed by Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Ellingson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today in support of our trans community in Alberta to table yet another e-mail that we received in our constituency office, saying that

gender affirming care saved my best friend's life. If there is no . . . gender-affirming care available, people I love will die.

It is . . . easy to prevent this. Gender-affirming care saves lives. Albertans are trans, whether you like it or not. Albertans are queer, whether you like it or not. We . . .

The Speaker: Order. I might just remind members that the purpose of tablings is so that members of the Assembly are able to read it at their own time, not to read the letter into the record.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you. I'd like to table a letter from a number of organizations here in Edmonton, written in September, all calling on all levels of government to address the increasing encampment evictions, frostbite, and the houselessness crisis in Edmonton. I would urge all members of the House, including the minister responsible for housing, to read this article.

The Speaker: Excellent. Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Member Kayande: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the five requisite copies of three letters: one from Spencer Patterson, one from Jennifer Lohuis, one from Samantha Ireland, constituents of Calgary-Elbow who are begging the Premier to reconsider her antitrans bills.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health has a tabling.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings, actually. On behalf of the Premier I'm pleased to table five copies of the Summary of National Guidelines, published December of 2022, that the Premier referenced in her remarks yesterday. The guidelines are from the Sweden National Board of Health and

Welfare called Care of Children and Adolescents with Gender Dysphoria.

The other tabling. Can I go ahead?

The Speaker: Please proceed.

Member LaGrange: I am pleased to table five copies of the Cass report, an Independent Review of Gender Identity Services for Children and Young People. The Premier referenced this extensive U.K. report from Dr. Hilary Cass in her remarks yesterday. It's an excellent read.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, followed by the Government House Leader.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings that I referred to in debate yesterday. The first, actually, was from question period, which shows that 95 per cent of the respondents on the survey about the Royal Alberta Museum would like the building preserved.

The second one is about Texas abortion laws, meaning that ob-gyn workforce is at risk in Texas generally.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the Premier to table five copies of the December 2, 2023, *Forbes* article by Joshua P. Cohen, that discusses Europe's fact-based conversations on care for transgender youth and America's political-based conversations in the same, which she referred to in her remarks yesterday.

Also, five copies of another tweet by the UN's special rapporteur on violence against women and girls in support of Bill 29, the Fairness and Safety in Sport Act.

2:50

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by St. Albert.

Dr. Metz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of a manuscript from the *Journal of the American Medical Association* dated November 1, 2024, titled Texas Banned Abortion in 2022: Here's How It's Affecting Ob-gyns and Patient Care. It describes devastating loss of ob-gyn workforce, and I would like it to be considered when we think about all the bills targeting transgender people and what effect that will have on the supposed recruitment...

The Speaker: I might just remind all members that the purpose of the tabling is so that members can read the document which you hope that they will read, not extensively describe the content of the document or encourage members how they might use that document.

The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Ms Renaud: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies of an opinion piece published in the *Calgary Herald*. It's entitled Disabilities and Homelessness: Alberta Can Do Better, written by Andrew Green, Robert Philp, Anna Lund, and Adam Cembrowski.

The Speaker: Excellent work.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the five requisite copies of a Fraser Institute article showcasing that by 2030 the carbon tax will cost workers 6,700 bucks.

Ms Hayter: I rise to table the five requisite copies of a letter from Edgemont, from Pamela to the Premier, saying that everybody has the right to safety and dignity and belonging; everybody has the right to life-affirming and nondiscriminatory health care. Pamela is calling on the Alberta government to step into integrity and stop the provincial bill.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of a constituent I'm tabling five copies of a letter from Brendalee Letendre, who is a parent to trans children and is concerned about legislation.

My second tabling is from a constituent, Raven Borstad, also a parent to trans children concerned about the antitrans legislation that's been introduced.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that brings us to points of order. At 1:56 the Government House Leader rose on a point of order.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Schow: Yes, Mr. Speaker. At the time you noted, I called the point of order, and I'm citing 23(h), (i), and (j), in particular, "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely create disorder." At the time noted, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View was delivering a member statement. It is common in practice that we don't call points of order during member statements, but I made a point of doing it after the fact given, I think, the importance of making note of the comments made. In the statement there are two issues that I have. First is where the member says something about "vulnerable groups [that] they... target," particularly "protecting antivaxxers and conspiracy theorists." Then she goes on to say, "Albertans deserve better. It is time for the UCP to stop punching down and start governing."

Now, Mr. Speaker, yesterday you did provide caution on the use of the term "punching down." You had said specifically – and I just pulled this up here – that you had issues with the term "punching down" as "I... heard it... used on a number of occasions inside the Chamber." It has a number of implications or meanings, one of which is to attack; now, the other side is to criticize. In this instance I don't really believe it's criticizing. I really do believe the term is "punching down."

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I trust the intent of the Member for Calgary-Mountain View is not to try to create disruption or create disorder in the Chamber, but it is, you know, to make a point. The language being used is in fact creating disorder. I think it's language that isn't appropriate for this kind of debate. So I would offer some suggestions of different language to be used. For example, punching down: instead of saying, "It's time for the UCP to stop punching down and start governing," I would say that the UCP should keep governing with the same level of transparency and integrity they've shown since 2019. With regard to the term of "protecting antivaxxers" I'd say: defending medical bodily autonomy.

The Speaker: I might just interrupt the Government House Leader. It sounds to me like he was using the end of that point of order to continue the debate. I will accept the first half of the argument on its merits.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but I do believe that the Government House

Leader has the quotation correct, and I think it is really salient to this. It was “It is time for the UCP to stop punching down and start governing.” I did note your caution yesterday, during which you said – and this is from November 5 *Hansard* page 1919 – “But if members are implying that other members are punching individuals, Albertans, young people, of course this is a point of order.” Now, it’s clear that the member was talking about the UCP, a collective of people, and talking about governing, not talking about an individual member throwing punches.

Now, why would that language be used? Well, as per *Cambridge Dictionary* the definition of punching down: “to attack or criticize someone who is in a worse or less powerful position than you.” *Collins Dictionary* says, “If someone punches down, they attack or criticize people who are less powerful or important than they are.” Mr. Speaker, I feel that this definition applies incredibly well. According to the Stats Canada 2021 census approximately .15 per cent of Albertans 15 or older identify as transgender or nonbinary, yet fully 25 per cent of this government’s legislative agenda is targeting this vulnerable group.

A recent study of more than 6.6 million people found that those who identify as trans had a 7.7 times rate of suicide attempts and a 3.5 times rate of suicide deaths than the broader population studied. A recent peer-reviewed journal found antitransgender laws have a significant and causal impact on suicide risk among transgender and nonbinary people. When we are talking about less . . .

The Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, but just as I did to the Government House Leader for, in my opinion, continuing the debate, it sounds a lot like the hon. Opposition House Leader is continuing debate on the substantive issue that is before the Assembly. If she’d like to continue to speak specifically to the point of order, I’m happy to hear that, but if she wants to continue debate, I am prepared to rule.

Ms Gray: No. I appreciate your feedback, Mr. Speaker. I am simply trying to suggest how punching down, which you hear most colloquially when you’re talking about comedians and making jokes, is, again, targeting vulnerable people and how we are equating that to the legislative agenda and how I think the definition applies.

But let me get back to a couple of other quick arguments. We have had similar points of order, especially around what behaviour an individual might be doing versus groups of people or collectives. The depersonalization has often been a critical part of your rulings in the past; as an example, April 23, 2024. Even just in the language we heard today in this Assembly, I was reminded of how often the government loves to refer to the NDP collective and use very aggressive language, whether it’s NDP drug sites or that the NDP want people to freeze in tents, I’ve heard in the past. Today I heard: drove investment out of Alberta, closed businesses. At the very end – I don’t have the benefit of the Blues – I’m fairly certain I heard: attack on rural Alberta. Again, speaking to the collective, which is why I did not call points of order on these things, because I believe this is all a matter of debate.

The member at no point was implying that an individual was going around and physically striking. Using an idiom that I think people understand contributing to the debate around a group of people who I would suggest are quite vulnerable: I think that it is appropriate language to use in this Chamber.

I did review your ruling yesterday, so our use of it is in no way intended as disrespect. I hope that you will find that it is not a point of order, that instead we are just continuing debate here, so that we can get back to the business of this afternoon.

The Speaker: I am prepared to rule. I have the benefit of the Blues, but if there is a member who believes they have a substantive argument to add, I am prepared to hear that as well.

Hon. members, I would like to just comment briefly. I’ll provide a note for you, perhaps some light reading later. December 1, 2010, Speaker Kowalski makes some comments about points of order during Members’ Statements, members being allowed to have the widest swath possible but that members also have a responsibility during that time to use language that is in order. If you are inclined to read the ruling, I’ll leave that to you.

I do have the benefit of the Blues. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View said the following. “Meanwhile working Albertans fall further and further behind under this government. Albertans deserve better. It is time for the UCP to stop punching down and start governing,” which has been reported here today. I am glad that the hon. member had the opportunity to review the point of order ruling yesterday. The compelling portion of the argument for this afternoon is, in fact, in the Leader of the Official Opposition when she speaks more broadly about the use of the term and in this case the Member for Calgary-Mountain View said that they need “to stop punching down and start governing.”

3:00

What I can, with a significant level of certainty, say is that if members in this Assembly say that the government is punching down on trans youth or specific individuals, Albertans, I can assure you that that’s a point of order. In this case the member did say “punching down and start governing,” and there was no specific reference to a group of people or otherwise.

The challenge before the Assembly is that, as identified by the Leader of the Official Opposition, the definition is to attack or criticize, and language like “punch” certainly has physical overtones, so I am apprehensive about the implication that members of the House are punching at Albertans. As I said, the challenge before the Assembly is that we’re going to split hairs on: did they say it about a group of people, or did they say it about governing or otherwise? Rarely does that lead to a productive use of the Assembly’s time.

What I’ll say is that in today’s case this isn’t a point of order. I’ve been around long enough that I would never presuppose the actions of the Assembly, but my sense is that a member of the Official Opposition will use this language tomorrow, a member of the government will call a point of order on such language, as we have done in reverse, I might add, when members of the government have said certain things that members of the opposition disagreed with and we ended up a few days down the road with significant periods of time spent on splitting hairs over language, and eventually it gets ruled out of order because it creates disorder.

My hope is that members will govern themselves accordingly, self-regulate, and we can all move on with the important business of the Assembly. In this case, though, I do agree with the Official Opposition. This isn’t a point of order. I consider this matter dealt with.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

Point of Clarification

Mr. Schow: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Respectfully, I rise on 13(2) to ask a question about the second half of the point of order, on the word “antivaxxers.” I appreciate the ruling; I’m not disputing the one on punching down. There were two parts of my point of order, and I want it noted for the record if possible, please.

The Speaker: Yeah. Sure. Perhaps poorly described. I thought that in the first half of the ruling, when I talked about Speaker Kowalski saying that within the context of members’ statements there is the

widest latitude possible – that is the tradition of the Assembly. I'm not of the opinion that that – we certainly have heard more aggressive language from both sides of the Assembly used in members' statements. We have a number of rulings that would suggest that that's reasonable. Of course, all members are responsible for the words that they use in the Assembly, but given Speaker Kowalski's position I will continue to maintain such freedoms in members' statements here in the Assembly.

I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.

Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 29

Fairness and Safety in Sport Act

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Tourism and Sport, the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to rise today to move second reading of Bill 29, the Fairness and Safety in Sport Act.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Last week, when we introduced the bill, I was joined by Hannah Pilling, a talented and dedicated athlete who almost missed out on her opportunity to compete at provincials and the scholarship opportunities found there because she was running against a transgender athlete. Madam Speaker, I was also joined by a number of other athletes, coaches, parents, and members of the transgender community that came to the Legislature in support of this important legislation. It is for Hannah, for the women who came to support the introduction of this legislation, and for our daughters, sisters, and loved ones across Alberta that we are moving forward with this bill.

The Fairness and Safety in Sport Act delivers on our government's unwavering commitment to fairness and safety for Alberta athletes. These principles are at the heart of this legislation because sport is more than just competition. It's about important ideals such as community, teamwork, and personal growth. Sport is for everyone, and every athlete in Alberta deserves a fair and safe environment in which to compete.

Madam Speaker, fairness is the foundation of sport. It is the belief that athletes should have the opportunity to compete on a level playing field where no one holds an unfair or disproportionate advantage. This legislation directly addresses a growing concern in our sporting community about competitive fairness and physical safety of athletes, particularly biologically female athletes. We have heard from countless Albertans, and the consensus is clear. No athlete should have to put themselves at risk of harm in order to participate in the sports that they love, and no athlete should have to face an unfair competitive disadvantage simply because of who they are competing against.

This bill addresses the concerns we've heard from Albertans by requiring organizations that deliver amateur competitive sport in our province to create policies to ensure that women and girls' divisions are limited to female-born athletes. This is a policy designed to protect the competitive integrity of women and girls' sport by giving female-born athletes the opportunity to participate in biological female only divisions.

The physical differences between biologically male and female athletes, particularly in strength and endurance and speed, are well

documented. For example, male athletes are on average 40 per cent more powerful than female athletes, with over 30 per cent more lung service to fuel their exertion and the ability to jump over 33 per cent higher than most female athletes. These differences are biological realities that affect women every day in sport and that, when made to compete against more physically capable biological male athletes, lead to women losing out on important opportunities, scholarships, and experiences in sport.

In the report of the UN special rapporteur on violence against women and girls its causes and consequences found that female athletes have lost nearly 900 medals due to the encroachment of biological male athletes in female divisions. But the Fairness and Safety in Sport Act is about more than just medals; it's about ensuring that women and girls have a fair opportunity to compete against their peers.

At the same time, Madam Speaker, this legislation is also about inclusion for all athletes. We know the importance of sport in people's lives. Sport builds character, promotes physical and mental health, fosters friendships, and builds healthy habits that last a lifetime. Everyone should have the opportunity to participate in sport, and this legislation ensures that by ensuring transgender athletes can participate meaningfully and fully in the sports they love.

The Fairness and Safety in Sport Act directs applicable organizations that oversee amateur competitive sport to report to government any requests that they receive for new coed divisions as well as the creation of any coed opportunities. Beyond these legislative requirements, Alberta's government will work with relevant school authorities, postsecondaries, and sport organizations to support the formation of these additional coed opportunities. These coed divisions will provide a space where Alberta athletes of all gender identities, including transgender female athletes, can participate in the sport of their choice. This approach ensures that sport remains a place where everyone can feel welcome and enjoy the benefits of sport while safeguarding the competitive fairness and safety of female-only divisions.

Madam Speaker, this bill did not come together in isolation. Over the past several months our government has engaged in consultations with key stakeholders, including school authorities, postsecondary institutions, provincial sport organizations, as well as coaches, athletes, parents, members of the transgender community, and other subject matter experts to help inform our approach to create a safe and fair sports system in Alberta. We listened carefully to their concerns and perspectives, and we've incorporated their feedback to craft legislation that balances fairness and safety and inclusivity in Alberta's sports system.

3:10

We understand that every organization and sport is unique, which is why our government is committed to providing clear guidance and assistance to school authorities, postsecondary institutions, and provincial sport organizations as they work to develop and implement athlete eligibility policies in alignment with the principles outlined in this legislation. We will work hand in hand with these organizations to make sure that they have the resources, the information, and the support they need to implement these changes and ensure fairness and safety in the sport they oversee. This legislation will also include legal liability protection for applicable organizations overseeing competitive sport as they carry out the requirements of the legislation.

As it relates specifically to women and girls in amateur competitive sport, this legislation requires organizations to create policies governing athlete eligibility. If passed, our government will provide additional guidance and direction regarding these policies,

including through regulations. These regulations will make it clear that eligibility for women and girls' sport divisions will be limited to female-born athletes. This legislation will apply to amateur competitive organization sports that are overseen by provincial sport organizations, postsecondary institutions, and independent academic institutions that are subject to the Post-secondary Learning Act as well as school authorities with students of applicable age who are subject to the Education Act.

However, I want to emphasize that this legislation does not apply to recreational or professional sport or private or for-profit clubs. We know how important sport is for young women and girls not only in their physical development but their confidence, leadership, and sense of achievement. We know that approximately 90 per cent of women in executive-level positions were former athletes, and many tie their professional success to the time they spent in their respective sports. Alberta's government wants to see our women and girls thrive, and by protecting the integrity of female sport divisions, we are helping girls across Alberta have the opportunity to excel on a fair and equal playing field both in and out of sport.

In addition to protecting female-only sport divisions, this bill takes proactive steps to support the formation and addition of coed divisions where numbers warrant. These divisions will offer opportunities for all athletes to compete while preserving the fairness and safety of competitive sport. By expanding coed divisions, we are not only ensuring that transgender athletes have meaningful opportunities to participate; we're also promoting inclusivity for athletes across the board. Our government will work closely with applicable organizations to provide the resources and guidance necessary to support these new divisions.

Madam Speaker, we cannot overstate the importance of sport in the lives of Albertans. Sport is about so much more than winning medals, breaking records. It's also about building character, promoting health, and bringing communities together. Athletes both young and old learn resilience, discipline, teamwork, and perseverance through sport. These are crucial, critical values that stay with us throughout our entire lives. Sport teaches young people how to overcome challenges, how to strive for their personal best, and how to respect their opponents. For many athletes the friendships they form on the field, the court, or the track last a lifetime, and I can personally attest to that.

It is the power of sport to shape lives in positive ways that makes it so important that we make sure we get this legislation right. We are committed to ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to fairly and safely experience the benefit of sport. By striking the right balance between fairness and safety and inclusion, we are working to create a sports environment in which all athletes can thrive, compete, and grow.

Madam Speaker, the Fairness and Safety in Sport Act is a major step forward in ensuring fairness and safety for Alberta athletes. However, the work doesn't end there. As we move forward with the implementation of these new policies, our government will continue to work with school authorities, postsecondary institutions, and provincial sport organizations to make sure that they have the guidance and support they need to be successful. We are committed to ensuring that all Albertans, regardless of gender, have the opportunity to participate in sport in a way that is safe, fair, and inclusive. Sport has the power to transform lives, and we want to make sure that every Alberta athlete has a chance to participate.

If passed, this legislation would likely take effect next fall, and in the coming months we will continue to work with and support school authorities, postsecondaries, and sports organizations to ensure a smooth implementation process. Alberta's government will provide ongoing education and training to ensure that all

athletes, coaches, and officials understand the new rules and are prepared to implement them.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, the Fairness and Safety in Sport Act is about protecting the integrity of sport for all Alberta athletes. It's about ensuring that all athletes have the opportunity to compete fairly, safely, and meaningfully in the sports they love. With this bill we are taking a balanced, thoughtful approach to sport policy, one that reflects the values of fairness and safety and inclusivity that are at the heart of sport in Alberta. Sport is and should be for everyone, and this legislation ensures that all athletes can thrive in an environment that is fair, safe, and welcoming.

With that, Madam Speaker, I hereby move second reading of Bill 29, the Fairness and Safety in Sport Act. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others that wish to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to start this debate regarding this piece of legislation by acknowledging and thanking those that are joining us in the gallery and online that are from the athletic community, that are from the trans community, and the so many Albertans that love and support them. On this side of the House, we see you, we love you, and we're going to fight for you.

As the shadow minister of Tourism and Sport I truly cannot believe that I am standing in this Chamber today to discuss a piece of legislation that is now the third piece of antitrans legislation that has been introduced by this government. It is absolutely shameful, Madam Speaker, that this is what we are doing in this Chamber.

Clearly, everybody wants kids to be safe, families to be close, and sports to be a place where kids can be themselves and feel confident. The title is Fairness and Safety in Sport Act; everything that is said after that point is hypocrisy. To hear this government talk about how they value the importance of sports for young people and then completely talk about it being inclusive and focusing on fairness and safety goes against everything that that minister just said. If they were truly focused on fairness, safety, and inclusion in sports, they would not be targeting transgender people. Period.

This legislation is not very long, six pages. Nowhere in this legislation are the words "transgender," "female only," "female born," which is very misleading, Madam Speaker. It talks about fairness and it talks about making sure that all youth and children have access to sport, but then we heard the words that came out of this minister's mouth that clearly identifies that this piece of legislation is going after transgender people. Why can't they be transparent in what they're doing? We know that this is a piece of legislation that is filled with hate and transphobia and it is targeting transgender women.

The minister said that they're doing this for their daughters, their sisters, and their loved ones. We know that is transgender women. Period. They are our daughters; they are our sisters; they are our loved ones. And for this government to imply anything different is hateful.

I'm a mom of three children who have actively participated in sport. I am a mom who has actively participated in being a coach in sport. My oldest is 30 years old. I've been involved in this community for a long time. At no point have I ever heard that this is an issue for anybody in the sporting community.

3:20

The goal of sport is to create safe, inclusive, and nurturing environments for all children. Period. We heard this minister say that. Yet on the other side he talks about making sure that only female-born girls can participate in female sport. That is not being

inclusive. That is not creating a safe space of safety, and it is simply not fair.

I have had parents and children and loved ones from the trans community reach out terrified about what this piece of legislation is going to do. I had a mom of a 14-year-old transgender daughter who is playing sports on a girls' team, and she said that at no point was anyone concerned about her born gender. She said that it's not accurate that her daughter has any sort of physical advantage. She said: "Nicole, come watch her play. You wouldn't know by watching her play."

The misinformation that they're using to put this piece of legislation forward is absolutely wrong, Madam Speaker. There's a clear intention that we're barring transgender girls and women from playing in women's sport. They're using information that is inaccurate when they say it's to create safety and that women are at a disadvantage if there's someone who's transgender playing on their team. What it does is it creates a space where it's no longer safe to participate in sport.

Who is going to be monitoring this, Madam Speaker? Whose responsibility is it to receive the complaint and then follow up on the complaint? The legislation says that a complaint can be made if someone suspects that a female player is not female born. What does that look like? What's the criteria for that? It's targeting a community that needs to be protected. For this government to pretend that it's anything else is simply misleading and disingenuous because we're watching this government currently introduce three separate pieces of legislation that are antitrans. They are targeting the trans community.

This piece of legislation has some of our youth here in the province terrified. These young people are at higher risk of suicide and now, knowing that they're going to be outed – not might be outed. Going to be outed because of this legislation.

There are currently transgender children and youth playing in sports all across the province. Nobody's concerned. Now we have a government saying: we're giving the authority to schools to check on your born gender. Not a birth certificate but, like, a record of birth, which I would argue most parents don't have. I know as a mom I have birth certificates for my kids, but I don't have their record of birth. I'd have to go to vital stats to get that. There's a cost to that.

So if someone says, "I don't believe that child is a female," what's the protocol, Madam Speaker? What are they going to do to determine that? They're not going to believe parents when a parent says, "My child is a girl."

It's terrifying that this is giving all of this power to a government that has antitrans legislation and is clearly – clearly – targeting a community that should be loved and embraced. We have a Premier that, when she was running for her leadership, said: "This has nothing to do with what I want to do in government. I don't want to target any community." Yet here we are, and so . . . [interjections] I hear laughing across the aisle, and I just – it's frustrating. We're in this Chamber talking about literal life and death for some Albertans. Suicide is a stark reality when it comes to the trans community. They're at higher risk of suicide, and now we have a government who wants schools, postsecondaries, sports organizations to out kids. It is absolutely shameful.

The act applies to school divisions, charter schools, private schools, francophone regional authorities, independent academic institutions, prescribed provincial sport organizations, and any other entities specified by regulations. That is a broad statement, and it's frightening because who's next, Madam Speaker? We have kids today that feel like they don't fit in. They feel different. They feel like they're questioning: "Who am I? Am I next? Is this government going to come after me next?"

This is a very, very concerning piece of legislation that is targeting trans girls. And when we have the actual legislation not say the word "transgender," not say the word "female born," it's frightening. Unless people are paying attention and listening, they might not know. To look at this in how it's written on paper, it doesn't seem that offensive, but I tell you . . . [interjection] Oh. And we have a member saying: it's not. It's terrifying.

I would love to hear from more members of that side of the House talking about how they can support a piece of legislation that is antitrans and targets children. There is no age identified in this legislation at what point this will come into effect: little kids, children, youth. I'm unclear, Madam Speaker, why this government is leaving so much up for the regulations while being so openly hateful to the trans community. Why not just put it all out there? Why not just be transparent and talk about what it is that you're really intending to do? We know that it's targeted.

We also know that the transgender youth are such a small part of the overall population in schools, and only about half of the trans youth identify as girls. Why is this legislation coming out? They pretend that it's about fairness and safety. We see through that, Albertans see through that, especially because this is now the third piece of antitrans legislation that's come out from this government.

When we talk about what some of the barriers are and the reality of what is impacting limited access to sport, we need to talk about communities all across the province not having access to enough volunteers. Kids perhaps couldn't play sports because they don't have a volunteer coach available. I was just at RMA this morning, and we had a report on the lack of volunteers across rural Alberta.

3:30

This is something that I hear from the sports communities. They can't run their soccer team because they don't have a volunteer to step up and do that. That's a concern. I hear from parents all the time that they can't afford to put their children into sport. They would love to, but they can't afford it. It's on the other side of the city. It's in a neighbouring town. Those are barriers to kids in sport. We talk about kids not feeling comfortable and safe, but it's not because of their teammates.

There are so many things that this government should be focusing on that would actually impact girls' activity in sport, and I can tell you that it isn't transgender girls. That is not what young women are saying is preventing them from actively participating in sport, and for this government to pretend that that's the information that they're receiving is completely unacceptable.

On this side of the House we have reached out to communities that actually oversee sport, and we have heard that this is a dangerous – dangerous – piece of legislation. Boxing Canada, Madam Speaker, was not consulted in this. They are an organization that has a highly competitive nature, and you would think that if you want to attract women in sport, you would talk to Boxing Canada. No. Not consulted.

Curling Canada, Curling Alberta: not consulted. They indicated, actually, when we spoke to them, that they have their own policies. There are so many organizations across the province that already have policies. They're quite good at governing themselves. They didn't ask for the government to come in and start dictating how they run their organizations, how schools run their sports teams. It's another overstep of government that is using this as a way to create more antitrans legislation.

I've had three children that have played soccer. They've all played. It's a common sport in the province. It's a sport that generally has a lower cost for enrolment. The equipment is generally affordable. Canada Soccer has spoken out strongly against the

Premier's plan to introduce this. They called it exclusionary and void of facts.

When we have a government pretending that they consulted with all of these organizations and we have some major players like Canada Soccer coming out speaking against it, I think it's convenient that they're not talking about the other side of this, the side of this where athletes are going to be injured emotionally. The impact that this is going to have is devastating, Madam Speaker. This is absolutely not about fairness and safety in sport. To have people showing up in the gallery every day that we've been talking about this government's antitrans legislation speaks volumes. Albertans are paying attention. Albertans want to make sure that they have a government that doesn't target vulnerable communities and blatantly make legislation that attacks them.

I'm interested to hear from other members about how they can honestly support this legislation. How can they get up and talk about targeting trans girls, little girls, youth, children? That is what this legislation is about. It's absolutely devastating to me to have to speak to this when there are so many things that Albertans care about, and this isn't one of them, Madam Speaker. I strongly encourage every member of this House to do the right thing and vote against this piece of hateful legislation.

Mr. Williams: Point of order.

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

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Williams: Madam Deputy Speaker, there have been a number of different times in the Legislature where accusing legislation, members, or the government of being hateful has been ruled disorderly under 23(j). I ask that the member withdraw that comment and we continue this debate on civil terms, which is an important debate. I appreciate the important points the member opposite is making. I'm asking that this Chamber could continue to do so without invoking intentions and skewing the intentions of this government or others, to imply it's hateful when it's clearly not.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would contest whether this is a point of order. The member is speaking about the impact of this legislation. Certainly, I think we have heard very clearly from members of the trans community in Alberta that they feel this is a hateful move towards them. We have some here in the gallery today. There have been many individuals that have spoken about the impact. We have spoken about studies that have shown the results of these impacts. When we are speaking about the use of the word "hateful," I will note that the member did not cite any particular ruling. He did not speak to a particular moment, or at least I did not hear it. I apologize if I did not hear him refer to a specific ruling on that particular word. But if there is such a ruling, certainly, I believe you, Madam Speaker, would be able to point to that fact. And if there is such a ruling, we'll be happy to acknowledge.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, at this time I don't find there to be a point of order as there was no directed hate to a particular member. More broadly speaking, I'd say that the hon. member was speaking to the legislation in her opinion. However, as this might be a lengthy debate, full of emotion and opinion and visitors and the sort, I might caution all members to really watch what they say so that we can have an elevated debate in this Chamber, which I think is beneficial to all Albertans.

Debate Continued

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, you are out of time. I don't think there was any time left on the speaker. No. Sorry; your time has elapsed in the time that you have.

I am seeking other speakers to the legislation. I see the hon. member – oh, my gosh – for the riding which I cannot remember, which is Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today in support of the Fairness and Safety in Sport Act, sponsored by the hon. Minister of Tourism and Sport. Sports are an essential component in the development of our youth and adolescents and provide far more than just physical benefits. Like many of my colleagues on both sides of this House here today, I've seen the incredible impact of sports both as a youth myself and watching my children play them.

As the MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville I have been able to personally congratulate or send well-wishes to many athletes from my constituency. These incredible athletes include women like Sarah Melenka. Sarah is a passionate volleyball player, but due to a loss of function in her right leg she lost the ability to play standing volleyball. However, she didn't let that interfere with her passion and continued to play, participating in the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games. Her story speaks to the inclusive and fair environment our government supports.

Engaging in sports teaches young people essential life skills like teamwork, perseverance, resilience, and, of course, how to play fairly and by the rules. With the introduction of Bill 29 our government is taking a balanced, thoughtful approach to ensure fairness remains a key virtue of our province's sporting leagues also while bolstering safety and inclusion in sports for all Albertans. Our government knows how important it is to protect fair competition in sports.

This is especially true for young girls and women who work hard and aspire to compete at the highest levels. No athlete should have an unfair advantage, and no athlete should put themselves at risk of harm by participating in the sport that they love. This would ensure that their efforts are recognized in a safe and fair playing environment. At the same time, we recognize the importance of inclusion for all athletes. Madam Speaker, we believe that sport is for everyone. The Fairness and Safety in Sport Act, if passed, is the first step in ensuring that only female-born athletes are competing in female leagues and divisions.

3:40

I remember a time when women had to fight for their own sport leagues and events. As a former associate minister of the status of women I've heard stories from women with the same lived experience. The fight for these spaces happened because they deserve them. We know that more women are encouraged to participate knowing that they will be provided a safe and fair sporting environment. This is why our government has consulted on what should be done. The consultation process also included school authorities, coaches, parents, athletes, and members of all communities to inform this new approach.

The act will require provincial sport organizations, postsecondary institutions, and school authorities with students of appropriate ages to adopt athlete eligibility policies. This means that this act will not apply to private or for-profit clubs in professional or recreational sports as they are not covered by the act. It will also only apply to athletes of age 12 and older. If passed, regulations will be created that will provide additional clarity about what these policies should

include, including limiting eligibility for women's and girls' divisions to female-born athletes.

As I mentioned, we want to make this policy inclusive so that everyone can participate. This is why Alberta's government will also be working closely with applicable organizations to create and expand coed divisions so that all athletes can meaningfully participate in the sports that they love. There will be effective oversight on how these coed organizations function, with the act requiring periodic reporting of requests for and any ensuing establishment of new coed leagues. These new coed leagues will also be held to our reasonable standards of fairness and inclusion as any complaints brought under the eligibility policies. This will allow Alberta's government to continue to work with relevant organizations to ensure that our sport system is fair, safe, and inclusive.

What does this mean for everyday Albertans? For families with children who play sports, for parents of young female athletes, and for the many Albertans who value sport as a source of community and development, this legislation provides a safe, fair, inclusive sport system. It reassures parents that their daughters can compete safely on a level playing field and reassures all athletes that they will have a place in the sport where they are welcome and respected.

Sport has the power to bring people together, to build confidence, and to teach us valuable life lessons. It is also a key part of the social life of postsecondary students in our province and provides much-needed diversion from their academic work. I don't doubt that during the debate on this bill some members may suggest that these changes will be burdensome for applicable organizations. This is not a suggestion that is grounded. Our government has already undertaken substantial consultation with these organizations and will work with them to develop their own eligibility policies if this legislation is passed.

With this legislation we're ensuring that Alberta's sports community reflects the values of fairness and safety all while maintaining inclusion for all. I hope you can all join me in supporting it. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any others wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

Dr. Elmeligi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my privilege to rise today as a cis, heterosexual woman with she/her pronouns to stand and oppose vehemently this legislation. I oppose this legislation as a woman, a mother, an athlete, and really just as a person. I rise in privilege because I recognize as a cis, heterosexual woman that my life has had privilege in it because of who I am and that because of those attributes of myself I have not faced the daily discrimination that people in our trans and pride communities face every day, that they just try to be themselves out there on the landscape. And so it is with privilege that I rise to speak against this bill because I feel that it is partly my duty and my role to carry those voices of my constituents here onto this floor.

I think we can all agree that sports are important for mental and physical health and that it is a big part of staying healthy physically, emotionally, and mentally. I think we can all agree that being part of a team is also part of being healthy, especially as youth, when you're struggling so much with your self-identity and feeling like you don't fit in. I'm sure all of us in this Chamber at some point in our lives felt like we didn't fit in. For me, that was in junior high and high school, and it was the girls rugby team of my high school that made me feel like I belonged to something and that it didn't matter that I had this crazy hair that I was often judged for, because judging people for what they look like or who you think they are

based on what they look like is inappropriate. We all seem to recognize that, yet here we are debating a bill that is exactly that.

We know that it's good to be part of a team, that peers support you. They give you camaraderie. They help you when you're sad, when you're frustrated. They're often an ear to listen when you are going through tough times, and a lot of that team atmosphere comes from sports. I cannot imagine a more vulnerable sector of our youth than the LGBTQIA-plus community, yet this bill targets these youth and eliminates them from the exact support that they need, which is a team. A team of their peers who don't care what they look like. A team of their peers who just want to hit the field or the ice or the climbing gym or whatever the venue may be for the sport. Rather than making sports more accessible, this bill puts up barriers, creating a hostile environment, fostering discrimination based on appearance and judgments on who people think you are, not who you know you are.

This is not inclusive. It's irritating for me, personally, to hear the word "inclusivity" thrown around this Chamber and taken completely out of context. This bill is exactly the opposite of inclusive. It is eliminating trans women and trans girls from competing in sports in the way that they like or the way that feels right to them. So in that way, it is not at all inclusive, and the word "inclusive" should not be taken so lightly.

Sports are for everyone. The reality is that trans youth are discriminated every day of their lives, not necessarily in sport, just in general. Many trans youths drop out of school. They don't even graduate because they feel discriminated against every day, and that's a hard space to be in. Trans athletes are already less likely to participate in sport and less likely to receive all of those benefits that have already been identified. It remains unclear to me why we would even want to create an environment, a world, or a province where some kids would not feel welcome to participate in sports.

I have to say, Madam Speaker, that as a kid growing up in Alberta, I was very quickly labelled a "science kid." I was good at science and math, and therefore I belonged in science and math. It wasn't until high school that I started participating in team sports and realized that, oh, well, maybe I, too, can be athletic. Maybe I, too, can crush it on the rugby pitch or the climbing wall or whatever, but I did take some encouragement from my teachers and my parents and my peers to discover that side of myself.

Banning trans women in sport is not warranted according to the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. The number of trans women athletes in Alberta is low. We know that this is a bad situation.

This bill is based on assumptions on testosterone levels in people and what that means for athleticism. It's based on this assumption of biological advantage for male athletes which is a central, institutional feature of modern sports and fosters sexism in sport. I can tell you as a biologist that I know there is high variability in nature in hormone levels in people and other species. The endocrine system, which is the hormonal system in the body, is one of the least understood in biology. We always want to make things black and white: men, women, boys, girls. In reality, in biology and in nature, it is not so black and white. There is a ton of variability, and when we try to reduce it into these specific boxes, we lose the beauty of diversity.

3:50

Trans athletes do not have an unfair advantage in sports because trans women and trans girls face discrimination every day, and they may not even participate in sports because of that discrimination. This idea that there is this unfair advantage in sports ignores the daily reality of these people's lives.

I'll say that growing up or living right now in the community of Canmore, which has more Olympic and Paralympic athletes than any other community across Canada, I am surrounded by athletes every single day. My physio is a former Olympian. My massage therapist is an Olympian-in-training, and the list goes on and on. I can honestly say that athletic excellence is not determined by gender. What I have seen is that it is determined by somebody's commitment and determination to excel in their chosen sport. It's not about being a man or a woman.

I would be bragging, and I'm just going to for a second, that I CrossFit and there are lots of guys in my gym that don't lift as much as me. Take note. And I'm a woman, so how is that possible? How is that possible that as a woman, I could be stronger than a man. Okay. I'll just let that sink in for a moment. So a person's genetic makeup is not what makes them excel at fitness. When we exclude trans women athletes, we harm all women. We make statements about sexism in sport. We propagate this myth that men are somehow better at sports than women, and that is something that is just completely inaccurate.

I question a little bit about what's next. If we're going to say that we're targeting biological advantage based on gender, will we also start targeting biological advantage based on height? Oh, really tall people shouldn't be playing basketball and volleyball because they're too tall and they have an unfair advantage. People with really broad shoulders and big wingspans shouldn't be swimming because they have an unfair biological advantage. The list can go on and on and on. People with long legs should not be marathon runners because they have an unfair advantage.

Trans women are already competing in the National Collegiate Athletic Association, consistent with their gender identity. Yet women's sports in the U.S. college scene have not collapsed. The world has not caught on fire. Transgender children are not a threat to sports; transphobia is. I want to say this very clearly for the record: transgender women and girls are women and girls. So when we talk about fairness in sports for women and girls, to me that includes transgender women and girls because they're women and girls. They already fit in there.

If we really wanted to support fairness in women's sports, we would address the systemic discrimination in women's sports. We would fund it. We would help it grow. We would make sure that women have access to the same equal pay as male athletes. We would make sure that women's sports are fostered to grow in the same way that male sports are, and they are not. If we wanted fairness, that's where we would put our effort. So this bill is not fair.

Who defines fairness, Madam Speaker? Who gets to say what is fair? According to this bill, it's the Minister of Tourism and Sport. He gets to decide at the end of the day what is fair. Well, recognizing that ministers change over time and it might not be the same individual person, but I guess it will just be whoever sits in that ministerial chair that will decide what is fair. For me, that's really unfair. The UCP should stay in their lane. It is not the minister's decision to decide what is fair in sports. It is the decision of the organizing bodies that organize and host our sports and our athletes.

The big picture of all of this though: this piece of legislation and the other two antitrans legislative pieces that we've seen so far is segregation. That to me is very upsetting. As one of my constituents told me, this is cis people saying that they don't want to share public spaces with trans people.

For the record, Madam Speaker, I'll share my public space with anybody who doesn't threaten my personal safety, and I can tell you that every trans person I've met has not threatened my personal safety. In fact, I kind of like them. I love them all. They have taught

me new things about myself and about society and about the diversity of lived experiences that bring us here today that I could not have learned through other people, and for that, I am a richer person. My life is more enriched, and I am a better person because of this.

This bill and these bills together remind me of when I toured the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, that we create these two separate societies of us and them, that we divide society and we build support somehow for discrimination. And it doesn't happen, Madam Speaker, with one law or two laws; it happens with many laws that together in concert effectively segregate our society. What an incredible loss that would be.

At this time in our world we need, more than ever, governments that bring us together, governments that celebrate diversity, governments that don't buy into the hateful rhetoric that we hear on the streets or on social media. My God, what a toxic place that is. We need governments that embrace each other, that encourage us to welcome everybody, that embrace all of us and recognize that diversity is our strength, Madam Speaker. It is not a weakness. At this time of division the propagation of hate and judgment must not be fostered by government; it must be shot down. We need a government to bring us together, not to alienate. We need a government that rules from a place of kindness and love and appreciation, and that is not what this bill does.

I encourage all members of the House to stand with me in solidarity and vote against this abhorrent piece of legislation. Thank you.

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

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a privilege to speak to you about an issue that is not only vital to the future of our communities, but it also directly impacts the lives of our children, our athletes, our families, our daughters. It's a privilege to speak, because what we are discussing today is a matter of fairness, safety, and inclusion in the world of sport. With the introduction of Bill 29, the Fairness and Safety in Sport Act, Alberta's government is taking a firm step towards ensuring that sport is safe, fair, and accessible for all Albertans.

This legislation is a critical part of our government's broader effort to ensure that children and youth are supported as they grow into adults and reach their full potential. It's about ensuring that every child, no matter their gender, background, or identity, has the chance to develop in a fair and supportive environment. It's about supporting women and girls in sports and making sure that our policies reflect the values of fairness, safety, and inclusion. Ultimately, our government is committed to making sport safe, fair, and accessible for all Albertans because sport is for everyone.

More than that, sport is a powerful force in our society. It teaches discipline, resilience, teamwork, leadership, and so many other life lessons. It brings us together and builds strong, healthy communities. I'm a sports mom, a mom to a daughter and a son, and I know the importance of sport. But for sport to be truly transformative, it must be fair and safe for everybody. The Fairness and Safety in Sport Act is designated to do just that. It seeks to guarantee that biologically born female athletes have the opportunity to compete in biologically female-only divisions, protecting the fairness of women's sports. It's important to note that women's sports have long been a space for young girls to excel, to achieve their dreams, and to leave their mark.

Madam Speaker, the day that this bill was tabled for first reading, I had a young girl meet me on the steps in the Legislature, on the marble steps, hugging me, saying, "Thank you for protecting me;

thank you for allowing me to play safely in sports,” and that will forever resonate with me. This legislation will help preserve that space where women and girls like Anaya will have the opportunity to compete on equal footing with others of their same biological sex. If passed, Bill 29 would ensure that women and girls have the opportunity to compete in biological-female-only divisions. We all understand the effort that it takes to succeed in sports, and for young girls who dream of competing at the highest levels, it’s vital that they have a safe, fair, and competitive environment in which they can grow and thrive. But we also understand the importance of inclusion. Alberta’s government is fully committed to making sure that all athletes, regardless of gender or identity, can participate in sports.

4:00

To ensure that transgender athletes can compete in a meaningful way, Bill 29 would support the creation of coed divisions. This approach provides a pathway for transgender athletes to meaningfully participate in the sport of their choice. This legislation is designed to strike a balance between those two important principles: fairness for women and girls and inclusion for transgender athletes. After all, sport is for everyone. By creating coed divisions, Bill 29 ensures that everyone has a place in sport, regardless of their gender identity, while protecting the integrity of female-only competitions.

The Fairness and Safety in Sport Act is not just a theoretical policy. It is a practical framework that will guide the way we manage sports here in Alberta. The act would require all in-scope organizations to adopt athlete eligibility policies. These include provincial sports organizations, postsecondary institutions, and school authorities with students of the applicable age of 12-plus, subject to the Education Act. These policies would confirm that amateur competitive sports events and competitions are conducted with fairness, transparency, and respect for all participants.

If passed, Bill 29 would apply to organizations overseeing competitive sports for individuals aged 12 and older, including amateur sport competitions and events organized by the relevant sport authorities. It would only apply to recreational sports, professional sports, or sports that are organized and overseen by organizations not specified in the act.

If Bill 29 is passed, the Alberta government will work closely with sport and education organizations to develop specific regulations that will guide the creation of eligible policies. These regulations will provide further clarity on the criteria for eligibility and ensure that they align with the principles of fairness, safety, and inclusion.

The Fairness and Safety in Sport Act is part of a broader vision for a healthy, inclusive, fair, and safe Alberta. Whether it’s through sport, education, or health care, our government’s goal is to create a society where every Albertan, regardless of their background, gender, or identity, has the chance to succeed and thrive.

Our government is also dedicated to confirming that health care services for transgender individuals, including gender-affirming care, are accessible, safe, and of the highest quality. We will continue to engage with health care professionals, community groups, and individuals to ensure that our policies are aligned with the best interests of all Albertans.

In conclusion, the Fairness and Safety in Sport Act represents more than just a piece of legislation. It’s a statement about the values that guide us as a province, values that prioritize fairness, safety, and inclusion for all in the sports that they love. It’s about ensuring that every athlete has the opportunity to participate in the sport they love in an environment that values their contribution and treats them with respect.

For young women and girls this legislation would safeguard their hard work and dedication so that it will be rewarded in a fair and competitive environment. For transgender athletes it would create a meaningful opportunity to participate in sport through coed divisions. For parents, educators, and organizers it would provide the clarity and support needed to navigate these complex issues. Together we can guarantee that sport in Alberta is safe, fair, and accessible for all Albertans, because sport is for everyone.

I want to take a minute to thank the minister for bringing this bill forward, and I encourage every member of this Assembly to support Bill 29, the Fairness and Safety in Sport Act.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It has been a civil and substantive debate from both sides of the House, and I want to thank all members for engaging in what is the important place to have this conversation on very consequential legislation.

With that, Madam Speaker, we will be bringing up Bill 29 again for more debate as government. In the meantime I move that we adjourn debate on this legislation.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 32

Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (No. 2)

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I’m pleased to rise today and move second reading of Bill 32, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (No. 2).

This bill proposes some key changes that move forward on some mandate items to meet the needs of Albertans. To remind members, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act proposes the following changes. First, it introduces alternative finance mortgages. If passed, we’d be the first jurisdiction in Canada to enable Alberta-regulated financial institutions to offer alternative finance mortgage products.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

Second, it increases social benefits and tax system parameters by 2 per cent for 2025, and it implements a new legislative framework for these increases that would improve consistency and flexibility.

Third, it implements the electric vehicle tax that we announced in Budget 2024.

Fourth, it eases the financial burden on families affected by the loss of a child by extending Alberta child and family benefit payments for six months after their child has passed away.

Lastly, it includes some minor technical tax amendments, so our income tax legislation is in line with federal requirements.

The first change I’d like to speak to is alternative finance mortgages, previously referred to as halal financing. This is something we’ve been looking forward to for a long time because it opens the door to allow more Albertans to own a home. Alternative finance mortgages would be open to all eligible customers regardless of faith, but the impetus behind this change was to remove barriers to home ownership for many Muslims who are unable to access traditional mortgage financing because paying interest is prohibited under Islamic faith. No one should have to choose between fulfilling the commitments of their faith and being able to buy a home. If passed, this bill provides a fair way to give

more Albertans the tools they need to take a step toward home ownership.

Mr. Speaker, in creating this legislation, we consulted a lot of people, a lot of organizations. We consulted extensively with Islamic finance experts and Alberta's Islamic community to ensure alternative finance mortgages are offered in accordance with the Islamic faith. We've worked with interested financial institutions to understand the legislative and regulatory impediments that prevented them from offering alternative finance mortgage products.

Now we are introducing legislation that would allow Alberta financial institutions to offer alternative finance mortgage products. Of course, it's up to financial institutions themselves to develop and make these products available, but in this proposed bill we're removing barriers by creating the conditions that will hopefully allow these products to be available in 2025.

Next, the bill proposes changes to tax and benefit amounts for 2025 and a new framework for the indexation of tax and benefit programs. To begin, I'm pleased to announce that we are increasing tax parameters and in-scope benefit amounts by 2 per cent in 2025. This is in line with the most recent inflation numbers, which have slowed to about 2 per cent. That's why measures like these in our upcoming income tax cut are so important.

At the same time, we are proposing a new legislative framework. It would standardize and improve consistency in how we adjust programs annually to account for inflationary pressures. It would also give government greater flexibility and control in setting annual adjustments. Specifically, we're proposing to replace the existing legislated indexation provisions with a standardized discretionary escalator to be set by the government. The legislation will, however, include a default rate equal to the lesser of either 2 per cent or Alberta's inflation rate or the consumer price index.

If passed, these changes would apply to programs across government, including personal income taxes, the Alberta child and family benefit, income support, assured income for the severely handicapped, the benefit components of the Alberta seniors benefit program, and other government programs. This is definitely not deindexing benefits in our tax system but rather ensuring consistency in calendar rates and formulas for government programs when they are increasing each year.

The next set of changes would amend the Fuel Tax Act to establish the electric vehicles tax we announced earlier this year. A growing number of jurisdictions across North America are introducing electric vehicle taxes as a fair way to ensure taxes are applied to all drivers. The tax would be set at \$200 annually, which is in line with what drivers of a typical internal combustion engine vehicle pay in fuel tax. This \$200 annual tax would be collected by registry agents when electric vehicle owners register their vehicle and is in addition to the existing registration fee. Fuel tax revenue goes to the government's general revenue, where it is used to fund programs, services, and infrastructure Albertans rely on. This includes supporting road construction and maintenance.

4:10

Next, the bill proposes a change to the Alberta child and family benefit to help parents at a time when they might need it the most. Mr. Speaker, this is an amendment that would ensure bereaved parents continue to receive Alberta child and family benefit payments for six months after the death of their child instead of stopping the month following the death. This aligns with similar federal changes to the Canada child benefit. There's no greater tragedy than the death of a child, and I'm sure I speak for both sides of the House in saying that our hearts go out to all the families and loved ones grieving these losses. Through these amendments we

hope we can ease some of the financial burden on these grieving families. If passed, this change would come into effect on January 1, 2025. Albertans would see the impacts of this change on the quarterly payments sent out in February of 2025.

The final amendment is a necessary housekeeping matter. This technical amendment to the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act would ensure that Alberta's taxation of multijurisdictional split income aligns with the requirements of the federal-provincial tax collection agreement. Again, this is a technical change that is being proposed to make sure Alberta's legislation aligns in the necessary ways with this agreement.

Mr. Speaker, this bill moves Alberta forward in some very practical ways. It provides options for people who may not be able to access a traditional mortgage, it increases benefit payments for 2025 and creates a legislative framework to give government greater consistency and flexibility in adjusting tax and benefit programs in the future, it introduces an electric vehicle tax that is in line with what drivers of traditional cars would pay in fuel tax, it extends benefits to help bereaved parents through an unspeakable loss, and it makes some small but important housekeeping changes to make sure we're aligned with federal-provincial agreements.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 32 is part of a larger plan to make tangible and practical changes that benefit this province today and into the future. It moves the dial further toward creating positive and sustainable changes across government programs. I encourage all members to support this bill and look forward to the debate.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 32. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any others wishing to speak? The Member for Calgary-Foothills has risen.

Mr. Ellingson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise and speak today on the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (No. 2). I will just say in general as an introduction that we could have maybe done better with this bill to make Albertans better off. Appreciating that this bill does cover some ground, that it is making changes to the Alberta child and family benefit act – thank you for those changes. The Alberta Personal Income Tax Act, the technical amendments, also the tax on electric vehicles: I'll speak a little bit about that, but I'm going to spend most of my time on alternative finance mortgages and indexation.

On the tax on electric vehicles, I guess what I will ask about, what's curious to me, what appears to be kind of common across this government's approach is the consultation that has taken place or the data that has been collected on this. Appreciating that the \$200 is set kind of according to the typical driving Albertan's experience and the fuel tax that may be paid by the typical Albertan, I don't know that we can just accept that those who are driving electric vehicles are typical Albertans in the use of their vehicles. I might guess that a lot of electric vehicle owners may be, you know, urban elites, a term that is commonly used, and that a lot of that electric vehicle use is in the city, and it may be less than a typical Albertan is using their vehicle. Electric vehicles may also be a second vehicle for a family and not their primary vehicle. So I think we could have done some work on maybe engaging in a study on how much electric vehicles are used and what that appropriate level would be and whether or not \$200 was the right number.

I think we can also ask about the alternative finance mortgages, again, appreciating that what the government is doing here is creating enabling legislation, that this is incredibly important to the Islamic community in Alberta. Halal financing and halal mortgages are incredibly important to them. I know they've been expressing

to the government that this is something that they need, so it is important that the government is moving forward on this point. But I think that this bill, just being introduced earlier this week – we have already reached out to several members in the Islamic community, and they feel like they haven't been engaged or consulted with respect to this bill. I think they would appreciate that engagement and consultation so that they had more opportunity to share directly with the department what their thoughts and feelings and expressions may be with respect to alternative finance.

This happens to be an area, too, where being the representative for Calgary-Foothills: it is one of the constituencies in the province with one of the higher percentages of Muslim population in it. So when we go into our constituency week, I also will be taking the opportunity to be engaging with the Islamic community in Calgary-Foothills to ask them some questions about this bill and whether or not they had been engaged and consulted and what their thoughts may be on this bill coming forward.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take some additional time to talk a little bit about the indexation provisions in this bill. The indexation provisions cover a number of other acts, so there's a lot embedded here. I will say again, as I opened with this, that when I'm speaking with constituents, what I hear most from them in Calgary-Foothills and across the province, including Lethbridge, are concerns about health care, education, and affordability.

A lot of Albertans talk about affordability. They talk about not only their own struggles that they're facing in their cost of living but also the struggles faced by their children, who may just recently have been moved out of home, and also their parents, who may be living independently and may be facing real kind of circumstances in their lives where they may not be able to continue to live independently. They talk about the cost of utilities. Now, Mr. Speaker, the Alberta NDP did have a cap in place mitigating the impact of any cost increases on the consumer for utilities, but when this government came in in 2019, they did remove that cap, and in a time of rapidly escalating prices, Albertans were left to be covering these incredibly increased costs on their own.

Some of those Albertans, many of those Albertans on the regulated rate faced utilities that were rising by hundreds of dollars a month. The government did come in with a plan, but unfortunately that plan was more of a debt deferment than it was a cap. So those on the regulated rate, who may be more vulnerable than those who were not on the regulated rate, were left holding the bag with, you know, in the short term lower utility costs but that had to be paid back later.

A lot of those families were facing alternatives and incurring other forms of debt in order to pay down those utilities, which is regrettable, Mr. Speaker. And while the government does stand today and say that utilities have come down considerably in the last year – I think we heard 35 per cent earlier from the minister today – the reality is that utilities today are still higher than they were when this government took office in 2019, so we need to see real change and real movement in that area.

We also see concerns and Albertans talking about auto insurance. Again, the Alberta NDP here placed a cap to help consumers with the increasing rates, and again this cap was removed in 2019, when the UCP government came into place. We have heard that there is legislation coming this fall, but also we have heard that structural changes take time. We have also heard this government tell doctors that an agreement was going to be in place. They heard that over a year ago; they heard that promise reiterated over six months ago. So I think there is some cause for question when we say that this legislation may take time. Albertans are still facing these incredibly high auto insurance rates, and this bill, of course, is not really going to be helping Albertans in that regard.

Albertans are also, Mr. Speaker, concerned with the cost of housing. Over the last few years, in a period when rent and the cost of purchasing a home increased at the highest rates in the country, people have incredible concerns, and this put them under incredible pressure.

4:20

I spoke with many seniors in Calgary-Foothills living on fixed incomes, who told me that their rental rates were increasing, that their monthly rental rate would then be beyond what they were earning on their fixed income, and they simply didn't know where they were going to go. These are real struggles, Mr. Speaker, faced by Albertans. It is unfortunate that we're not seeing legislation now from this government to address those real concerns.

What we also don't see in this bill, as we have asked in this House, is with respect to minimum wage. While there was the opportunity here, because we have amended several other acts, we could have maybe also taken this opportunity to amend some legislation that would provide an indexation for minimum wage, which was, again, deindexed when this government came in in 2019.

So while those earning a minimum wage are earning less than a living wage, this government is choosing to continue to suppress those wages. Even with this legislation, Bill 32, those living on minimum wage aren't going to see an indexed increase to their minimum wage. I think we might question why those who are earning income and earning the lowest levels of income in the province were not given consideration in this legislation, and we don't see their incomes increasing when I think that we can honestly say that so many of those workers really do need to see those increases.

Mr. Speaker, what I'd also like to talk a little bit about is those who are living in deep poverty in this province, those who are covered by many of the acts that are being amended here: the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Act, the Income and Employment Supports Act, the Seniors Benefit Act, the Alberta Housing Act, the health statutes amendment acts. People who are receiving supports under these pieces of legislation are living in deep poverty. We're talking about people who are living on AISH or seniors' supports, who may be living on \$1,900 or less. Some people in these categories are living on less than \$900 a month. We're not talking about hundreds of Albertans or thousands of Albertans; we're talking about hundreds of thousands of Albertans, through these programs, that are living on supports and incomes that they – if any of us in this Chamber were asked to live on these amounts, I think we would really see and experience how difficult that would be.

These same people, again, had their rates frozen in 2019, when the UCP came into power. Granted, before the election in 2023 they did see some increases there, but they had already gone through three years of rapidly increasing costs, with the money that they had each month to live off not being sufficient and not keeping up.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'll also talk about how this act, in setting a floor – as we look to harmonize across all of these acts and all of these income supports, we are setting a floor. So when the minister says that it's 2 per cent or inflation, whichever is less, we are setting a floor, and while the inflation rates today may be at 2 per cent or slightly less, this is certainly not what we have experienced over the last four or five years.

Since 2019 the average rate of inflation in Alberta has been 3.28 per cent. The average inflation rate in Canada has been 3.26 per cent. So, Mr. Speaker, I think it is a bit unfair to say that in setting it at 2 per cent because today the inflation happens to be at about 2 per cent – it's unfair to those people who are living in deep poverty

and living off amounts that they struggle every single day on. Should inflation exceed 2 per cent, 2 per cent is now the floor or the default rate that they would receive.

Now, I would also say that, understanding that ultimately what's going to be happening is that Treasury Board will make those decisions every year, I certainly hope that when Treasury Board comes and sits down and debates and thinks about that, they don't think about that floor rate, but they think about a rate that is honestly just and due to these people who are living off amounts that, quite frankly, any of us would not be able to live off.

I'll also speak, Mr. Speaker, a little bit to how the legislation that has come in is deindexing. It is deindexing if the rate of inflation exceeds 2 per cent. If we talk about our tax brackets: if tax brackets are moving with inflation, then we're not seeing deindexing. If tax brackets are moving in line with wage increases, which I think we also heard today that in Alberta is just over 3 per cent, a number that we shouldn't be super excited about because it is the lowest wage growth rate in the country . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there others wishing to speak? Edmonton-Glenora, I believe, has the floor.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to rise and respond to the legislation before us today in second reading. I appreciate that there are sort of five key areas addressed in this legislation: the first, of course, being the one that my colleague the Member for Calgary-Foothills just finished referring to, the piece around lower-than-inflation indexing, CPI or 2 per cent, whichever is lower; the second being alternate financing mortgages, often referred to as halal financing, but of course being open to people of all faiths; the third being taxation on electric vehicles, being \$200 per year, every single year, when you register your vehicle; the fourth being increasing some opportunities for parents who are grieving to see some tax benefits within six months of that period of time; and the last being tax splitting. I will do a slight analysis on the last two points and probably deeper on the third one.

In terms of the last one, I do believe that the tax splitting requirements that are being written in are somewhat consistent with other jurisdictions or relatively consistent with other jurisdictions in Canada and appreciate that.

The piece around grieving parents: absolutely. Being able to access those benefits and being able to do so in a timely fashion, I think is a compassionate thing to be able to do.

I will say it's about time on the halal financing piece, certainly a campaign promise that was made a number of times by the current government, so I'm glad to see that something is happening on it. There are questions that I'll ask, though, in relation to it at this point, Mr. Speaker, and that I hope the minister will get back to us on either later through members of his caucus responding to debate in second reading or early in Committee of the Whole. The primary question I would ask is: I appreciate that this piece is coming in, but I want to know that the people who've been advocating for it were actually consulted on it.

4:30

When I think here specifically in Edmonton, when I met with a number of folks to discuss policy positions over the last year, there was a strong desire to help codevelop housing policy as it relates to Islamic Family, the organization not far from here. Many of us attend a number of their events. While they had a lot of proposals on public housing, particularly ensuring that public housing or subsidized government housing be funded by the bedroom, not just by the unit – of course, the current ways that it's funded penalize

developers who build multiple bedrooms. They don't get the same return on public investment that they would otherwise.

But the halal financing piece was a significant one that they mentioned because many people in the community who adhere strictly to the faith will not take out a mortgage, so making sure that home ownership isn't a barrier for those who might be able to access one although it is becoming a barrier for all sorts of families and single people across this province right now.

Then, of course, my colleague has spoken quite a bit to the deindexing piece, it being lower than inflation, and I'm sure that he and others will have much more to say about that.

I'd like to take the remainder of my time here in second reading to comment on the tax on electric vehicles because we are at a time where many jurisdictions are encouraging electric vehicle use, and I will say that there have been Conservative cabinet ministers – I don't know if there are currently, but there definitely have been in the past – who drove electric vehicles. The first one I remember was the former Finance minister. He was the MLA for Hinton and Edson. I'm looking to my colleague.

Mr. Schmidt: Robin Campbell.

Ms Hoffman: Yes. Robin Campbell had an electric vehicle, one of the first ones I saw in the parking lot of this Legislature.

Mr. Schmidt: Lucky he didn't drive a coal-fired vehicle.

Ms Hoffman: Well, that licence plate said "coal fired" because at that time we had coal-fired electric power. So you're not wrong, hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, for the *Hansard* folks who are trying to keep up with our chatter here.

But he was very quick to get on the electric vehicle process and to acquire one. And I remember seeing Smart vehicles driven by the former MLA for Edmonton-Calder. What was his name again?

Mr. Eggen: Doug Elniski.

Ms Hoffman: Doug Elniski drove a Smart car. We've seen many people drive – and I will say it was rather funny. He was very, very tall and the car was very, very small, so it was quite – you couldn't miss him when he tried to get in or out of that vehicle, especially around the Legislature Grounds. It was quite the sight to see.

So there have been Conservative cabinet ministers and MLAs, caucus members – those are just two off the top of my head – who have shown a desire to drive electric.

Mr. Nally: What about hydrogen?

Ms Hoffman: Does the minister of affordability drive a hydrogen vehicle?

Mr. Nally: The government has three hydrogen vehicles.

Ms Hoffman: But does the minister?

Mr. Nally: Well, I am responsible for the fleet, so . . .

The Acting Speaker: Members. Members. Please refrain from dialogue between members. All comments should be coming through the chair at all times.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was referring to vehicles that people have paid out of their own pocket to be able to drive who happen to be in cabinet or in caucus, but I appreciate that there are three in the fleet, and I would be happy to learn more about that. But those are ones that I believe people had purchased of their own

accord and their own individual purchasing power. I certainly welcome more feedback on that.

I've only read this bill once so far because we're in second, but hydrogen vehicles aren't seeing this extra tax. They're not seeing a required extra \$200 per year when they register their vehicles. That is something. If we want to talk about hydrogen being on par with electric, I wonder why the government has chosen to not apply this across the board.

I'm not calling on them to. I'm actually calling on them to reconsider this portion of the bill because while many jurisdictions around the world are trying to incent more people to purchase electric vehicles for a variety of reasons, including reduced emissions and our ability to power many of them at home for a fraction of the cost, instead it seems like the current government here in Alberta is working to penalize people who are making that decision; \$400 per year, so over the term of this government \$800 more to be able to drive a vehicle that they have chosen out of their own purchasing power to be able to purchase. It's not like we have incentives here. It's not like Ontario, where they're actually giving rebates to people who are purchasing electric vehicles. Here it seems like we are doing the opposite through this legislation while penalizing people for making that choice.

It will cost about \$3 million to implement this new collection agency, some might say, through the registry offices, and next year it's anticipated to generate \$5 million in revenue. So just to put that into context – I know many people, especially on the other side, like to talk about wanting lean government – they're putting \$3 million more in costs to beef up agencies that are doing work on behalf of government, and they are taking \$5 million out of people's pockets next year, according to the government's own estimates, through this increased tax of \$200 per year. I certainly don't recall this tax being something that was campaigned on in the last provincial election. Happy to be corrected if I'm wrong, but I don't recall the members opposite campaigning on increasing taxes and specifically on taxing electric vehicles and the people who register them an extra \$200 per year.

It would be something that I would hope, in the context of this legislation, the government would reconsider and that, rather than finding barriers to people entering and staying in the electric vehicle market, they would perhaps consider investing some of the surplus they're boasting into increasing opportunities for people to be able to charge electric vehicles across the province.

When I've talked to many folks, particularly – a lot of us in this Chamber drive a lot. Many of us have ridings outside of the capital city and need to come back and forth. Some have said: you know, I'd be open to electric, but it's just not feasible in my line of work; I drive too much. What we're seeing in Europe, in particular, is a commitment to actually increasing charging stations and getting rid of some of those barriers, and some of them have high-efficiency charging stations that have the ability to charge much more quickly.

Certainly, it could be an opportunity, if they were in various ridings throughout the province, for an increased opportunity for tourism. I would say that if somebody happens to be in southern Alberta and is going to sit for 25 or 30 minutes – I have a friend who recently came back from Jasper. They stopped in Hinton at the Canadian Tire to charge their vehicle and – guess what? – they had 20 minutes to go around and spend money in Hinton at the Canadian Tire and bring home some things for the family.

It could be an opportunity for increased tourism as well as increased economic opportunities in communities outside of the two largest cities. Of course, the most charging stations are in Edmonton and Calgary right now. There also is one that I imagine many members see regularly in Red Deer at the conference centre,

that is always quite busy. I will also say that there are charging stations outside of two of my offices. There's one outside of our office right here, by the Federal Building, on I believe it's 99th Avenue, and there's one outside of my constituency office on 108th Avenue, just off 124th Street, and they are often busy.

I worry that government interfering in people's private interests and private decision-making around where they want to choose to prioritize their spending and what types of vehicles they want to invest in – the government through this bill is choosing winners and losers. They're specifically choosing to increase the taxation at registration time on those who have chosen to purchase an electric vehicle, and I just don't think that's right or fair.

They might talk about how they've made some exemptions around this, but I believe they're only for off-highway vehicles, and other than golf carts I don't know a lot of people who have electric off-highway vehicles right now and would, again, welcome to hear if the members opposite do know a lot of people who do have electric ATVs, quads, or side-by-sides, talking about why it is that it was important for that to be exempted as opposed to just an even playing field and not trying to reach into the pockets of those who have electric vehicles to take \$5 million out of their pockets. It definitely doesn't feel very fair or respectful of the consumer, of the Albertan who chooses to register their vehicle in this province.

4:40

So that is probably the main area I would like to hear some answers from our colleagues on. Again, the halal financing. In addition to the financial community – and I appreciate that the major banks and ATB and, hopefully, the co-op had to be consulted on this – in terms of those who have been advocating for it and particularly folks that have said it would make a big difference to home ownership in their cultural communities: among that group, who was actually consulted?

And then the other piece is the rationale on: why electric vehicles? Why the exemption for off-highway vehicles that are electric? It seems intriguing to me that the government has chosen to take this as one of their top priorities, to grab \$5 million out of the pockets of ordinary Albertans. I will again say that when I talk to folks in and around this city as well as around the province and spending time in many communities, including Lethbridge, right now, these pieces in this bill have not been raised as priorities for the most part. I appreciate – and I think I mentioned that I think three of them are probably a move in the right direction, but they haven't been raised as their top priorities.

The top priorities that many people are talking to us about are around affordability and being able to afford to pay their rent or mortgage or buy groceries, regular, high-pressure times right now for ordinary families across this province. And then health care, of course, is another major area of concern, particularly access to things like family medicine and timely, appropriate surgical responses for those who need them.

So, again, three areas in this bill that I'm probably somewhat relatively supportive of although I don't think they are the highest priorities for most Albertans. This electric vehicle tax, though, I think the government should reconsider and repeal from their legislation perhaps.

I will say that when I was a minister, we brought forward amendments a couple of times. It doesn't happen every day that a government chooses to amend their own bills, but I definitely think it's a way to demonstrate that you're listening to folks on the other side of the aisle, that when they do raise a point that has merit behind it, your mind is open and you're willing to be collaborative. That would be one area that I would really urge the government to consider revoking in this current legislation, and I'm sure that my

colleagues will all have a lot more to say about the inflationary piece.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Others wishing to speak to the bill? The Member for Calgary-Acadia.

Member Batten: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on Bill 32, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (No. 2), and I'm delighted to add to the debate and bring in the voices from my Calgary-Acadia constituents. I'll start right off with a message from one of my constituents named Ian. Ian is a teacher, he's a father, and, of course, he's a taxpayer. And I quote: give me a wage that is fitting for the work that I do for the future of this nation; earning six figures and living paycheque to paycheque is out of hand. End quote. Yes, Mr. Speaker, a six-figure salary should allow you to not live paycheque to paycheque, but that's not the situation we have in Alberta right now.

Does this proposed bill help Ian out or his family in any way? Okay. Well, let's take a look. Looking through it, it certainly reads like a tax hike and certainly not the promised tax cut that we were promised during the election in 2023. But maybe I just have to keep looking. You know, maybe I'm missing it. Okay. Wait, no, it's actually worse. It's a tax cut with fewer benefits, so give more for less; do more with less. Is that not what this government has been forcing Albertans to do over the last five years?

Okay. No, that's actually not quite right. It's worse than that. This proposed bill would rob Albertans of their hard-earned dollars by tying it to a capped inflation rate. As mentioned earlier by my colleague from Calgary-Foothills, our inflation rate right now is about 2 per cent. By tying the benefits to this capped rate, it means that for Albertans like Ian, when inflation again rises over 2 per cent, Ian and his family will not receive the corresponding benefits, meaning fewer dollars in their pockets. Oh, and remember that, of course, under this UCP government Alberta has the highest inflation rate in the country: not exactly the Alberta advantage this government claims we have.

Now, back to Ian. Here's his ask, and I quote: help me pay my mortgage and be able to afford a vehicle that isn't falling apart and costing me a fortune to keep running to get to the classroom to teach 35 kids with no support, where I lose all my time to plan and mark. End quote. So, yeah, this proposed bill certainly has impacts on Ian's finances but not in the way that he's asking.

Now, let's chat a little bit about the Alberta child and family benefit. This House has heard me share several stories about my time providing nursing care to the children and families here in Alberta. The proposed change to extend the benefits beyond the passing of a child: well, that sounds great, but let's take a little walk down memory lane here.

In 2018, when the then Alberta NDP government took the bold and appropriate step to connect the benefits to cost of living, this meant that Albertans were supported regardless of the seemingly ever-increasing cost of living. Twenty-nineteen: change of government. The UCP government deindexed these benefits, claiming that the province couldn't afford it. Interesting. Well, let me be very clear. The Albertans who receive these benefits, Mr. Speaker, the social services that enable more and more Albertans to participate and live in our society: they could not afford it. They couldn't afford it then, and they cannot afford it now.

But wait; it gets better. The last five years the whole world has had to learn to navigate through rough roads. Now, imagine trying to do so when your income and benefits have not changed, but goodness the cost of living definitely has increased.

There was a tease of hope during the election, a promised tax cut. Now, in 2023 we did see the reindexation, and Albertans were delighted to receive more appropriate benefits. But let's remember that the indexation-deindexation swings have real-life consequences. These swings change the direction of Albertans' lives. It's not just those relying on these benefits, Mr. Speaker; all Albertans are affected by these swings.

Albertans want to live in a society where we take care of our most vulnerable, where we support each other. It's a society, Mr. Speaker. This bill does not support Ian, it does not support Albertans, and we need to do better.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any others wishing to speak to the bill? The Member for Calgary-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Edmonton-North West.

The Acting Speaker: Edmonton-North West. Sorry.

Mr. Eggen: I've been to Calgary-North West, and I can say that Edmonton-North West is much better.

Anyway, thanks so much for giving me an opportunity here to speak on Bill 32. I just had a chance to peruse it in a perfunctory sort of way here, and there's lots to it. As my colleagues have pointed out, certainly the breadth of this bill reaches into many parts of Alberta's finance. Indeed, there are some practical things that needed to happen. But, again, always with a bill of this sort of heft and scope, sometimes the good things get lost by the bad things – right? – and so we have to maybe, you know, look at some individual pieces and the merits of those and perhaps look to maybe discard some of the other bits as well.

As my colleague from Edmonton-Glenora pointed out, you know, it is possible to hive individual pieces off or make amendments to make a bill better – right? – and that's the process we are engaged in here today on Bill 32. I mean, I can't help but notice that a lot of it's talking about our financial circumstances here today and what Albertans are facing, and I also just noticed that rather obvious things that all of us have to deal with every day are conspicuously absent from this bill as well.

4:50

For example, we do have among the highest electricity costs in Canada at this moment, Mr. Speaker. We have the second-highest car insurance rates in Canada right now, right? We have burdens on food security, right? We have more people using the food bank than ever before. Fully a quarter of Calgarians, for example, are unable to put a healthy meal on the table, a notable 28 per cent of Calgarians, an increase in Calgarians visiting the food bank in this last year. Again, Edmonton has a 37 per cent increase in the last 12 months as well. You know, we can obviously see that there are pressures on Albertans, and part of our job in this Legislature is to try to help to alleviate and to make life more affordable for Albertans.

When I do look at Bill 32, I am concerned that there is room in some of these provisions around indexing, for example, to increase taxes on Albertans on a provincial level quite significantly. We just sat through the last Legislature the last four years, and one of the really notable failures of the first UCP government was around indexing of taxation. You know, Albertans probably cumulatively were on the hook for \$600 million at least from this indexing situation, and we simply can't let that happen again, especially during this affordability crisis that we're all experiencing now. It's

just really our responsibility to learn from the mistakes of the past and not do that again because Albertans quite frankly can't afford it.

Another issue that I found interesting – and maybe we can just get clarification from the minister on this in another reading – was putting a \$200 tax on EV vehicles. I mean, the rationale behind that was that this is like the road tax and then the road tax is otherwise built into the fuel tax here in the province of Alberta. But I'm curious to know, the fuel tax portion of a litre of gasoline that we purchase in the province: is it dedicated to roads, or does it just go into general revenues? I think it's the latter, really, quite frankly, so if it's just going into general revenues, then the logic of taxing an EV owner for a road tax doesn't make sense, right? It's not logical. You have a general revenue contribution coming from the fuel tax, but that could be paying for the lights on here, it could be paying for health care, or it could be paying for roads. So I think that logic doesn't work.

Certainly, we're trying to encourage people to, you know, burn less fuel. There are lots of benefits besides just carbon reduction with an EV vehicle. It also reduces pollution, right? When you have electric vehicles running, especially in urban settings, if there's enough of it, you literally are reducing the particulate pollution in an urban centre. I don't think we should want to discourage that by taxing people who are driving EV vehicles.

Other elements of this bill: again, I'm just trying to get a sense of it. You know, we know that the cost of living is so high in regard to housing in this province, in terms of auto insurance and so forth. I mean, there are ways by which we can make this more affordable. We can put limits on how much car insurance rates are to keep the industry viable and competitive, but also give a break to Albertans. If you are compelled to have insurance by law, then a government is compelled to be responsible to ensure that there's an affordable product to meet that legal obligation to have insurance in the first place. You can't make a law to have car insurance – of course you have to, right? I mean, that's obvious – without having an affordable product for people to choose to be able to use.

I guess, you know, if we can have clarification around this, the indexation and the tax creep that we saw in its insidious form from the last Legislature, and to make sure that we are legislating that away and to make sure that it doesn't insidiously creep back into our taxation system. I think that needs to be clarified in this bill because, in fact, what we see here now I believe is just some other version of tax creep, right? So that is another thing that I would look for in this bill.

I know that the CBC quoted the Minister of Finance here and said that the 2025 indexation rate would be 2 per cent, which would cost the treasury an extra \$200 million. So if we can just make a general assumption that a 1 per cent rise in the index issue rate is relatively equal to about \$100 million into the pockets of Albertans, then for each 1 per cent cut we could say that we are leaving \$100 million out of the hands of deserving Albertans.

It's not clear if he was just referring to taxes or benefits or a combination in the comment, but, you know, I don't think that matters too much, really. What does matter is that the deindexation of Albertans' tax brackets and benefits will result in millions of fewer dollars into individuals' pockets and their bank accounts. In 2021, '22, '23, '24 inflation was well over 2 per cent. So this new indexation policy would have potentially cost Albertans hundreds of millions of dollars over these years. It's not something that we want to see, Mr. Speaker, nor something that we need either.

Ultimately, and the most insidiously I think, is that it's not transparent at all. The UCP turns around and says that they have a choice to go above the 2 per cent and this just would be a floor for

the increase. Well, then why would they leave themselves that option, if they weren't going to use it? It begs the question, and I think we deserve an answer.

Fully indexing tax brackets, which allows citizens to earn more money at a lower tax rate, is essentially a tax cut. As incomes rise to keep pace with inflation, income tax thresholds must also rise to avoid bracket creep. That is, if income tax thresholds are not indexed to inflation, an increase in income will result in higher taxes being paid by the taxpayer even though their purchasing power has not changed. If you have a tax increase by any other name, it's still a tax increase, Mr. Speaker. I seem to recall that Bill 1, job one for the UCP government, was to have a referendum if they're going to have a tax increase, right? That's what they said, I think. So, I mean, I don't know. As my colleague from Calgary-Foothills put it this afternoon: if you have a tax increase coming down the pipe, when's the referendum?

Anyway, I think that Albertans do deserve clarity on Bill 32. I know that there are always financial statutes that do need to be modernized and to be changed, but this bill seems just loaded up with a bit too much. I mean, during second reading I'm not always one to pass judgment. I need to look at this more thoroughly, Mr. Speaker, and to look at it in more detail. I encourage all MLAs to do the same.

With that, I would please ask if we can adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 30

Service Alberta Statutes Amendment Act, 2024

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

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been too long. I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill 30, the Service Alberta Statutes Amendment Act, 2024. As you know, Bill 30 proposes amendments to three acts: the Condominium Property Act, the Prompt Payment and Construction Lien Act, and the Public Works Act, which fall under the Ministry of Infrastructure.

Now, at this time, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to go into a bit more detail on how these amendments will benefit Albertans. I'll start with the changes proposed to the Condominium Property Act. We heard time and again from condominium owners, board members, managers that condominium governance needs to change. So that's what we're doing. We've taken that feedback and used it to create the amendments proposed in Bill 30. Bill 30 includes clarifications of the Condominium Property Act that will help improve condominium governance and enhance consumer protections.

5:00

For starters, it's been made clear by the condominium community that they're in need of an effective dispute resolution mechanism. Those community members will be pleased to hear that, if passed, Bill 30 would provide the long-awaited authority to establish a condominium dispute resolution tribunal. A tribunal would provide an affordable and accessible way to resolve common condominium disputes and would create an alternative to taking disputes to the courts, particularly for those matters that regularly occur and are not usually taken through the court process.

If passed, Bill 30 will allow for a simpler, owner-based method of voting in condominium meetings. This would be in addition to the existing unit factor votes and would allow corporations to establish a different type of simple voting and bylaws, addressing the calls for an easier and faster form of voting to help boards resolve simple matters more efficiently.

The proposed amendments would also enable chargebacks to be treated as contributions. A condominium chargeback is where a condominium corporation charges costs back to a unit owner when costs are incurred by the actions or inactions of an owner or a person that is responsible. This helps ensure that the costs associated with the owner's actions or inactions are not passed on to other unit owners. Allowing chargebacks to be treated as contributions means money would be collected directly from those who generate costs. It would help protect owners from increasing condominium fees that would otherwise be used to cover those costs. It would act as a safeguard to the financial health and well-being of the condominium community.

Now, similar to the ongoing engagement and feedback we've had from condominium community members, we've also been working closely with the construction industry. Since the Prompt Payment and Construction Lien Act came into force in 2022, we've been checking in with industry members to find out how implementation is proceeding, whether there are barriers to the adoption of prompt payment practices, and what kind of interest exists for extending prompt payment to government projects. This work also identified other concerns with the PPCLA, including shortfalls in the adjudication process, rigidity around payments to consulting professions like engineers and architects, ambiguity around when a construction contract is complete under the act, and other uncertainties that have caused confusion.

As a first step in addressing this feedback, Bill 30 offers amendments that would clarify language and eliminate ambiguity within the Prompt Payment and Construction Lien Act. In addition to clarifying language and eliminating ambiguity, it would also allow consulting professionals to opt out of the PPCLA lien holdback requirements.

If passed, Bill 30 would also address the ambiguity around when a construction contract is considered complete. The amendments would clarify that a contract is to be considered complete when the final payment has been made in full and would specify that adjudication rule will be available for 30 days after the date of completion. With regard to adjudication, Bill 30 includes amendments that will streamline adjudication processes to encourage contractors to access adjudication to resolve disputes as opposed to using the courts.

We've also heard interest from industry members in seeing the current prompt payment rules that apply to private-sector construction projects extended to government-owned construction projects. Alberta's government is willing to act swiftly and lead by example. The proposed amendments to the PPCLA would facilitate the changes to the Public Works Act that would extend the prompt payment rules and processes to government of Alberta construction projects. This would create one set of prompt payment rules and processes for public- and private-sector construction projects.

Bill 30 would also stipulate that as of spring 2025 all new contracts must align with the requirements of the Prompt Payment and Construction Lien Act. If passed, these changes to the Prompt Payment and Construction Lien Act and the Public Works Act will help keep money flowing through the construction chain in private and public projects. They'll ensure contractors have access to adjudication services and keep the prompt payment process running smoothly.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments laid out in Bill 30 are aimed at making life easier for the folks in the condominium and construction sectors. They're about protecting Albertans and providing them with the appropriate safeguards and tools to keep them safe in their places of residence and businesses. Bill 30 is also about showing that we're listening and taking action to ensure our legislation is working the way Albertans want it to. It's another opportunity to ensure Alberta is the best province to live, work, and raise a family.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I invite the support of the House to give second reading to Bill 30. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Are the others wishing to speak to Bill 30? The Member for Calgary-North East.

Member Brar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since my colleague from Edmonton-North West earlier mentioned that Edmonton-North West is better than Calgary, I want to disagree and say that Calgary-North East is better than other places, but yeah; that's a separate discussion.

I want to thank you very much for giving me an opportunity to speak on this important piece of legislation, Bill 30, Service Alberta Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, a bill that makes important updates to Alberta's legal framework for condominium properties and construction projects by amending the Condominium Property Act, Prompt Payment and Construction Lien Act, and the Public Works Act.

This bill touches on critical areas that affect thousands of Albertans. It's not just about the legal issues, Mr. Speaker; it's about the livelihoods of those Albertans. It's about their financial security, it's about the stability in their homes, and it is about the lengthy, exhaustive legal process that they had to go through, which resulted in lots of mental stress as well. So it is important that we recognize that as well, and it is important that we discuss that here in the Assembly.

I want to acknowledge the intent of the government here in this Bill 30. I'm glad that Alberta is stepping forward and aligning itself with other jurisdictions like Ontario and B.C. and other provinces who have already taken innovative approaches to managing condominium disputes so that the constituents, the people have enough time and the people feel better to go through the dispute resolution process and also ensure prompt payments for the people who work in the construction industry, whether that be small-business owners, whether those are subcontractors, contractors, or the workers who work in those projects. You know, there are lots of merits, but at the same time there are some gaps, and there are some areas where we can still work together and improve things. I would like to go through a couple of things one by one.

The first I would like to discuss is condominium dispute resolution tribunals. A major component of Bill 30 is our introduction of a condominium dispute resolution tribunal, Mr. Speaker, and this tribunal aims to make the process quicker, easier, accessible, and save money and time for condo owners if they want to go through the dispute and give them a platform where they can resolve the issues instead of paying lots of money in courts. It also gives some relief to the court backlog and the judicial system as well.

This is a positive development, and it aligns Alberta with other jurisdictions like Ontario, B.C., Saskatchewan. Ontario was the first one in Canada to create a tribunal system for condo disputes. Ontario's tribunal has provided an accessible platform where residents can file complaints about the issues that don't necessarily need legal action; for instance, a noisy neighbour or pest infestations, compliance issues. Alberta's approach here is a step forward toward a similar accessible framework which will streamline the dispute process and, hopefully, reduce the burden on the legal and the court system.

After all, Alberta has more than 250,000 condominium units, probably more, and around 500,000, half a million, Albertans living there, so it's important that there is a tribunal, there is a system that is accessible to all those Albertans to resolve their disputes, there is a system that they can use to make sure they save their money, they

save their time, and they get things done without getting too much mental stress.

5:10

While I welcome this tribunal, I want to make a request and suggestion to this government that usually there are lots of programs of the government, there are lots of mechanisms of the government that are available there but are not communicated properly to the constituents, to Albertans. I want to share one example, Mr. Speaker. Before this portfolio I was the critic for small business. There is a program called Biz Connect in the minister's portfolio, the jobs, economy ministry. That program is a real resource for so many new Albertans who want to start small businesses. They can get lots of information from there. But the problem is that the program is not widely communicated. It is not widely accessible to so many Albertans.

I also requested the minister to make sure that program was available so that Albertans could benefit from that, so that Albertans could actually use the resources from that program and get their businesses going. That would have been really helpful to new Canadians. Lots of people from all over Canada are choosing Alberta, so population growth is going up. People want to grow their income, people want to set up businesses, so those programs are really helpful. Similarly, using that example, I want to request this minister to make sure that this program, this tribunal program, is communicated properly to Albertans. I know there is \$8 million of funding allocated to this tribunal system under this bill, so I hope that that will be accessible, that will be communicated properly to all Albertans.

The next point I want to touch base on, Mr. Speaker, is the technical audits. The bill also requires technical audits for newly built condominium buildings, and again this is a critical step forward, aligning Alberta with other provinces like Ontario, which already have technical audit requirements in place for new builds. These audits will help ensure construction meets safety standards and quality standards, giving the buyers a sense of relief, a sense of assurance about the structural soundness of the investment that they are about to make by buying a new condo. However, let's not ignore that Alberta has faced persistent issues with construction defects in condominium buildings, whether those be leaky roofs, whether those be faulty electrical systems. There have been instances where condo owners had to pay out of pocket because of the lack of clarity, because of the lack of strong oversight and weak developer accountability and inefficient warranty coverage as well.

These are the issues that Albertans have faced in the past, and I hope that things will improve in the future with this bill. These issues could have been mitigated if technical audits and stronger protections were implemented earlier, Mr. Speaker. We are playing catch-up here, and while it's better late than never, Alberta should be a leader, not a follower, in setting standards for safe, high-quality housing. It is important that we protect the condo owners from these hefty expenses because people work hard. People save their money. Their hard work . . . [interjection] Sure.

Ms Hoffman: If the member is willing to give way. Thank you so much to the member for ceding a moment of his time. Calgary-North East is one of the fastest growing places, not just in the city of Calgary but in the province. Every time I . . .

The Acting Speaker: Point of order. Actually, the speaker following the mover cannot accept an intervention. It has to be the second speaker following the mover. Sorry for the confusion.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks for the reminder.
Get ready, third speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Proceed.

Member Brar: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for highlighting the importance of Calgary-North East. As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, Calgary-North East is one of the fastest growing and one of the best places to live in Calgary. I will again say, since the Member for Edmonton-North West was not here when I was speaking earlier, that I disagree with him that Edmonton-North West is the best place. It's Calgary-North East. Just making some corrections for the member.

Yeah. Anyways, I am going to the third point, Mr. Speaker, here, and that is prompt payment legislation. It's important that we make changes to prompt payment legislation because lots of livelihoods, lots of households depend on this legislation. There are lots of workers, there are lots of subcontractors who put their safety at risk, who go and work in different seasons. While we are all sitting in warm rooms, they are working on the construction project. It is important that we recognize their hard-earned labour, that we recognize their efforts and we value their efforts.

Bill 30's prompt payment provisions are a significant step forward, Mr. Speaker, particularly for Alberta's construction sector. Prior to this only private-sector projects were covered under prompt payment legislation, leaving contractors and subcontractors on public projects without similar protections. Within this amendment Alberta's prompt payment requirements will now extend to Crown contracts and alignment with Ontario's Construction Act amendments made in 2019, which introduced a prompt payment and adjudication regime.

In Ontario, Mr. Speaker, contractors must be paid within 28 days by project owners, and subcontractors must be paid within seven days of receiving the payment. Similar provisions exist in Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, and other provinces like Manitoba have also started to explore these kind of provisions.

Mr. Speaker, these timelines have effectively become a Canadian standard in providing a reliable framework for timely payments that support small businesses, workers, the livelihoods and households of so many Albertans that work hard in the construction industry, and also support business cash flows and reduce the disputes as well, again, leading to fewer liens, leading to fewer backlogs in the court, making life easier for so many Albertans by reducing their stress and keeping workers employed in the construction industry.

The federal government has also enacted the Federal Prompt Payment for Construction Work Act, setting a strong precedent for prompt payments within federal contracts. This act requires payments to contractors within a specified timeline with subcontractors and their subcontractors also receiving payments down the chain within seven days. Mr. Speaker, that is an important thing, that the whole chain gets paid in a timely manner and everybody gets to get their business going. In this way the construction industry also gets a boom and the construction industry also creates more jobs, and good-paying jobs are created in Alberta, and the safety of all workers is also not compromised.

However, Alberta's legislation, Mr. Speaker, exempts P3s, public-private partnerships, from these payment rules, which is a bit concerning and a matter of discussion, which will continue. As we know, P3s are increasingly used for major construction projects, so it would be nice if we include those public-private partnerships as well under some sort of legislation, under some sort of amendment so that workers working on those P3 projects are not kept in limbo, their livelihood is not compromised, and their labour is valued and we make sure that they are also protected.

It's not only about the type of project; it is about the workers working there. It is about the small-business owners putting efforts there. It doesn't matter what kind of project they work on. They

should have a sense of safety. They should have the sense of security about the payment that they are going to receive because then they have to pay their employees, who are working hard in the construction industry. Again, including P3s would be another area that we still need to look at, that Alberta legislation still needs to work around and find something so that everybody gets paid on time.

Adjudication. The next point, Mr. Speaker, is adjudication and legal clarity in the Public Works Act. The . . .

5:20

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

The Member for Camrose is recognized, followed by the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm excited to talk about the Service Alberta Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, a piece of legislation that could have a real impact on how we as Albertans interact with government services in the coming years. This bill would make changes to the Condominium Property Act, Public Works Act, and Prompt Payment and Construction Lien Act.

As we all know, the world around us is changing fast. Technology is advancing, businesses are evolving, and so are the needs of people we serve. Government services must evolve as well to stay relevant, efficient, and responsive to those needs. Our changes proposed in Bill 30 are designed to bring Alberta's legal framework into alignment with these evolving realities. Our government is committed to supporting our economic sector, ensuring Albertans have the protection they need, and promoting fairness in both the workplace and at home. This bill does so by improving how we support our construction industry and how we ensure that consumer protections are both clear and enforceable.

On August 29, 2022, the Prompt Payment and Construction Lien Act, formerly known as the Builders' Lien Act, came into force and established requirements for shortened payment periods and a system of streamlined adjudication for payment disputes. Since the PPCLA came into effect two years ago, Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction has seen a variety of improvements. This includes establishing a nominating authority to assign adjudicators for construction disputes. There's also been consultation with stakeholders to create an exemption to prompt payment rules, discuss implementation of proceedings, and focus on barriers to the adoption of prompt payment practices and tending prompt payment to government projects. Proposed amendments would apply prompt payment timelines and adjudication to government of Alberta projects under the Public Works Act.

If passed, amendments to the Condominium Property Act would establish an accessible and affordable dispute resolution tribunal, providing an alternative method to help condominium owners and boards resolve common disputes outside of the court system. Additionally, there would be chargebacks to be treated as contributions. These, in turn, would protect owners from increasing condominium fees due to unanticipated costs caused by the actions or inactions of one owner or persons they are responsible for as these costs would be collected directly from those who cause damage or other costs on the corporation. Condominium governments would be improved, and consumer protections would therefore be enhanced, and increased clarity would be provided, ensuring consistent and fair application of process across condominium corporations.

Mr. Speaker, my personal experience living in a condo building has shown me how necessary such a tribunal is. I faced a situation where raw sewage began to leak from my ceiling. This rather unfortunate circumstance could have been fixed very quickly.

However, the tenant renting the unit above me would not allow the maintenance crew to access the unit so they could address the problem. This ordeal went on for months and was tough on everyone involved. I'm glad this new tribunal will give people going through similar situations some level of recourse.

Another area where this bill makes a real difference is in addressing the challenges faced by condominium owners and boards. For many Albertans their condo is more than just a place to live; it is often one of their largest investments. However, managing a condominium can be complex. Rules and regulations are not always clear. This legislation aims to bring much-needed clarity to the governance of our communities, ensuring that all involved parties have a shared understanding of what the rules they must follow entail. This clarity is not only about reducing confusion but also about fairness. When everyone understands their rights and responsibilities, it leads to smoother operations and fewer disputes. It also makes sure that decisions are being made consistently across the province, maintaining trust and accountability within the condominium sector.

By establishing a dispute resolution tribunal for condominium owners, we are enacting changes that condo owners, boards, and managers have been requesting for years. For too long disputes between condo owners and boards or even between owners have been difficult to resolve. These conflicts can drag on for months or even years, leaving residents frustrated and unsure how to move forward. Our tribunal will provide a dedicated space for these issues to be addressed more efficiently and fairly. It will offer a more accessible and streamlined process which allows for faster resolutions and reduces the burdens on the court. We are not just improving the experience for condo owners by offering a clear pathway for resolving disputes but strengthening the overall governance of condominium communities across our great province.

This tribunal will also aid in ensuring that the decisions made are consistent and aligned with the law, creating a sense of confidence among all parties involved. Condo owners will have greater peace of mind knowing that they have reliable mechanisms for sharing and resolving their concerns, and boards will benefit from a more transparent and efficient process. This is a win-win for all parties and helps foster stronger, more harmonious condo communities.

Additional amendments would have the government lead by example in the construction industry by including public-sector construction projects in prompt payment rules. These amendments to both acts will help keep the money flowing down the correct chain in the public and private sectors and ensure contractors working on public projects have access to adjudication services.

Bill 30 represents a crucial step forward in ensuring that Alberta's legal framework for consumer protections, condominium governance, and the construction industry keeps pace with the changes that we see in our communities. Our amendments will improve dispute resolution, ensure fairness, and enhance clarity for condo owners and boards. These proposed changes will provide timely and efficient payment practices for public-sector construction projects and help keep Alberta's construction industry strong and healthy.

These amendments are designed to make our system more transparent, accessible, and effective. Whether you are a condominium owner, a contractor, or simply an Albertan accessing government services, you can rely on a more efficient and fair system. I believe that Bill 30 will not only benefit individuals directly but will also aid in strengthening our overall system of governance and economic processes.

The actions that we are taking today lay a framework for a more stable, fair, and prosperous future for all Albertans, and I want to

thank the minister for bringing this very important legislation forward. This is going to be meaningful for so many Albertans. Thank you to you and your team for this work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has risen.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to speak to this particular bill because, of course, having been a subcontractor myself, I know the realities that you go through when you're jumping from one project to another to another to another.

For the members of the House that aren't aware, in one of my previous lives I used to be a finishing carpenter. You know, it's one of the times in my life that I really appreciated because my father was the one who taught me how to do a lot of that work. In finishing carpentry you do a lot of really fine detailing of work in people's homes. Some people just think it's the baseboards and things like that, but really when you get into the crown moulding and you start working on finishing people's fireplaces and things like that, you can get into, like, really intricate, detailed, and very beautiful work. So I'm really thankful that my father – may he rest in peace – taught me how to do that, right?

But my experience being a subcontractor was often – you know, it wasn't the small, little jobs that you did for people in the neighbourhood. Essentially, you would have people that would just hire you for, like, a one- or two-day job. But it was the big jobs, Mr. Speaker, the big developers, and things like that where you'd have to go in and do, for example, 20 houses, or you'd go into an apartment condo complex and you'd have to do, let's say, 200 units, right? So you were busy.

5:30

I was very lucky because I was able to hire a number of people to work along with me. I could pass on the tricks of the trade. A lot of those people were young people that ended up coming to work with me. All I ever demanded from people was just to do what you say you're going to do, get the job done, stay until you get it done so that we can move on to the next project.

But as I was saying, Mr. Speaker, it was these big companies, these big corporations that were the ones that would end up holding out on you. Now, of course, you can't necessarily blame the owner of the corporation itself because what was happening in these instances was the fact that they would pay out the general contractor, as some of you may well know, and then the general contractor would then be paying out the subcontractor.

Now, in those circumstances, before we had prompt payment legislation, prior to when the UCP brought it in, the reality was that we would just depend on contracts, but unfortunately those contracts sometimes didn't mean anything. A lot of those times the contracts said that the subcontractors had to be paid out in 65 days or 75 days and some as much as up to 95 days. And, you know, you were a subcontractor; you would just agree to that contract. You knew that if you did the job, you were at least supposed to get payment within that specified amount of time, but for the vast majority of subcontractors that wasn't what was happening. There would be some subcontractors that would have to wait 100, 120 days in order to get paid.

When I was first elected in 2015, Mr. Speaker, one of the first groups of people that came to me was the Electrical Contractors Association of Alberta. When they came to me with this particular issue, I was like: whoa; I'm very familiar with it because it

happened to me. It happened to me many times where a significant amount of days past the contract date I still wasn't paid.

You know what would end up happening in a lot of cases, Mr. Speaker? As a subcontractor you're just dying to move on to the next job because if you don't move on to the next job, then you're not going to be able to have more cash flow coming into your business, and you need that cash flow so that you can buy the materials for the next job. Guess what happens when you don't get paid on time. You're having to use your own money to buy the materials for the next job. Then what happens is that in a lot of circumstances the general contractor would be like, "Oh, well, you didn't finish this, this, and that," and because you didn't finish these three little details of the job, they would withhold payment on the entire amount. That's what was incredibly unfair.

Then as a subcontractor you've got to ask yourself, "Well, I need to move on to the next job" or "I've already moved all my tools over to the next job." And you're like: okay; okay; just pay me cents on the dollar. That was the reality here in Alberta for a very long time, Mr. Speaker. A lot of hard-working women and men who were subcontractors were losing out because people weren't honouring not only their word; they weren't even honouring the contracts, the agreements, that were written. They weren't honouring that.

So I was very happy to work with the Electrical Contractors Association back when I was elected in 2015 and start bringing this issue to the Legislature, talking about it, engaging with my colleagues at the time, letting them know that this was of particular interest specifically to the electrical contractors but also many other contractors, who were also of the same opinion that there needed to be some kind of prompt payment legislation. Now, of course, owners and general contractors were completely against this thing, so we had to find a balance. We had to find a balance between prompt payment legislation – of course, we didn't want to make others upset by bringing in prompt payment legislation that wasn't somehow fair.

I'm very happy to say that a lot of work was done. There were a lot of consultations being done prior to 2019, and eventually people started zeroing in on what our friends across the aisle actually brought in soon after being elected. I'm very proud to have been part of that work.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to this particular issue – well, let me take a step back. When I was talking to a lot of the electrical contractors, of course, a lot of them were doing infrastructure projects for the province itself and the Ministry of Infrastructure. I managed to get a meeting between several contractors and the minister at the time, who was our very beloved Brian Mason. At that time he was actually Minister of Infrastructure and of transportation. At that time, as the members across the way may know, in 2016 what we did for these provincial contracts is that we established a 1.800 number so that a subcontractor that was working on a project, if they weren't being paid on time, could simply pick up the phone, call the 1.800 number, and say that they weren't getting paid according to the contract and getting paid on time.

As the government I'm not too sure if that's actually something that they're going to put into the legislation or how they plan on working that out. They're saying that they're going to extend prompt payment. Well, the prompt payment that they did bring in was particularly for the private sector, and now they're saying that they're going to expand it to public Crown and public works, which I find a bonus.

But, really, at the end of the day, we have to be working on the subcontractors themselves. What recourse are they going to have? Are they going to be able to call a 1.800 number and actually say that they haven't been paid on time according to the contract or

that they haven't been paid on time according to the contract or within the allotted number of days, as has been put here, 28 days for a contractor and then seven days after for the subcontractor? What is going to be the recourse that those subcontractors have?

I say this because not only does it get detrimental on the actual business side of what the contractor is doing; I heard from so many subcontractors that it actually started impacting their lives at home because – guess what – if you're not getting paid from doing jobs and you're constantly out doing jobs and you're not spending that time at home, there's going to be some problems at home. If you're not bringing in money and you're not putting food on the table, there's obviously going to be problems in that household, with that marriage.

I really want to be able to paint the picture for the members across the way of how important prompt payment legislation truly was and how for decades – decades – this was ignored. This was ignored by previous Progressive Conservative governments here in this province. The problem was happening, yet nobody was willing to do anything about it.

Now, the common response to a lot of subcontractors: well, there's the lien act. You can just put a lien on the property, and eventually you're going to get paid. But let me tell you, every subcontractor that I talked to, Mr. Speaker, would say that that was like committing suicide. The minute that you took a lien against somebody in this province, you could guarantee that you were never going to work in Alberta again, and you were probably not going to be able to find another contract across Canada. That was the reality. The Progressive Conservatives for decades did nothing in order to actually deal with it.

5:40

So I'm happy that our friends have come along. They understand what the issue is and how important it is to Alberta families. I would like to see more of that kind of work when it comes to so many other aspects of people's livelihoods here in the province of Alberta. It was a good job.

Now, my particular issue with the piece of legislation that the minister has brought forward is the fact that this prompt payment legislation is not going to apply to P3s. It's understandable that there is a certain level of difficulty in making it apply to public-private partnerships because, of course, as you and I both know, Mr. Speaker, in a public-private partnership you're actually bringing in a consortium.

I see that the minister is standing up, and I'd like to give way. Perhaps he can explain a little bit more about that.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. This has come up twice from the last three members, so I thought I would rise and address it. The member is right. P3s are not included for a couple of reasons: the complexity of P3s and because P3s include maintenance projects. And maintenance, as you're aware, is not part of it. So while this prompt payment does not apply to P3s, the principles of prompt payment will be written into the P3 contract.

Listen, just to be clear – and I appreciate your compliments – we are outliers on prompt payment in this province. Other jurisdictions do it, but they only do it on the prompt payment, not on the invoicing. We have it in place for the invoicing and the prompt payment, so we are truly outliers on prompt payment, and the principles will be incorporated into the contracts of P3s.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much for that, Minister. That puts my mind at ease. Really, it does. Making sure that prompt payment is then actually put in the clauses, making sure that the

consortiums that are getting together in order to build a P3 can then make sure that those clauses are actually inside of their contracts means an incredible amount to our tradespeople here in the province of Alberta. I think it's a step in the right direction that will help an immense amount of people.

That being the case, though, I think that there's a lot of work on how P3s can be made more efficient. When it comes to the particular projects, we just need to look at, for example, the building of the Mill Woods LRT. Sorry. I chuckle there at the same time. I mean, that project was – oh, boy, let me tell you. Whatever could possibly go wrong with that project, it did, and unfortunately the constituents of Edmonton-Mill Woods and those of Edmonton-Ellerslie and those of Edmonton-Meadows who now rely on that LRT were waiting a very, very long time.

Minister, one of the things, particular asks I would have of you, is how can we make – if you're going to insist, I mean, I still have a lot of issues with P3s. Boy, let me tell you. But I know that your government is open and willing to explore options. I have no doubt that you as Minister of Infrastructure, when you're looking at these things, of course want to figure out how you can bring added value to some of the projects. But the reality is that these projects are taking way too long – way too long – so I feel that there is some jiggling of the contracts that has to happen. But, one, applying P3 clauses to those contracts is fantastic. I highly support that.

Mr. Speaker, there's a number of things that, when it comes to the prompt payment legislation, I think we still need to work on. I think that it would be really important for us to review legislation as we go on because, from my particular perspective, we can always make things better. We can always make things better.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Any others wishing to speak? The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our United Conservative government is absolutely committed to supporting our economic sector and the residents to ensure that all Albertans have protections that they require and are treated fairly at work and at home. This is why I support government Bill 30, the Service Alberta Statutes Amendment Act, 2024. If passed in this Chamber, Bill 30 will make the necessary amendments to the Condominium Property Act that will establish an accessible and affordable dispute resolution tribunal. Now, Mr. Speaker, this is actually quite important.

As a man that's worked as an accountant for a lot of years, I have seen some of my clients go through some of these disputes. You know, a lot of times these are small businesses, and we heard from Edmonton-Ellerslie that – you know what? I think that there are things about this legislation that both parties, all parties can get around. This is important to all of us, that we see that the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction is looking to address this, and I have to say that I will commend him on the fine work because this is a good piece of legislation. I will say that this is long awaited.

The condominium dispute resolution tribunal would provide an alternative method for assisting condo owners and boards to resolve common disputes outside of the courts for intervention. The change is something that the condo owners, boards, and managers have been requesting from service Alberta for many years. It's important when we're saying that this has been wanted on for many years, because we heard from Edmonton-Ellerslie again; this has been something that potentially could have been addressed for decades. Well, again – you know what? – this slipped through the NDP's fingers. They had four years to address this, and they ignored them.

An Hon. Member: Shame.

Mr. Cyr: It is shameful.

But I will tell you that when it comes down to it, I know that our government is looking to address concerns before the condominium owners. They're not just taking the letters in and filing them right into the garbage can like the former NDP was doing; they're actually reading them and actually looking to resolve them.

These proposed amendments to the Condominium Property Act contained in Bill 30 would also address issues of chargebacks. If passed, Bill 30 would enable chargebacks to owners for damage that they have caused to be treated as contributions. This would protect owners from increasing condominium fees due to the unanticipated costs caused by actions or inactions of one owner or persons they are responsible for. The costs would be collected directly from those who caused the damage and other costs on the condo corporation.

This is another important point here. Why would the corporation or the group of condos have to pay for one unit's damage? This is something I believe that we always need to be looking forward to and saying: look, we do have a collective responsibility, but in the end we also have individual responsibility. And I will give credit to the minister again; he's saying: let's give some methods for these condo associations to be able to deal with this in a timely fashion.

The amendments also improve the condominium governance and enhanced consumer protections. Mr. Speaker, one change you might especially appreciate given your role is the proposed amendment to simplifying the form of voting for simple matters like approving meeting agendas. Overall, the proposed amendments would provide clarity and ensure consistent application to processes across the condo corporations.

Mr. Speaker, you know, it's hard to fill a lot of these boards. People are busy, they have lives, and – you know what? – their condo association is so important to them, but what ends up happening is that they want other people to take care of it. Well, that's a very poor strategy because what ends up happening a lot of times is that you may not get the attention you do need. Simplifying this is all that much more important. Let's make these meetings go as fast as they can so that these boards can get back to their normal lives.

As the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction recently said, quote, our work with condominium owners, board members, managers, and others in this sector has reinforced the need for changes that will meet the needs of condominium owners and residents. This legislation will improve condominium governance, provide additional measures for consumer protection, and establish a mechanism for easy access to dispute resolution. End quote. He summed it up in two very easy sentences that we all can understand. He's really looking out for the condominium owners. And you know what? As a condominium owner myself this is important. I, too, want to ensure that these condominiums are protected adequately.

5:50

Well, Mr. Speaker, this is yet another example of our government listening to the very concerns of many folks across Alberta. Many of these long-standing concerns stretch back from prior to our first mandate. Our government has been working on solutions as a result, and we now have Bill 30 in front of us. Furthermore, these proposed amendments would establish a basis for technical requirements for newly built condominiums to protect consumers against structural and other defects in their construction. We all have heard horror stories from defects in these construction projects in the past that have severely burdened condominium owners.

Again, if something has been poorly built, there should be some stopgap for our condominium associations to be able to go to those contractors and say: you need to fix it; it's your responsibility. Like a new home warranty, if you will. Well, our government listened, and we are acting.

Now, I'd like to turn to other aspects of Bill 30. It proposes amendments to the Prompt Payment and Construction Lien Act, or the PPCLA. It creates rules for timing of payments in Alberta's construction industry and proposed amendments that would prompt timelines and adjudication to government of Alberta projects that are under the Public Works Act. These amendments would ensure that the government is leading by example in Alberta's construction industry. Simply put, Mr. Speaker, this would ensure that all construction projects follow the same set of rules when it comes to prompt payment.

The prompt payment rule was established in legislation in 2021, but the rules in the PPCLA only applied to private-sector projects. While I'm sure Alberta's government always prioritized prompt payment for government contracts, Bill 30 would ensure transparency and fairness by subjecting itself to prompt payment legislation. I would add that since the PPCLA came into force in 2022, Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction has engaged in consultations with relevant stakeholders. As a result of those consultations, amendments are now being brought forward to address current and prior concerns in the legislation.

These amendments I have discussed so far today are very important, Mr. Speaker. Moreover, they represent changes that folks all over Alberta have been requesting for some time now. Our United Conservative government is delivering tangible results through proposed amendments in Bill 30. That is why I will be voting in favour of Bill 30, the Service Alberta Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, and I hope that members on both sides of this Chamber would do the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any others? The Member for Edmonton-Meadows has risen to speak.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the House on behalf of my constituents and add I think brief comments, I would say, looking at the clock, to the bill, Service Alberta Statutes Amendment Act, 2024. I remember speaking to a similar bill in the House not very long ago, probably a year ago, discussing very similar issues. I had comprehensive feedback on that bill, and seeing that this bill is back in the House once again on slightly different things after a year and a half, passing the bill to address the same issues. As politicians, as public representatives we have a job, you know. I never mind. As many times as we need to look at the issues to resolve the matters that help people at large, that help our industry, that help our workers, that promote our economy, it's always good.

I have my feedback in line of what we are discussing, kind of in line; not exactly. Because that bill, when we were discussing it under the previous ministry, you know, that happened to be coming back after a few months, that was not even passed, but before it even was implemented, to getting it fixed.

The three acts that this bill particularly is amending, you know: I wanted to say these are good amendments, and I wanted to thank the minister for bringing these forward. What I wanted to say, I would probably say in the next reading, is that I had feedback on a number of things that fall under the service ministry related to contract works in the industry that we are not touching. The problems on those sections are huge in the same manner that we are

discussing, but it seems like because of, probably, the lobbying of one section of the construction industry or knowledge, whatever the reason, our focus is again on very, very narrow problems in the industry, what we are discussing in this bill.

In the construction industry, this is going to clarify a number of other things. In the condominium act it's going to add some ease to the condominium residents, condominium owners, and the project owners, and that is appreciable. But there are other issues, like, as an example – I just have slightly two minutes. I don't know how far I would get on this. The trucking industry in my riding or in my community, the area that I represent: there's a large number of people working in the trucking industry. They are facing the same challenge, but there is not a clear process for repercussion for them.

When we were discussing – and I can go back to my speaking notes that I had for the sake of record, that seemed like it was not considered when we were looking at this bill, because tons of people in my riding were coming to me, complaining that their

payments had been withheld in tens of thousands of dollars multiple times in the trucking industry. So similarly as, you know, the lack of finance impacts the operation in one industry, definitely the impact in the other industry is the same. If the operation in the construction industry is impacted by not being able to, you know, sustain the labour, the workforce, or carry the operation without the finances; similarly, even the trucking industry is in a very, very bad situation. They have mortgages on their equipment, they have mortgages on their trucks, and they have heavy insurance payments that keep coming regardless of if their machinery is working or not.

The Acting Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the House stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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For inquiries contact:

Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875

E-mail: AlbertaHansard@assembly.ab.ca