



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, May 16, 2024

Day 53

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

First Session

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Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)
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Boparai, Parmeet Singh, Calgary-Falconridge (NDP)
Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)
Brar, Gurinder, Calgary-North East (NDP)
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Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC)
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Party standings:

United Conservative: 48

New Democrat: 38

Independent: 1

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Sweet

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 16, 2024

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our King and 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 interest and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Hon. members, it being the last sitting day of the week, we will now be led in the singing of *God Save the King* by Ms Nicole Williams.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Hon. members, many of you may have seen that today the Legislature is hosting an Angels of Ukraine display in the rotunda. This memorial exhibit consists of over 540 handmade yellow and blue angels. Each angel represents a child that has been killed in Ukraine since Russia's illegal invasion in 2022. Sadly, the number of angels has more than doubled since the display was created by two Ukrainian mothers in Slovakia in 2022. Since then the display has travelled all over Europe, including Cyprus, the United Kingdom, Germany. Edmonton is the second Canadian city to host the display since it arrived here in Canada. While it's only on display for one day, I think it's particularly fitting that it's here today, on Vyshyvanka Day, a day to celebrate Ukrainian heritage and folk traditions. I encourage all members to view the exhibit before they leave the Assembly.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's my great privilege to introduce to you a special guest joining us today in the Speaker's gallery all the way from the Northwest Territories. Speaker Shane Thompson, who represents the constituency of Nahendeh, is visiting the Legislature today to meet and learn from our dedicated LAO staff about the ways that they are engaging with Albertans. I enjoyed touring him around the Legislature this morning. As well, I was happy to host a delegation of members for lunch with Speaker Thompson. He's also joined by the Northwest Territories' manager of public affairs and communications, Jennifer Franki-Smith. I ask that they both rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Hon. members, also joining us today in the Speaker's gallery – I mentioned earlier the Angels of Ukraine display in the rotunda – I see Consul General Danylyenko, the consul general of Ukraine. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Also joining us in the Speaker's gallery today, the Angels of Ukraine display would not have been possible without

the support of Orysia Boychuk, the president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress Alberta Provincial Council. She's a strong supporter and a proud Ukrainian Canadian. It's my pleasure to host her and the remainder of the Ukrainian delegation. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has a school to introduce.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, it's my pleasure to introduce the students and staff from Headway School. [Remarks in Punjabi] I ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to rise today and introduce to you and through you three of my esteemed guests from the Nepalese community who have joined Nepal's hon. ambassador to Canada: Dipendra Pandey, Shreejana Mahat, Suraj Adhikari. I would request them to rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the House.

Member Boparai: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Sergeant Pabandee Singh Dhaliwal, currently with the Calgary Police Service for over 20 years focusing on community-based policing, diversity, and gang prevention. His work goes beyond policing, with a key role in the nonprofit KidsPlay youth foundation, having received several awards and accolades. I ask him to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you my friend Blair McCormick, who is the executive director of Fetal Alcohol Network Calgary, a critical organization that works with my department each and every day. I'd ask that he rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Dach: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three highly accomplished guests with a keen interest in legislative proceedings, two of whom are also members of the very lively Sierra Leone diaspora in Alberta. The MLA for Edmonton-City Centre and I had the pleasure to meet these three charismatic Albertans at a recent Sierra Leone Independence Day celebration. I ask Louis Amankwah, Elliot Damasah, and Elizabeth Darko to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Ip: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to introduce to you and through you Manwar Khan and his wife, Nashid Sultana. Manwar is a long-time community leader and advocate and the founder of the Do Not Be a Bystander antibullying campaign. He is recognized nationally for his work. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise today and introduce to you and through you Marino Farella, an international exchange student from southern Italy who is completing his grade 12 year here in Alberta through the Rotary Club of Calgary exchange program. Joining him is the club president, Mr. Bryan Walton. Thank you, both, for being here

today, and thank you to Rotary for what they do. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Sabir: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce three guests from Calgary: Saima Jamal, a well-known community organizer and activist; Nazia Harris, a real estate professional for the last 20 years; and Nathir Haimoun, a lecturer of economics. I also want to note that they were asked to remove their kaffiyehs, which I find very disrespectful. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

Dr. Elmeligi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I introduce to you and through you one of my favourite constituents – don't tell my husband – my good friend Stephen Legault. He's here as the senior manager from Alberta Energy Transition for Environmental Defence Canada. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am glad to rise and introduce Madhu Pandey, a guest and board member from the Nepalese community here in Edmonton. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Ms Chapman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you, representing Speech-Language & Audiology Canada, Nicole and Jarrad. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

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

Moose Hide Campaign Day

Member Arcand-Paul: Nanaskamon, Mr. Speaker. Today is the official Moose Hide Campaign Day, a day of national importance dedicated to raising awareness and taking tangible steps to combat violence against women and children. On my lapel there is a small, square patch of moose hide to mark my commitment as a Nehiyaw to stand up against violence against women, children, and 2SLGBTQIA-plus people. Moose hide holds a profound significance in the protective traditions of the Plains Cree people. It stands as a lasting emblem of safeguarding the most vulnerable within our community against the punishing impacts of colonialism and patriarchy. Moose hide evokes warmth, love, comfort, and the gentle embrace of home.

Despite the moose hide pin only covering about two square inches, it has recaptured the spirit of solidarity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous men and people to prevent violence against all women, children, and 2SLGBTQI-plus people. This simple gesture carries the weight of generations, the spirit of resilience, and the power of solidarity. Bravery is not built by a brooch, though. But it is sustained by social movements that show out, call out, and defend women and children against violence without hesitation.

1:40

According to the Assembly of First Nations Indigenous women are four times more likely to be victims of violence, often sexual in nature, and four times more likely to be victims of homicide. The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

and Girls released 231 Calls for Justice to address the massive disparity in violence against Indigenous women, the first 58 of which are directed at us, the elected representatives of the provincial Legislature. We must address the root issues of heteropatriarchy and colonialism in every legislative action. It is literally life or death for people.

Though small, the moose hide square empowers me, like the insole of moccasins sewn together by my mom, aunties, or kokum, to navigate adversity with love. Join me in standing against gender-based violence.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti has a statement to make.

Wildfire Season Preparation

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This year more than ever we are prepared for what may be another active wildfire season. We are starting to hire sooner and are funding more positions than ever before. This means we have significantly more wildland firefighters hired and trained than we had at this point last year. I'm happy to report that our government has met its hiring targets for this wildfire season, including an additional 100 seasonal wildland firefighters in Budget 2024. I'm also happy to report that some of the areas of the province have received some rain in recent days, but wildfire danger still remains.

Now more than ever it is crucial that Albertans take the necessary precautions; stay up to date on fire bans, restrictions, and advisories in their area; and avoid activities that may lead to new, human-caused wildfires. I want to assure that all Albertans who have been evacuated from their homes for seven days or more can begin applying for a one-time emergency evacuation payment. Eligible evacuees will receive \$1,250 per adult and an additional \$500 per dependent child under 18.

Our wildland firefighters continue to work tirelessly to respond to and extinguish wildfires across our landscape, but these brave men and women need our help if we're going to prevent wildfires in the days and weeks ahead. You may have heard the ads on the radio or seen billboards along the highways educating everyone about the importance of being wildfire aware and safe. When it comes to wildfires, 67 per cent are caused by humans. With the May long weekend on the horizon, this is a timely reminder: as the weather heats up and you enjoy more of the outdoors, remember to stay safe, and don't be that person.

Thank you.

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

Speech and Hearing Month

Ms Chapman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May is Speech and Hearing Month, and I'm happy to share with this House the importance of communication in the quality of our everyday lives. Speech-language pathologists and audiologists provide evidence-based care to individuals across their lifespan by identifying, assessing, and treating a range of speech, communication, hearing, balance, and swallowing disorders. Communication disorders are one of the leading reasons students struggle to learn, but with accessible supports, early detection, and intervention students can reach their full potential.

SLPs and audiologists work tirelessly in our schools to give students the support they need to thrive. Unfortunately, access to these specialists within our education systems here in Alberta is seriously lacking. We need more SLPs and audiologists in classrooms to support students throughout their education journey so that we

know we have given all students the very best chance to succeed. Most students receiving the support of these professionals currently experience service disruptions between kindergarten and grade 1 as they transition off PUF. Virtually all students working with these professionals will lose services by grade 4.

Alberta can be a leader in Canada by making efforts to increase our capacities for SLPs and audiologists in the public sector. This would mean quicker assessment, more hands-on support, and continued help for every single student who needs these extra supports.

This May I want to thank all speech language pathologists and audiologists and the folks working behind the scenes to provide adaptive learning to students so they can become the very best selves that they can be, and I encourage all members of this Assembly to do the same.

Thank you.

Bills 18, 20, and 21

Mr. Shepherd: Breaking news, Mr. Speaker. The UCP's new three-act play is a flop in rural Alberta. Their marquee legislation, bills 18, 20, and 21, is getting a universal thumbs down. This terrible triple bill has crowds cringing, critics calling out the nonexistent dialogue, cast of clueless characters, and a plot full of holes. You almost have to feel sorry for the ministers being forced to star in this democratic farce by a director bent on dominating the box office and apparently everything else in the province.

Well, let's go to the reviews. It's extremely hard for a Conservative government to make rural Alberta mad, and they've done that successfully in three acts: Paul McLaughlin of the Rural Municipalities of Alberta. Pay attention to this one, Alberta; it's brutal for everyone: Mayor Craig Snodgrass of High River. How much overreach does this government want?: Reeve Delilah Miller of Foothills county. I'm genuinely concerned about the attack on democracy: Mayor Tanya Thorn of Okotoks. Very, very scary, says Mayor Barry Crane of Diamond Valley. An attempt to grab more power and wield more control over how people choose to live in their own communities: Mayor Tyler Gandam of Alberta Municipalities. As Councillor Ben Fadeyiw of Bonnyville says: no one wanted to see Bill 20 or, really, bills 18 or 21, but this Premier and government are intent on forcing them into a municipality near you.

Faced with this undemocratic dog and pony show, Albertans don't know whether to laugh or cry, but they know they're the ones that are going to have to pay for this bloated production that's all but guaranteed to cost far more than it earns. A tragic tour de force that will tear local democracy to shreds from a first-time director who's lost the plot. It would be a comedy if it weren't so tragic. But I'm thankful, Mr. Speaker, that so many are speaking up and calling out this truly terrible triple bill because we deserve a better story, written and directed by a government that truly cares. It seems there are at least 85,000 Albertans who agree, and they're investing to make it happen. Production is under way. Watch for an Alberta NDP government coming back to a province near you. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The hon. the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Vyshyvanka Day

Mr. Boitchenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I wish to express my heartfelt greetings to those celebrating Vyshyvanka Day, a significant tradition for Ukrainians around the world. Today we don't only wear embroidered shirts but celebrate our culture,

heritage, and identity. For Ukrainians in Alberta Vyshyvanka Day reminds us of our rich history and enduring spirits of our ancestors. The patterns and vibrant colors of the Vyshyvanka symbolize the resilience and creativity of the Ukrainian people, who have overcome great adversities with grace and determination.

While we reflect on Vyshyvanka Day, we also look ahead to the future. During this time we are reaffirming our commitment to preserving our cultural heritage by passing it on to future generations. In Alberta Ukrainian Canadians play a key role in our society, adding to the province's cultural diversity and economic prosperity. The war in Ukraine underscores the importance of standing in solidarity with our brothers and sisters near and far. Let us give our support to those affected by violence and injustice. I encourage everyone to embrace Vyshyvanka Day and celebrate the splendour of Ukrainian culture. Let us wear our Vyshyvankas with pride, resilience, and unity.

Thank you and happy Vyshyvanka Day. [Remarks in Ukrainian].

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Health System Reform

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, today the AMA outlined more frightening observations about the state of health care in Alberta. Their president equates acute care with an aneurysm. He says: it's getting big; that artery is just ready to burst. People are already forced to run from hospital to hospital just to get basic emergency surgical care. So to the Premier: instead of pushing a bill that will only help to make her cabinet even bigger, why won't she stop driving health care workers away and start listening to them and investing in the things they know they need?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier has the call.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a great relationship with Dr. Paul Parks. He texts me regularly because not only is he the head of the AMA; he's also a constituent of mine. As we had a back-and-forth exchange, he reminded me that this is a problem that has been growing for 15 years, which means those guys had a chance to fix it and they didn't. That's why we are taking the approach of being able to ensure that we have an opportunity to increase the amount of alternative levels of care so that we can pull those 1,500 patients who are in acute care beds into the appropriate facility, and that's what we're going to do.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, last year Alberta's population grew by 200,000 people, but the UCP has refused to add the necessary new resources, so now there are major hospitals without surgeons on the weekend, and there may soon be no one to care for anyone after midnight. Now, the AMA offered a report with the needed investments last year in November; others have, too. So to the Premier: instead of focusing on making her cabinet bigger, why won't she listen to front-line workers and make health care better? They've got a plan. Why are you ignoring it?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, in talking with Paul Parks, he confirms for me that freeing up 1,500 acute care beds

would be a massive win for hospital care. We are on the right track by identifying places for mental health treatment, addiction treatment, assisted living, ensuring that we have an efficient way to move people into supportive living. By taking those folks out of acute care beds, it's going to increase the amount of work we're able to do with emergency care, with surgical care. We're on the right track, Mr. Speaker.

Ms Notley: Putting them in motels is not the right track, Mr. Speaker.

Now, in response to my questions yesterday, the Premier confidently offered similarly nonsensical thoughts. She claimed nurses are unhappy in their chosen areas, so forcing them into areas they didn't choose will help with recruitment, and the solution to fragmented services in health care is to separate them completely. So to the Premier: how can she fail to understand that with this kind of logic informing Bill 22, health care in Alberta is only going to get worse much, much faster under this UCP watch?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think this tragic example of somebody being discharged to a facility that couldn't support them is exactly the reason why we have to ensure that our Seniors, Community and Social Services minister is helping to find the appropriate care. That's why we're making the decisions that we are so that we have that minister able to work with our Health minister in finding the appropriate level of care. I can tell you that any time you only have one employer to work for, you're not going to be able to get the best options for working conditions. We're creating lots of options for nurses, and I think they're going to be happy.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Bill 20

Mr. Kasawski: Bad things come in threes; that tracks for UCP legislation. Bill 18, Bill 20, and now Bill 21 make Alberta more authoritarian as the UCP tries to command and control everything, everywhere, all at once. Alberta Municipalities unanimously passed a motion asking the UCP to pull Bill 20. RMA stated Bill 21 has made rural Alberta very mad because it will confuse and complicate emergency response moving forward. Since the UCP hid their agenda on this tragedy in three acts from Albertans during the election, who is controlling policy direction for this government?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact is that most municipalities do want help with affordable housing, to have tax relief when they're building housing. Albertans want more transparency. They don't want dark money as much as it is now since the NDP's legislation left it so that \$1.6 million went to nine candidates in Calgary, and most people don't know, really, where the money came from. This is an important piece of legislation. It'll make things more transparent and accountable.

Mr. Kasawski: A councillor in Banff stated in a public meeting: Bill 20 fundamentally changes the foundations of municipal government, and frankly because of the new ability to remove members of council, I feel nervous even commenting on Bill 20 for fear of being labelled for speaking against it. It creates paranoia and division where there should only be respect and collaboration. This government clearly doesn't respect municipalities and, by extension, doesn't respect the voters who elected them. Why does

the minister think that he should have the power to override local decisions made by local voters?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, only the NDP would create an example of someone afraid to speak out by using an example of someone who's speaking out. Clearly, they weren't that afraid.

In fact, it's not new authority, Mr. Speaker. We actually dismissed a good part of a council in the last six months. In fact, I would recommend that the folks opposite go to alberta.ca/chestermere and read not only the reason for it but the audited report on why we did it afterwards. This is not new authority. We know it; they know it. They just won't admit it.

Mr. Kasawski: I wonder what the next bill coming out of this government will look like; they continue to take control and essentially attack democracy: these are the words of the mayor of Wetaskiwin, and he's not alone. Blackfalds, Calgary, Edmonton, Banff, Strathcona county: the list of opposition to the UCP's undemocratic power grab grows day after day. The minister claims that Albertans are his bosses, but he has put his UCP earplugs back in, ignoring them. It's not too late. The minister could listen to what Albertans are saying and pull these bad bills. Will he?

Mr. McIver: Again, Mr. Speaker, the folks across don't do good research. If they did, they would have seen a media conference where the mayor of Wetaskiwin twice – twice – was asked by the media: should the bill be scrapped? He said: no, there's good stuff in there; I'd like to see some amendments. I talked to that mayor. We have amendments on the way that he had something to do with. The folks across need to keep up. The story is moving. They're pretty far behind where we are right now.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has a question to ask.

Wage Growth and Cost of Living

Ms Pancholi: A recent analysis shows in painful detail that Alberta and especially Calgary is rapidly losing its affordability advantage. In almost every other province the average worker has seen their wages steadily increase since 2019, but not in Alberta. No. Under the UCP the wages of average Albertans have dropped 4.4 per cent in the last five years. Let's try something. Can any minister over there answer why they believe Albertans deserve to make less money while everything costs more, and can they do it without blaming another party, level of government, Trudeau, or the dog who ate their homework?

Mr. Jones: Mr. Speaker, the NDP are only looking at half the picture. Alberta does have some of the highest wages in the country but also has the lowest taxes in the country, meaning that Albertans get to take home and keep more of what they earn. We also don't have a sales tax, so, again, they get to keep more of what they earn. We've added 100,000 jobs over the past year, mostly from Canadians choosing Alberta over other jurisdictions, so it's no surprise to see B.C. and Ontario try to increase wages to get their people back.

Ms Pancholi: Well, the minister should know that in Calgary the cost of owning a home has risen by 40 per cent since 2019, which means Calgarians have to spend almost half of their income just on housing, and a rental that used to cost \$1,000 now costs \$1,700 per month. Rent in Calgary now will soon be as high as rent in Toronto. The UCP's talking points about the economy are completely out of touch with what Albertans actually feel and see in their own

households. Albertans are not waving and cheering about the fact that under this government they earn less and pay more. Will the Premier admit that she has turned the Alberta advantage into the Alberta . . .

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

Mr. Jones: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the members opposite have finally connected that you need to have a job to pay for a mortgage. See, from 2015 to 2019, when they set 180,000 people's pay to zero, this was a fact that they clearly didn't understand. They couldn't make the connection. Perhaps I'm not being fair; perhaps they have connected that you need a wage for a mortgage, but that mortgage should be in B.C. That's why they were telling Albertans to move to B.C. to get a job. The NDP shouldn't comment on anything related to jobs or the economy. Please choose another category.

Ms Pancholi: The economic advantages that once made Alberta desirable have all but vanished under the UCP. The numbers prove it. Wages have dropped, unemployment is up, and the cost of living has soared. Alberta is calling, but if you answer the call, you'll find there's not enough room in the school for your kids, good luck finding a family doctor, and we hope you don't mind getting your health care in a hallway or a motel. Between that and decimating Alberta's booming renewable energy sector and creating investment uncertainty through undemocratic schemes, is the new Tory land Premier prepared to take responsibility for eroding the Alberta advantage, or is personal responsibility just so 2012 Wildrose? [interjections]

2:00

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Jones: Mr. Speaker, the NDP continue to demonstrate that they don't think Alberta is that great. You know who disagrees? Albertans and all Canadians who are moving here in record numbers. If you listen to the picture painted by the NDP, it's terrible here. So why do we have 200,000 people moving here over a 12-month period? I can assure you it's not because there's an NDP government in place. We saw 200,000 people move the other way last time they were in government. Again, I would encourage the members opposite to say three nice things about Alberta in their next question. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Bill 18

Member Hoyle: Alberta is a beautiful province, and Albertans are smarter than this government thinks. This government talks a lot about their support for the rule of law and respect for democracy and free speech and expression, but you have to read the details to see the full story. When it comes to academic freedom, it's not the researchers or the academics or even the students whose views need to be protected. No, no, no. Bill 18 makes it crystal clear that the government will always stand up for the Premier's opinions over all others. Will the Minister of Advanced Education listen to the concerns and at long last scrap Bill 18? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education.

Mrs. Sawhney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a couple of days ago I had the opportunity to meet with the Alberta Association of Academic Staff. They actually came to the Legislature to meet with me. We talked about Bill 18, and I'd like to thank them for making

the time to come out and have this conversation. Through the course of this conversation I invited them to join the stakeholder engagement. We are going to put regulations together in the summer and they are going to be at the table, and we are going to make sure that Alberta is more competitive than ever before.

Member Hoyle: There isn't a university out there that believes this government, who cut hundreds of millions of dollars from postsecondary budgets, is actually interested in supporting them. Instead, the gatekeeping Bill 18 is more focused on ensuring that the research that the Premier supports gets priority. There is a simple way to ensure that postsecondaries get the support they deserve and need: actually fund them, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister admit that Bill 18 is just a mask for half a decade of cuts to postsecondary under this government and just pull it?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, we have made tremendous investment in the postsecondary sector, and I've talked about this many times in this House. In regard to Bill 18 we are going to collect more information on the amazing research that's being done at our postsecondary institutions, and we're going to work together to make sure we have a robust process in place to support the research that is of priority to the provincial government.

Member Hoyle: We've seen the importance of supporting free speech and expression on campuses, Mr. Speaker. The minister needs to stop pretending to be a research scientist or an academic and start acting like the Minister of Advanced Education. She has the power to do something. The Post-secondary Learning Act gives her the power to launch an investigation into the deeply disturbing conduct we saw in peaceful demonstrations on campus. Albertans are looking for answers on this. Will the Minister of Advanced Education use the powers she has and call an investigation today? Yes or . . .

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

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank the Minister of Justice and the minister of public safety for bringing together leaders of the Muslim community, for bringing together students and the chiefs of police. We had a very important conversation, and that is why the ASIRT review was launched based on that conversation. Of course, if information comes to light that requires further investigation, we will take action.

Northern Alberta Transportation Concerns

Mr. Dach: The regional municipality of Wood Buffalo endorsed a \$1.5 billion east Clearwater highway project as a preferred option for a secondary evacuation route. The road would connect northern communities such as Fort MacKay, oil sands sites, and Fort McMurray itself to highway 881, offering a second escape route if highway 63 was ever blocked. In May 2017 the NDP government committed \$5 million to the ring road's initial design and planning, and the Wood Buffalo municipal council called for predesign funding as well. It's been five years. Can the minister please say why his government has failed to start this project?

Mr. Dreshen: Well, Mr. Speaker, highway 881 is a very important, critical road in the province of Alberta. That's why we've actually done the engineering on 14 passing lanes, that will help once completed, while the consultations with First Nations are under way. We're making sure that these 14 passing lanes can be built. The construction, hopefully, will be started next year, and it will take three years to complete. But, obviously, whether it's

northern Alberta or other places across this province, we want to make sure that our road network is there not just to help out the economy and truck traffic but also making sure that communities are safe all across this province.

Mr. Dach: The transcontinental railway took less time, Mr. Speaker.

Given that Fort McMurray needs an additional evacuation route and given that the Premier named highway 686 as a priority instead of the east Clearwater highway project and given that even though the agreements have been signed with three First Nations to begin work on connecting Fort McMurray and Peerless Lake with a 218-kilometre two-lane gravel highway, no work has been done to start the project, can the minister please update this House on why this project is grinding along so slowly when it's supposed to be the Premier's priority?

Mr. Dreeshen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to inform the member and the entire House and all Albertans that highway 686 is a priority of this government, and that's why we've actually had consultation dollars with the three First Nations along that 200-plus-kilometre route, with Bigstone, Loon River, Peerless Trout. We're doing something different here in the province. We're actually giving them the pen to mark a line on the map, essentially, from where this road would go from Fort McMurray over to Peerless Lake. We're working with the First Nations to make sure that this project can get built, and then we will build it once the plan is developed.

Mr. Dach: Given that two days ago we asked the minister on behalf of the people of Fort Chip but they had not had a sufficient answer and given that the only transportation routes for the people of Fort Chipewyan are air via the airport and water via the dock and given that the dock has run aground due to the drought and the lake being too low and given that the dock is needed for evacuation purposes and the community has been asking the province for help on this for months, will the minister today commit to helping the people of Fort Chipewyan with a dock extension to ensure they can evacuate by water on a lake if needed?

Mr. Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, the short answer is yes. If this dock, obviously, this community-owned dock, needs any dredging work and any kind of upgrades, that's something that we within Transportation and Economic Corridors – we can help with permitting, whether it's the federal government or our own environment ministry here in the province. But, yes, there are lots of companies around the province that can do this work, and it's something that if the dock improvements are necessary, we will do.

Mr. Speaker, I'd hate to play politics with this, but the NDP is trying to, I think, incite some fear. This government is very committed to northern Alberta, especially during wildfire season, to make sure that there are safety egresses, that on the transportation side there are solid evacuation plans to make sure that people are safe, especially ...

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

Housing Policies

Mr. Lundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the Calgary city council was led by NDP leadership candidate and current anti-union champion Naheed Nenshi, the city's record on housing was a complete failure, including rejecting many new communities that would have increased housing supply in Calgary. His terrible leadership contributed directly to the housing affordability challenges in Calgary and will be even more devastating if this lifelong Liberal becomes NDP leader. To the Minister of Seniors,

Community and Social Services: what is our government doing to ensure that homes are being built for all Albertans despite what the antihousing NDP might want?

Mr. Nixon: Well, I'll tell you what we're doing, Mr. Speaker. We're building the most houses in the history of Alberta. We're also building more than anywhere else in the country. Where the rest of the country is seeing a 9 per cent decrease in housing starts, do you know what's happening here in Alberta? This last month a 57 per cent increase in starts in Calgary, a 64 per cent increase in Edmonton, and we are on track again to have the largest construction season in the history of the province, a stark contrast from what was taking place under the NDP, where we lost houses.

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

Mr. Lundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta has a record-breaking quarter and nearly 14,000 housing starts since January and given that other provinces like Ontario saw a 37 per cent decrease in housing starts, including a 38 per cent decrease in Toronto, and further given that our neighbours to the west also saw an 11 per cent decrease in housing starts, with Vancouver outpacing its provincial trend with a 30 per cent decrease, to the same minister: what are we doing in Alberta that is so successful compared to other provinces?

2:10

Mr. Nixon: CMHC just said in their recent report that we are the only bright spot anywhere in the country, right here in Alberta. They credit a stable, Conservative government who is rejecting socialist policies like the members opposite want to bring in, like rent control. Because of those efforts, Mr. Speaker, we're seeing another record I'm so excited about. I hope the House hears. The largest, the highest amount of building permits have been issued in the history of the province, and we're just getting started, so stick with us. Alberta, we're going to keep building houses. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The hon. member.

Mr. Lundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation clearly shows Alberta is a leader in Canada when it comes to addressing pressures in the housing market and further given that coupled with our innovative policy and strategic investments Alberta is working hard to ensure every Albertan can have access to safe, secure, and affordable homes, again to the same minister: how can we continue to be a leader in Canada on the housing file?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we're going to do two things. We're going to keep rejecting ideas like rent control and putting in place good policies that are going to allow our industry to continue to make more houses than any time in our history at the same time as investing strategically in the right areas for things like seniors' homes and other types of affordable structures, which we are also doing in a record way right now. Right now it's a great story in the province. We should celebrate it. Alberta continues to lead this country. I know that doesn't surprise this side of the House. It sounds like it surprised this side of the House. The number one thing that we're going to do is that we're going to reject NDP socialist policies that would destroy our housing industry in our province.

School Construction in Lethbridge

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, Holy Spirit school division needs a new middle school in downtown Lethbridge. It is not a new request. I've

toured the school. The Minister of Affordability and Utilities and MLA for Lethbridge-East has toured the school. Everyone in the city knows that St. Francis middle school needs to be rebuilt, so I don't need to hear what the government is doing for the Lethbridge public school division. I don't need to hear about unaffiliated government planning processes. The only answer I need from the minister is: where is Holy Spirit's new St. Francis middle school?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, building schools in every corner and community of our province is incredibly important to this government. We are proud of the fact that Alberta is one of the fastest if not the fastest growing province in the entire country. Of course, that does create some pressure, and that does mean that we need to continue our work in building and modernizing schools across the province, including in Lethbridge. We know, of course, Lethbridge Catholic school division has requests for new schools, as do all of our school divisions. Every year we will evaluate those requests and determine prioritization in budget cycles.

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, given that there was a certain arrogance in the way the minister just hand-waved away the concerns raised by the Holy Spirit school division with respect to their desperately needed middle school and there were no commitments to any kind of planning or a plan even to make a plan for Holy Spirit and given that the people of Lethbridge are listening, can the minister explain why he is ignoring the needs of the Catholic school division in Lethbridge?

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, I'm happy that the folks from Lethbridge are listening. I hope they're listening to the question as well because the member has just demonstrated that the member has no understanding of the capital planning process.

Ms Gray: Point of order.

Mr. Nicolaides: As any member would know, school divisions submit their requests. Afterwards the Ministry of Education evaluates those requests and makes budget allocations. I would also like to remind the incredible people of the city of Lethbridge that they have fierce advocates on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, who are working hard every single day to represent the concerns of the residents of the city of Lethbridge.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:13.

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, given that last week I also tabled Holy Spirit's letter to the minister about the need to better fund education support workers, given that the Catholic school division is concerned the minister is not funding negotiated increases for education support workers, choosing instead to force the school board to rob Peter to pay Paul and dip into the instructional grant to cover the negotiated increases, why is the minister not funding the negotiated increases for education support workers? Why is he ignoring both their capital and their operating requests coming from the Catholic division in Lethbridge?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to ensure that we provide funding to our growing school divisions. In the last budget we provided approximately \$400 million in new funding to our school boards to ensure that they have the funding and resources that they need to continue to deliver a world-class education. As well, we will continue to explore and evaluate all of the projects. As I mentioned, every year all our school divisions across every corner of the province submit their capital priority requests. Those

are all evaluated and, of course, will determine the best way to proceed during the budget cycle.

Life Lease Housing

Ms Renaud: Mr. Speaker, this UCP government has been acting like they're championing life lease holders, yet all we've seen is disappointingly weak legislation and business as usual between the UCP and Greg "Ponzi Scheme" Christenson. Hundreds of seniors have been waiting for their life savings to be returned and are now spending what should be their carefree retirement years feeling shame for being duped by Christenson. Other than nine meetings resulting in no action, what is this minister doing to get their life savings back?

Mr. Nally: Mr. Speaker, that's rich coming from a caucus who actually was in government and had a chance to fix this back in 2017, and unfortunately they did nothing. Unlike them, we're putting in legislation to make sure that this will never happen again. In addition, we'll continue to push Greg Christenson to make sure that everyone is made whole.

Ms Renaud: Given that Greg Christenson has donated tens of thousands of dollars to the UCP government and continues to financially benefit from contracts with them and given that Bill 12 is a toothless piece of legislation that offers only the bare minimum of consumer protection for life leases, the fact that the government continues to do business with this bad actor is alarming. Who is driving the getaway car: Greg Christenson, the minister, or the entire UCP government?

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

Mr. Nally: Mr. Speaker, it doesn't seem like there was much of a question in there; it was more of an opportunity for that member to stand up and smear our government as well as other individuals. But I would say this. That is the caucus that voted with us on third reading. In fact, as I recall, that life lease legislation passed unanimously. So they failed them in 2017; at least they didn't fail them this year, and they voted with us on Bill 12. I'd like to congratulate the members opposite for passing that legislation to make sure this does not happen again. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

A point of order is noted at 2:16. The hon. Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services raised the point of order.

Ms Renaud: Given that Greg Christenson continues to slap seniors in the face by posting on social media, boasting about housing affordability and industry leadership, while he owes tens of millions of dollars to seniors that he ripped off and given that any time the UCP minister is questioned about what he's doing to get their money back, he brags about nine meetings that resulted in exactly nothing happening. Other than a useless recap of the minister's meeting schedule, what steps is he taking to actually get their money back? Christenson owes them millions.

Mr. Nally: Mr. Speaker, I didn't know half of what that member was referring to only because I don't go on Twitter. But here's what I will tell you. We put legislation forward that will make sure that this will not happen again, legislation that they voted for unanimously. We are aligned in putting legislation forward in this House to make sure that this does not happen again. They failed life lease holders in 2017. We will make sure that never happens again. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka has a question to ask.

Hydrogen Industry Development

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hydrogen is the most important element in the universe, and the hydrogen economy is gaining momentum internationally as the clean, zero-emission fuel for now and in the future. I heard that the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction was seen recently driving a hydrogen-powered Toyota Mirai, and now there is a challenge for 5,000 hydrogen vehicles in western Canada in five years. To the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction: how many hydrogen-powered vehicles are now in the government's fleet, and what feedback do you have on its performance?

Mr. Nally: Thank you to that member for the question. Mr. Speaker, I can say that it was my team that put forward the hydrogen road map last term, and it put out the path that we are going to take to pursue a hydrogen economy. Yes, we do have three hydrogen vehicles in the government fleet, and we are currently analyzing to see how many more of the fleet vehicles we can convert over to hydrogen fuel cell. And to answer the member's last question: they're beautiful vehicles, incredible torque, and the best part is that you don't have to plug them in.

2:20

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

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister. Given that hydrogen is already commonplace in Korea, including for heating for residential and commercial, power generation, for transportation, and for industrial purposes and given that exports are also seen as a significant economic opportunity for Alberta beyond its borders, to the Minister of Affordability and Utilities: what are the barriers to Alberta supplying Asia Pacific with hydrogen?

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, Alberta is energy, energy is Alberta, and it's no more true than it is with hydrogen. Do you know that Alberta is the number one energy hydrogen producer in Canada? That's true. Not only that; we are one of the top producers in the world, one of the top five producers. That means that this trillion-dollar opportunity is an opportunity that Alberta can really take advantage of. With clean carbon capture and sequestration and with all the other opportunities, with cheap natural gas and low-emission natural gas, there is no better place in the world than Alberta to build hydrogen or produce it.

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

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister. Given that the city of Edmonton cancelled its fuelling station for hydrogen buses and given that the city's climate committee says that natural-gas-produced hydrogen is not the solution for Edmonton meeting its emission goals and given the delays to enable Qualico to build a hydrogen community in Bremner next to Sherwood Park, to the same minister: do the costs of hydrogen outweigh the benefits, and if not, why is there a perception of backsliding on delivering the hydrogen economy in Alberta? Is that perception reality?

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

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government knows that there isn't just one simple solution to ensure Albertans' energy needs are met both now and into the future. We understand the need for a properly developed energy mix and the right infrastructure to support it, balanced with fiscal responsibility. That's why our government is working with industry and other jurisdictions to explore and enable exciting new technologies such as hydrogen; small modular nuclear reactors; carbon capture, utilization, and storage; geothermal energy storage; and much, much more.

Alberta Energy Regulator

Ms Al-Guneid: Mr. Speaker, the UCP appointed long-time partisan David Yager to the AER board. Mr. Yager says that the Premier ran for the Wildrose Party upon his request and that he taught her everything she knows about energy. Here's the thing. We are touched by the Premier's friendships, but our province requires a nonpartisan regulatory body to enforce regulations. Why didn't the UCP appoint Indigenous leaders, remediation experts, and environmental leaders?

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, that's so rich coming from that NDP Party who appointed their friends when they got into government that had no expertise at all on energy. The AER is going to be full of experts, technical experts, that will serve the people of Alberta, and David Yager is one of those experts. He is world renowned for his expertise on the oil and gas industry, and those are the kind of people that we need to put forward, people that are Albertans, that are true Albertans, that are working hard for Alberta and making sure they always put Alberta first. Those are the people that are going to serve Alberta best. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Al-Guneid: Given that instead of stacking the AER board with UCP friends, the energy minister could have focused on reforming the regulator and given that under the UCP we no longer have an industry closure schedule and given that industry-wide closure spending requirements were set at \$700 million for 2023 and then forecasted to increase to \$764 million in 2024, \$833 million in 2025, \$909 million in 2026, and \$992 million in 2027, why did the minister erase the schedule and . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy and Minerals.

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, Tzaporah Berman. Now, I don't even know how those folks got the resumé in order to appoint that person in Alberta in a position of authority. What I do know is this. We will take no lessons from that previous NDP government when they let the AER run wild with the people of Alberta's money, a quasi-criminal situation that we will never let happen again. We are picking the best people for the AER board because they serve Alberta. Whether it's water, whether it's air, whether it's land, nothing is more important to Albertans. We're going to make sure they have priority. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Al-Guneid: Given that the UCP is casting doubt on our regulator by adding their friends on the AER board – this is a regulatory body sued by Indigenous groups and ranchers in rural Alberta – and given that instead of focusing on regulatory reform, the environment minister does not even have oil sands liabilities as a priority at budget estimates. We reminded her that addressing oil sands liabilities is part of her mandate. Why are these ministers not

focused on addressing liabilities and making sure they are a credible regulator?

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, wherever I go representing the people of Alberta and the energy industry, I hear one thing consistently, that the AER is the best regulator in the world. What we've done is that we've taken steps to make it better. We know the NDP had some difficulties in the past with their partisan appointments for people that were not focused on the people of Alberta, that were focused on anti oil and gas industry. We are not going to focus on that. We're going to focus on the best interests of Albertans, and the way to do that is to pick the best people for the job, and that's exactly what we're doing.

Health Care Concerns in Chestermere-Strathmore

Ms de Jonge: Mr. Speaker, health care matters to Albertans, and they deserve a world-class health system when and where they need it. Seniors across the province should be supported in their communities with long-term care spaces that meet their unique health care needs. I was honoured to have the Minister of Health recently join me for the groundbreaking of a new long-term care home in Chestermere. Can the Minister of Health share with my constituents some insight on the coming AgeCare home in Chestermere and the planned Shasta Seniors Living home in Strathmore?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member. Strathmore and Chestermere were priority communities within the 2020 no-capital request for expression of interest and qualifications from AHS for the provision of continuing care capacity. AHS has selected AgeCare as the successful applicant under a recent expression-of-interest request, and the project is slated to open in '26-27. AHS also selected Shasta Seniors Living as a successful applicant and has targeted opening in 2026. We're supporting facilities to offer multiple levels of care and enable Albertans to age in place.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister for that answer. Given that health care remains a top concern for my constituents in Chestermere-Strathmore and there is a need for more physicians across Alberta, especially in our rural communities, and further given that this UCP government is committed to improving health care across the province, can the Minister of Health explain what the government is doing to attract general practitioners to rural communities like Strathmore and Langdon?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have so many strategies, one of them being Alberta's health workforce strategy, which is helping to manage immediate challenges facing the health workforce such as attracting, training, and retaining health care professionals. In response, we're expanding medical schools to train an additional 100 physicians per year, and we're improving the registration policies and processes for international medical graduates. Our government understands the important role that family and rural generalist physicians play in Alberta, and we're taking action to help support them through our recently announced primary care compensation model.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again through you to the minister. Given that many people across Canada and abroad are

choosing to call Alberta home and further given that the population growth of new Albertans is not uniform across the province and concentrates in metropolitan areas, can the same minister explain what is being done to address constraints in acute- and primary care access in our rapidly growing communities like Chestermere?

Member LaGrange: Through modernizing Alberta's primary care health care system, our government is taking immediate action to address urgent pressures, help stabilize the primary health care system, and increase Albertans' access to primary health care, Mr. Speaker. I know that it's working. We have allocated \$57 million over three years to provide family doctors and nurse practitioners with support to help manage their increasing numbers of patients, and we've also invested \$15 million to support a new nurse practitioner family primary care program. These initiatives will help address the access-to-care concerns across the province, but we're going to continue to do more.

Student Psycho-educational Assessment

Ms Hayter: Every child has the right to learn in a safe, supportive environment where they can thrive. For children who need them, psych-eds are critical to achieving this. Right now in Alberta children who need vital psycho-educational assessments are struggling to access them because school board funds to psych-eds are limited and private psych-eds are costing between \$2,000 and \$5,000. How many psych-ed assessments have actually been delivered by schools, and how many parents have to pay out of pocket for psycho-ed assessments?

2:30

Mr. Nicolaides: Exact numbers with respect to individual psycho-ed assessments are available from different school authorities. It is a priority for our government, however, to ensure that we are addressing the increasing complexity that we are seeing in our classrooms. That's why this government took the initiative, and in Budget '23 we created the classroom complexity grant. This grant provides \$126 million over the next three years, including \$44 million this year alone, for our school divisions to hire educational assistants, psychologists, speech-language pathologists, and other professionals to address these complexity issues.

Ms Hayter: Given that Bill 208 ensures that children who need psych-eds will get them but goes a step further, ensuring that teacher training and funding for complex classrooms are also addressed, and given that Bill 208 takes a critical step to ensuring students, teachers, and staff have the support they need to ensure Alberta's education stays world class and given that the ATA report Beyond Capacity shows that more than 56 per cent of Alberta teachers do not think that the assessments they requested will be fulfilled within the school year, how many students haven't received the psycho-ed assessments they've been referred to, and how long are these students waiting for?

Mr. Nicolaides: Again, those details are available with respect to individual school authorities. But this is an important issue that we do need to address, which is why our government is taking action. I mentioned the classroom complexity funding that is provided directly to school authorities to hire psychologists, speech-language pathologists, and other professionals to help support these critical needs. In addition, in total, Budget '24 provides over \$1.5 billion in learner support funding, and this is to help ensure that students have the services and the support that they need to succeed.

Ms Hayter: Given that Bill 208 creates a committee to review legislation and policies in other provinces, look at support provided to teachers to address classroom complexity, examine barriers experienced by students in Alberta who require or have had a psycho-ed assessment and given the lack of psycho-educational assessments, the inability to pay, the bias of how and which students are identified as needing a psycho-ed and given that the point of Bill 208's design is to gather this information, will the Minister of Education join me in support of Bill 208 so children in Alberta can keep their passion for learning?

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, Mr. Speaker, I've already provided my comments with respect to Bill 208 during debate time. I don't think I can actually comment on it further at this stage. I think I used all of my available time during the debate proceedings.

You know, again, that being said, Mr. Speaker, we recognize how critical and important it is to ensure that our students get the support that they need at an early age as well. It's one of the reasons why our government mandated literacy and numeracy screening for all students in grades 1 to 3 and that we're currently reviewing early literacy screening, because we believe and understand that we need to get it right for kids as quickly as possible.

Alberta Advantage Immigration Program

Mr. Haji: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta advantage program, once a beacon of hope, is stagnating in issuing nomination certificates. The numbers paint a bleak picture. As Alberta struggles, other provinces flourish. My hard-working constituents' experiences are a sign of failure under the UCP government, where skilled workers are left in limbo. It's time for action, not just promises, to promote talent and secure Alberta's future prosperity. Considering the current unpredictable immigration program, what is the minister's message to Alberta's stranded skilled workers?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism.

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you very much, and thank you to the member for the question. As you know, Mr. Speaker, Alberta is the land of opportunities. People continue to come to Alberta, and we continue to have them through our Alberta advantage immigration program. We have eight streams in this. There's a labour shortage in general in our province, and people continue to move here, and we continue to address the labour shortage in this province. We will be happy to continue to receive more people and help more people as we receive more people here.

Mr. Haji: Given the harmful impact of this decision on skilled workers, who face uncertainty and exclusion from pathways to permanent residency, and given that the suspension of the Alberta opportunity stream is driving skilled workers to seek other opportunities and given that only 5,000 nomination certificates were issued under the current Alberta opportunity stream in 2023, how does the minister rationalize the UCP's decision to halt this crucial program to Alberta's economic prosperity?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism.

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I would suggest to the member to please keep an eye as to how we are proceeding with this Alberta advantage immigration program. Our program for 2024 right now, as we are only five months into the year, is more than 73 per cent

of our allocations that we have for this year. We continue to work with the federal government to increase our nominations and address the labour shortage that we have in this province. This program is one of the best in our country, and that's why we continue to see more people in it.

Mr. Haji: Well, Minister, the reality is different than you described.

Given that the letter I'm tabling today shows that the UCP's mismanagement has turned Alberta's immigration system into a source of frustration for skilled workers and given that despite promises of increased nominations the lack of transparency plunges Alberta's immigration future into uncertainty and given that key sectors like construction, agriculture, hospitality, and tourism suffer from talent shortages, will the minister commit to reversing the existing policy on the program?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is no secret that we are facing a labour shortage here with respect to skilled workers, and we are trying to address that in a number of ways, including apprenticeship programs and other programs within the province as well as seeking qualified people from around the world. We are fully aware of the situation. We continue to work with the federal government, and I ask the member opposite here to help me to get more nominations for this province.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Provincial Passenger Rail Plan

Mr. McDougall: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's recent announcement regarding the development of a passenger rail master plan marks a significant milestone in our province's transportation infrastructure. This initiative underscores our commitment to fostering accessibility, efficiency, and connectivity across Alberta while addressing the evolving transportation needs of our growing population. Given the significant investment allocated in Budget 2024 to support this master plan development, can the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors provide clarity on the key objectives and timeline for the development of Alberta's passenger rail master plan?

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

Mr. Dreshen: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The rail master plan, that we just announced with this last budget, is a visionary plan that actually looks at how we can connect people in Edmonton and Calgary with a commuter rail system and their surrounding communities to their international airports as well as to the downtown core as well as looking at regional rail lines and the possibility of a high-speed train from Edmonton to Calgary with a stop in Red Deer as well as Edmonton and Calgary connected to our mountain parks. This is a big, visionary plan. It could take 15 years to fully develop, but we had to start somewhere, and we want to make sure that we consult with Albertans all along the way.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. McDougall: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the diverse transportation needs of Albertans and the potential benefits of a comprehensive passenger rail system and further given the importance of advancing passenger rail infrastructure to support economic growth in sectors like tourism and enhance regional connectivity, including with municipal light rail networks, can the

same minister explain the strategies and consultations planned to ensure the master plan aligns with the long-term goals and priorities of our province?

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

Mr. Dreeshen: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we are going to be consulting with Albertans all along the proposed routes. That's Edmonton and Calgary and their surrounding communities as well as Jasper and Banff and the city of Red Deer and Indigenous communities as well. We want to make sure that this plan is something that Albertans can be proud of. Essentially, what we want to make sure of, especially in connecting our LRT networks within Edmonton and Calgary, is that it's essentially like a nervous system, that it's well connected, so that whether you're coming from a major city going out to a rural area, it's something that will work seamlessly and that it's something that, again, Albertans will be proud of.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. McDougall: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the importance of careful planning and collaboration in the development of a passenger rail network that serves the best interests of Albertans and given that the province is looking forward to engaging with stakeholders, including municipalities, Indigenous communities, and the private sector, in advancing passenger rail in the province, can the minister outline the government's approach to maximizing the economic and social benefits of passenger rail while ensuring prudent use of taxpayer dollars and transparent decision-making?

2:40

Mr. Dreeshen: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are a government of big ideas, and this master passenger rail plan is one of those big ideas that will for generations reshape the province of Alberta. Obviously, we want to make sure that Albertans are engaged with this, and it's something where we will look forward to the consultations in the coming years. The 15-year window is something that we think is an achievable target to make sure that we can build out and connect a rail system that will benefit Albertans not just in the near future but for generations to come.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. The Lieutenant Governor will attend the Chamber in approximately five minutes. There are three items for business.

There will be no 30 seconds or less. We will continue immediately to Members' Statements.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

Members' Statements

(continued)

Educational Assistants

Mr. Ip: Mr. Speaker, last Saturday hundreds of educational support workers from Edmonton area school divisions rallied in St. Albert demanding a living wage from this government. Educational assistants keep classrooms running and support the most vulnerable learners. They contribute to the success of every child through their hard work, creativity, patience, and imagination. They do this in spite of growing class sizes and complexity, and we owe them a debt of gratitude, yet this government forces educational assistants to live on poverty wages.

EAs on average make less than \$27,000 a year, just below the poverty line. Educational support staff in Alberta have not received a raise in eight years, and now their wages are further eroded by the worst inflation in a generation. All educational assistants deserve a fair living wage and equitable remuneration that match their significant contributions to the learning and well-being of Alberta's children. Workload and student need continue to increase as enrolment outpaces funding. Far too often educational assistants are expected to help more students with fewer hours and fewer resources. This is a recipe for burnout and turnover, and students will ultimately pay the price.

[The Speaker in the chair]

When children don't receive the critical interventions they need to reach developmental milestones, this will have far-reaching consequences as they move into adulthood. We know that children who are able to read at grade level by grade 3 are more likely to finish grade 12 and achieve success beyond. But when this government starves educational assistants of wages and hours, it starves our kids of opportunities and the futures of their own choosing. Instead, we must invest in those who invest in our kids. If this government truly values Alberta children, they should also value the people that support them every day.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 34(3) I wish to advise the Assembly that on Monday, May 27, 2024, written questions 7, 8, and 9 and motions for returns 1, 4, 5, 8, 11, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19 will be accepted, and written questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 as well as motions for returns 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, and 17 will be dealt with on Monday, May 27.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has a tabling.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a CBC article entitled Calgary Housing Company Seeing 'Bottleneck' as Applications Surge, Turnover Slows, and I urge the minister responsible for housing to read this article.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, do you have a tabling?

Mr. Haji: Yeah. Mr. Speaker, I would like to table five copies of a letter from a frustrated skilled immigrant who is experiencing difficulties through the Alberta opportunity stream program.

Mr. Wright: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table five copies of the federal labour force characteristics by province, monthly, seasonally adjusted, which shows Alberta leading the country and the national average in participation of our workforce as well as employment.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that brings us to points of order, and all the points of order have been withdrawn.

Royal Assent

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor will now attend upon the Assembly.

[The Premier and the Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Lieutenant Governor]

[The Mace was draped]

[The Sergeant-at-Arms knocked on the main doors of the Chamber three times. The Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms opened the doors, and the Sergeant-at-Arms entered]

The Sergeant-at-Arms: All rise, please. Mr. Speaker, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor awaits.

The Speaker: Sergeant-at-Arms, admit Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Salma Lakhani, AOE, BSc, LL.D., and the Premier entered the Chamber. Her Honour took her place upon the throne]

Her Honour: Please be seated.

The Speaker: May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly has at its present sitting passed certain bills to which and in the name of the Legislative Assembly I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

The Clerk: Your Honour, the following are the titles of the bills to which Your Honour's assent is prayed.

- 10 Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2024
- 11 Public Safety Statutes Amendment Act, 2024
- 12 Consumer Protection (Life Leases) Amendment Act, 2024
- 13 Real Property Governance Act
- 16 Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2024
- 17 Canadian Centre of Recovery Excellence Act
- 19 Utilities Affordability Statutes Amendment Act, 2024
- 204 Municipal Government (National Urban Parks) Amendment Act, 2023

[The Lieutenant Governor indicated her assent]

The Clerk: In His Majesty's name Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to these bills.

2:50

The Sergeant-at-Arms: All rise, please.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Lieutenant Governor and the Premier left the Chamber]

[The Mace was uncovered]

The Speaker: Hon. members, please be seated.
Hon. members, Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 21 Emergency Statutes Amendment Act, 2024

The Speaker: The hon. the Deputy Premier and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move second reading of Bill 21, the Emergency Statutes Amendment Act, 2024.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is about transparency. It's about clarity and consistency when it comes to jurisdictions during an emergency. That's what we've heard from municipalities from the last fire season, clarity and transparency when it comes to responding to hazard season around the province.

What it's not about, despite the opposition's attempt to misrepresent the bill, is Alberta's government giving ourselves new powers in stepping in and taking over an incident response. Mr. Speaker, these powers already exist within the current legislation, full stop. The minister responsible for emergency services has the ability right now to take over an incident command for any disaster in Alberta. The new legislation, if passed, provides clear mechanisms for government intervention and enhancing co-ordination efforts. We're strengthening our ability to keep Albertans and communities safe during times of crisis.

While Alberta already has a strong emergency management framework, amendments to the Emergency Management Act, the Forest and Prairie Protection Act, the Water Act, and the Election Act under the proposed Emergency Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, would ensure the province has the necessary authority to effectively manage emergencies.

As part of Bill 21 Alberta's government is also proposing changes to the Election Act to move Alberta's set election date from May, which is right in the middle of wildfire season, to October. Mr. Speaker, natural disasters are occurring more frequently during the spring months, and last year's fire season was unprecedented and occurred during the election period. We all have seen disasters occur in the past during the spring season such as the 2016 Fort McMurray fire and the Slave Lake fire, just to name a few. Just this week is another concrete example of why all hands are needed on deck during an emergency. My heart goes out to Albertans who, of course, have been evacuated this week, and Alberta's government will do whatever it takes to keep people safe. Therefore, the election date must be changed to ensure that government is at full capacity to appropriately address such emergencies.

During an emergency the Emergency Management Cabinet Committee will at times meet daily. This includes ministers from a number of different portfolios and their staff to make swift and important decisions. Mr. Speaker, this is extremely difficult in the midst of an election. Last year during the election, in the middle of a provincial state of emergency, Elections Alberta scrambled to set up new polling stations to make sure that every displaced Albertan was able to vote. This shouldn't have to happen. Albertans and members of the media called for us to suspend the election. Even the Leader of the Official Opposition called for a halt to the election. Given that call, I look forward, of course, to the support on this piece of Bill 21.

Alberta's government is laser focused, Mr. Speaker, on making sure that we are well prepared for emergencies and that we have the necessary tools such as Bill 21 in place to keep Albertans and their communities safe from disasters. This is a solution that goes beyond partisanship. All MLAs, regardless of political party, play a critical role in communicating with their communities during a crisis. During an election that is impossible to do because during an election MLAs cease to be MLAs. As the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services during last year's fire season I personally can recall last year's election, which presented a number of challenges.

During the election the government still needs to operate, albeit at minimal capacity, until a new government is sworn in. Last year key decision-makers were pulled off the campaign trail with minimal support to provide vital direction during the province-wide

emergency. Mr. Speaker, the Election Commissioner had even threatened to hand out daily fines for press conferences that were being held as we attempted to provide extremely important evacuation and emergency information to save lives.

Bill 21 will address these issues. The proposed changes are a proactive measure to strengthen Alberta's response to emergencies and disasters. With these changes, we are focused on making sure that we are all working towards a common goal, which is the safety and security of Albertans.

In closing, I want Albertans to know that we have a strong emergency management framework in place, that we are well prepared to deal with emergencies, big or small. Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear that local authorities will continue to be responsible for emergency planning and emergency response in their jurisdiction. What we are doing is introducing a reporting process that improves clarity, that improves transparency as well as consistency, which will be in line with a new four-stage reporting process when there is a need for additional provincial support.

With this in mind, as the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services I move second reading of Bill 21, the Emergency Statutes Amendment Act, 2024. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any others wishing to speak to Bill 21? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 21. I would start by saying that in the last almost a year I have been to many community gatherings. I have met many individuals in my own riding, many individuals across this province. I have met many stakeholder groups and organizations, and every time that I have the opportunity to engage with them, I think, first and foremost, they will share that affordability is a top-of-mind crisis for them. They will share that the deteriorating health care system under this UCP's watch is a top-of-mind issue for them. They will talk about rising crimes in their communities. They will talk about lack of schools in their communities. They will talk about skyrocketing insurance, utility prices, mortgages, rents, and they would want this government to focus on the issues that are front and centre to them.

3:00

However, time and again this sitting what we have seen from this UCP government is that they just want to control everything. They want to centralize control on pretty much everything in this province. They want to have the ability to fire councillors. They want to have the ability to nullify a council's bylaw. They want to have the ability to change municipal local election laws. They want to have the ability to authorize who can participate and on what identification conditions in an election, and they want to control every single dollar that flows into this province, including research grants at postsecondary education. With this bill they want to control how municipalities deal with issues happening in their jurisdictions that they are familiar with.

In short, this legislation shows a deep level of distrust of municipal leaders. It shows a deep level of disrespect of the municipal leaders. It shows a deep level of disrespect to emergency responders and front-line Albertans who keep Albertans safe during a crisis. They are giving themselves, the minister the power to deal with all of that. The minister said earlier that this legislation is about transparency and clarity. An interesting thing is that those impacted by this legislation were not consulted. They didn't hear about it until it was just dropped along with the other two bills, bills 18 and 20. They describe it as the third piece of legislation that is designed to consolidate UCP's control on things, that is designed to dismantle

local decision-making, that is designed to dismantle local democracy.

This government who couldn't – I can come up with so many examples. They were not able to manage an essay contest. That's this government. During the height of the pandemic for a month they were not even present. Nobody knew who was Minister of Health for a whole month. That's the government who wants to take over emergency response across this province. That is scary. That is disrespectful, and somewhat they have a very exaggerated sense of their own value, their own ability, and their own power.

I think the right thing to do would have been that they should have consulted with the municipalities. They should have consulted those on the front lines and those with experience managing the previous disasters, those who worked to manage Fort McMurray wildfires, those who worked to manage Slave Lake wildfires, those who worked to manage Calgary floods. All of that was done without any help from any UCP cabinet minister, because municipalities have that infrastructure in place to deal with those issues. They are on the ground. They know their issues better. They know how to plan for things. And it's unfortunate that they were completely left out by this government on all these important issues impacting their municipalities, impacting their constituents.

The second thing the minister talked about was that because of these natural disasters, they want to move the fixed election date from May to October. The minister gave some very reasonable arguments that the Fort McMurray wildfire was in May. He also mentioned last year's wildfires during the election and said that it's a solution that goes beyond partisanship. I think what would have been nice – as a good gesture the minister should have indicated that: instead of extending our regime to October of 2027, we will call an early election; we will call an election in October of 2026. Instead of extending their tenure by six months, if they are really sincere about it, they could also shorten it by six months and call an early election. I can assure you that's something that we will fully support.

I can assure you that Albertans will support you on that because they are tired of this government's incompetence. They are tired of this government ignoring their issues that they are facing, this government's, I guess, complete disregard towards the cost-of-living crisis, housing crisis, rent, utilities, those crises, insurance crises. I think many Albertans will support your decision if you call an early election.

But this government, I guess, can't be trusted because in the last three bills what we have seen is that they are all about consolidating power. They just want Albertans to believe that it's because of natural disasters, but what essentially they are doing is they're just giving themselves an extension that they didn't seek from Albertans.

When people go into election campaigns, parties go into election campaigns, they share their platform, and Albertans make decisions based on that. That's the social contract that governments are supposed to hold, but this government's reputation on that and credibility on that is, I guess, zero. They told Albertans that, "We will not touch your pensions," and as soon as they became the government, first thing they did: they started taking over Albertans' pensions. That's why this government can't be trusted.

They told Albertans during the election campaign that they will not come up with a UCP police force, and when they became government, that's exactly what they did, that they said they wouldn't do. That's why they can't be trusted. They can't be taken for what they are saying here.

They told Albertans that they will get a tax break on January 1, 2024. Almost five and a half months ago Albertans should have gotten that break, but when they became government, they said no.

Get ready to get that break just before the election so they can pat themselves on the back and bribe them with their own money, hoping that Albertans will forget what the UCP promised during the election.

3:10

There are so many things that they have done that they promised Albertans they wouldn't do during the last election. There are things that they promised Albertans they will do that they didn't do. That's why we can't trust this government. Albertans can't trust this government. They can expect Albertans to oppose this power grab, this extension that they didn't seek from Albertans. They just feel entitled that they can do that with the dint of law. I think that's wrong. If they really want another extension, usually they refer things to referendums. Like, there are many things that could, I guess, go into a referendum and then do it. If you want to dismantle CPP, ask Albertans about it. If you want to create a new police force, ask Albertans about it. If you want to give your government an extension for six months, which it didn't seek from Albertans, ask Albertans for that extension.

In short, it's another heavy-handed bill that is designed to consolidate power and create a more authoritarian cabinet here in this province. It's undemocratic. It doesn't have the support of stakeholders. It doesn't have the support of municipalities. It doesn't have the support of Albertans, and this government didn't seek a mandate to do any of that. We stand opposed to those kinds of heavy-handed things that Albertans didn't ask for and Albertans didn't vote for.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: I recognize the Member for Leduc-Beaumont to speak.

Mr. Lundy: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to address the pressing matter of emergency management in the province. With the introduction of Bill 21, the Emergency Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, our government seeks to bolster our emergency response capabilities to better protect the lives and livelihoods of all Albertans.

Disasters such as wildfires and floods have become an all too familiar part of life in Alberta. The problem at hand is clear. Disasters are increasing in severity and complexity, leading to an increased need for provincial states of emergency. Given the major natural disasters and emergencies in recent years, the need for effective emergency ... [A cellphone rang] Deepest apologies. Apologies, Mr. Speaker.

Given the major natural disasters and emergencies in recent years, the need for effective emergency management has never been more pressing. With events like these the provincial government's ability to effectively respond becomes increasingly critical.

Mr. Speaker, I witnessed this first-hand in 2013, when I was living in Calgary during the record floods. Thankfully, our house was unaffected, but I had family and friends who were evacuated. This event highlighted to me the importance of effective co-ordination and management during emergency situations.

This year, Mr. Speaker, Alberta is already in the midst of wildfire response efforts with multiple wildfires burning across the province, and our hearts go out to everyone in Fort McMurray who was evacuated due to wildfires. All indications point to a challenging hazard season, and the need to be prepared for the unexpected has never been more important.

Our government is committed to ensuring that all of Alberta's communities are prepared for emergency situations. This is why our

UCP government has introduced Bill 21, the Emergency Statutes Amendment Act, 2024. This crucial piece of legislation is not just about changing laws; it is about safeguarding the lives and livelihoods of all Albertans. By amending the Emergency Management Act, the Forest and Prairie Protection Act, the Water Act, and the Election Act, this bill, if passed, would equip our government with the necessary authority to effectively manage emergencies.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 21 has been introduced because our government is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of Albertan families and communities. When disaster strikes, lives are at stake. The ability of Alberta's government to respond swiftly and decisively can make all the difference. By addressing this problem head-on, Bill 21 would ensure that Albertans are better protected in times of crisis, giving them peace of mind knowing that their government is equipped to handle the challenges that may arise.

As I said previously, Bill 21, the Emergency Statutes Amendment Act, proposes amendments to key legislation, including the Emergency Management Act, the Forest and Prairie Protection Act, the Water Act, and the Election Act. These amendments would provide clear mechanisms for incident support and enhance co-ordination efforts during emergencies. By granting the province greater authority to respond effectively, Bill 21 would strengthen Alberta's emergency management framework to better protect Albertans.

As the MLA for Leduc-Beaumont I'm committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of my constituents. The proposed amendments in Bill 21 would directly address the challenges faced by communities in my constituency and across Alberta. By empowering the government of Alberta to respond more effectively to emergencies, this bill would directly address the concerns and needs across the province.

Our government was elected on a platform of putting Albertans first and building a stronger, more resilient province. By introducing Bill 21, we are following through on our commitment to prioritize safety and ensure that Alberta is prepared to face any challenge that comes our way. These amendments align with our mandate to protect Albertans and build a brighter future for our province.

It's important to recognize that emergencies require swift and co-ordinated action. Municipalities are critical partners in an emergency and have the best on-the-ground information that is needed for an emergency response. However, their responses are more limited than those available to the provincial government. By providing clear mechanisms for provincial oversight and support, Bill 21 would enhance our collective ability to respond to emergencies.

In conclusion, Bill 21, the Emergency Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, represents a critical step forward in strengthening Alberta's emergency management framework by empowering Alberta's government to respond more effectively to disasters. Bill 21 would help fulfill our duty to protect the safety and well-being of all Albertans. Let all of us in this House come together to support this important legislation and ensure that Alberta remains resilient in the face of any challenge we may face.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

The chair recognizes the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Ms Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in opposition to this bill, the Emergency Statutes Amendment Act, 2024. But first what I do want to do is to recognize the folks from Fort McMurray

and other places in this lovely province of ours who are going through an incredibly trying, difficult time at the moment, just letting folks know that, of course, our hearts and all of our thoughts are with you right now.

When taken in concert with Bill 18, Bill 20, even Bill 5, though that seems so very long ago, Bill 13, and the recent passing of Motion 34 yesterday – and I know I’ve said this before, but it absolutely does bear repeating, Mr. Speaker – this is a government that is determined to wrest power from anyone who isn’t them, giving power to either cabinet or to an individual minister, with advice and counsel, too, being provided by a smaller and smaller group of people. It’s about an inability and an unwillingness to work respectfully and collaboratively with other elected officials as well as those on-the-ground, experienced experts, those folks who know best and who reside in all of those many smaller municipalities in our province.

3:20

As I noted yesterday, I did mention that as a teacher I was bound by a number of professional codes, four, in fact. On multiple occasions in each of those codes they note the importance of the necessity, the requirement to work collaboratively with colleagues. In teaching, as with many if not all professions, Mr. Speaker, it’s important to know how to work collaboratively with folks, to truly be a team, to understand when someone carries with them more expertise than you do, and then to listen to that expert voice, to rally folks around a centre point and that thing that you are all working toward in common. For school staff it could be creating that safe and caring environment. If you work in retail, it might be the need to increase sales. For folks working in the trades, it could be leading an OHS team to ensure that everyone is safe on the job.

But no matter the place or the situation, it’s about working with others. Collaboration absolutely on occasion can be difficult. Working together with a myriad of folks you don’t know necessarily that well isn’t necessarily something we know how to instinctively do. However, when you are in government, when you are governing, it’s a necessity and indeed an obligation. It seems to me this government is failing in that obligation in astonishing ways and on all counts.

One of the ways in which I know this, Mr. Speaker, is that trust has absolutely been broken between this UCP government and the people it serves. Instead of speaking with folks and being truly willing to hear their points of view, their issues, their concerns, their worries, this approach, this authoritarian approach, seems to always, without fail, be the go-to. Even though the minister of public safety has stated on a number of occasions that the provisions in this bill, Bill 21, are simply meant to streamline and clarify, the bill itself and the language that it carries within it belie that.

Of course, as a result of past behaviour and patterns, which I know we can all see by this point, this appears to be the now ingrained workings of this particular UCP government, and saying, “Trust me; that’s not what this is; we’ll only use it in exceptional circumstance” is simply now not believable. At the very least it gives folks like me pause because folks are beginning to wonder what the endgame, in fact, might be. We’re questioning just what problems or issues are actually being solved or addressed by whatever the answer is that might be presented, and we worry about what’s next. We worry what’s on its way that hasn’t been accounted for. We worry about the hidden agenda that, of course, because it’s hidden, we don’t know about.

This sort of governance, top-down style, “I’m the boss; do what I say; tell me everything I need to know and everything; I’ll decide everything,” that micromanaging that permeates through this bill as well as through bills 18 and 20, is clear. It’s a style of leadership

that seeks to undermine. It’s a style of leadership that utilizes a decidedly not level, uneven playing field and appears to revel in it. It’s a style of leadership that focuses control in a small group of individuals, no matter the situation.

While certainly there are moments when one governs, like in an emergency, where clarity and a clear chain of command are, of course, important and even as we all understand that Canada’s Constitution does indeed grant powers to provinces to in turn grant municipalities power, one cannot ignore the past practice that’s happened over recent years, the best practices, precedents in terms of the relationships that have grown between municipalities and provinces over the last number of years. Those relationships have changed. They’ve evolved. They’ve progressed. They’ve become partnerships, as they should, given the way our province has changed over the years and given the way our population has grown.

There’s an understanding that people throughout the province now have in terms of responsibilities of their own municipalities, whether they’re large, small, or medium. We understand in this province that a provincial government should respect and work with local government and officials. We understand that it’s a good thing when folks are supposed to act on behalf of and in the interest of all Albertans in an office that’s supposed to be independent and nonpartisan. We understand that a government should not fall into the trap of ruling and then require everyone to simply bend to its will.

But in this bill, Bill 21, the Emergency Statutes Amendment Act, as well as the other bills I’ve referenced, that’s exactly what’s occurring. It’s a shining example of – and I know you’ve heard it from us before – the UCP wants to control everything, everywhere, all at once. This is regardless, Mr. Speaker, of the fact that we know and understand that many of the changes that will be made upon passage of this bill do not sit well with municipalities or the folks who represent them. This disagreement isn’t just coming from Edmonton or Calgary; it’s coming from municipalities throughout our province.

I do wonder. Knowing that many MLAs opposite have had experience in some of those smaller rural municipal councils and they may, in fact, have also had experiences in those areas where a local emergency was declared, I wonder what their real, private thoughts are about this series of bills. I wonder what they are hearing from their councillors, mayors, reeves, and constituents. I know what I’m hearing. When I talk to constituents in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, they want to know what this government is up to. They want to know why this government appears to want all of this power and why it doesn’t listen, why it isn’t concerned about things that are happening right now and then fix those things.

We’ve heard plenty from municipalities, and they are wondering: if the government’s goal is to simply clarify and to be transparent, then why do we need this bill at all? We wonder if the government sees municipalities as a partner, an equal partner, or as kind of a form of government, really, to be discarded. We wonder if the government understands what the words “collaborate,” “engage,” and “consult” mean. We wonder if the need to establish a hierarchy is, in fact, paramount. We wonder if it’s because the government is mad at Edmonton and Calgary, and we wonder if the government is thinking that anyone who disagrees with them really just needs to be taught a lesson or put in their place and if there’s some other kind of overarching plan at work. What do the folks who live in those particularly smaller and rural municipalities think about some of these changes?

I just want to take a moment to go through some of the changes, some of the things that this bill does. We know that in amending the Emergency Management Act, it gives the province the option

to take over local emergencies outside a provincial emergency. Right now we also know that the minister can cancel that local state of emergency, but what the amendment does is that it expands those powers. Not only can the minister cancel that local state of emergency; an amendment can also occur. Right now the minister has the option and authority to end or restrict emergency measures that are put in place. But, again, in Bill 21 there's an expansion. It now allows the minister to assume total control of that local state of emergency and exercise those powers without first having come to this place, this Legislature.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I know that the Premier has often referenced and referred to Edmonton's mask bylaw, which was put in place in conjunction with a local state of emergency. That mask bylaw was a measure put in place by a local authority, in this case the city of Edmonton, to protect its citizens. But we also know, again, as I've mentioned, that the government and the Premier have indicated displeasure at the city's actions. So I'm wondering, then, in the case of a public health measure, if that might be something that the government might be interested in stopping should this act pass. I wonder if there have been real thoughts given to what some of the negative impacts of this bill might be. Altogether, again, as I mentioned before, it gives me a great deal of pause. Local emergencies, of course, can be fire, they can be flood, they can indeed be public health emergencies, and all levels of government bear a responsibility to ensure the safety of the folks that they govern.

Even if the minister orders those local authorities to take specific actions and says that local authorities will remain responsible for actions, I know that folks from RMA are very, very concerned in terms of: what's going to happen to the money? Are they going to be responsible for all the things that they are now directed to do by the provincial government? I also know that one of the things they are concerned about is that the government won't be talking to them. They won't be talking to the folks on the ground. That provision, then, certainly has the air of something inherently unfair. So if the province steps in, takes over, demands that local emergency responders do this or do that, commandeers equipment, people, resources, demands that the towns' administrators now work for them, there are all sorts of compensation issues that will absolutely arise.

The municipalities, while not disputing the complexities inherent in emergency responses, have also expressed some very real concerns. They worry about sweeping authority to seize control over local emergency situations. They worry about that necessity of the province to come in and swoop into the situations without actually understanding what's happening on the ground or the people involved. They worry that this is the discounting of municipal and local expertise and processes that, of course, already exist. They worry about who will in the end be tasked with some of these responsibilities.

They wonder why they weren't consulted in advance of this legislation being tabled, particularly since some of the provisions in this bill have to do with wildfires and hazards that happen as a result. They wonder why these changes are happening now and weren't discussed properly earlier, months ago. At the very least and as a result of the lack of clarity in this legislation and as a result of a distinct lack of consultation prior to the tabling of this bill, we know that this will add an extra layer of stress and uncertainty for municipalities, many of which will be dealing with some extraordinarily tough situations over the next number of months.

3:30

One has to ask: why? To what end? When municipalities are not adequately consulted on changes which will affect them directly,

when they are continually shocked to learn about prospective changes to legislation, when the chorus of municipalities' voices are certain in their opposition, I wonder why the government isn't hearing and I wonder why the government isn't listening. It isn't good enough to say: we'll work things out in regulations, and we promise we will talk and we will consult with you. It isn't good enough because, as I mentioned earlier, the trust has simply been eroded.

We know that this bill also amends the Forest and Prairie Protection Act, which, of course, gives the province more discretionary powers to conduct and direct emergency wildfire responses both in and out of forest protection areas, and it extends that minister's power to direct those firefighters and any other people, any other equipment under that municipality's control to take any action the minister might see necessary. But there may be some unintended consequences in so doing. I wonder what will happen when municipal firefighters from a large municipality are now being brought into a wildland firefighting situation. They fight completely different fires. Structural fires are not wildland fires. We haven't done the necessary cross-training. PPE requirements are different. Some of those unintended consequences could very well lead to serious accidents or injuries or even deaths.

We know that we've had an earlier start to this year's wildfire season, and we know that drought conditions and climate change have impacted the seriousness of this situation. We know, too, that fire chiefs themselves have also requested additional resources, increased training capabilities, equipment, and aials. In addition, they've also requested the establishment of a provincial fire services advisory committee, yet that didn't happen. Municipalities on numerous occasions have said that they need more support to fight the fires.

When I contrast what we're doing here or, rather, what we're not doing to what some of our neighbours are doing, it was interesting. I did a little bit of research, and I found out the approach that British Columbia recently took. At the time, Mr. Speaker, that a couple of my colleagues were asking this government to form a task force in advance of the wildfire season that we're now in, British Columbia actually did that. They had a task force that came up with a number of recommendations, which they are now able to implement because they did the task force; they finished the task force, and now they're able to implement some of those recommendations.

The task force met 13 times, and its goals were not only to provide strategic advice and recommendations, but it also focused on enhancing what they offered currently in terms of technology and what they might do later. It talked about the incorporation of local volunteer resources. The idea was to improve integration of rural and municipal fire departments into the wildfire service response, something I just spoke of. They wanted to update the entire wildfire emergency response strategy for British Columbia, and indeed they also wanted to strengthen community participation in all disciplines of FireSmart BC. They wanted to expand opportunities in wildfire prevention programs.

Everyone should vote against this.

The Speaker: Hon. members, if I could just beg the indulgence of the Assembly for a very brief moment. Just moments ago I had the great opportunity of welcoming a very important guest to the Assembly or at least to my office, and I wanted to introduce them to the Assembly. His Excellency Bharat Raj Paudyal, the ambassador of Nepal, is visiting from Ottawa today. I had the pleasure of meeting with him. We had the opportunity to discuss the strengthening of the relationships between Nepal, the Nepalese people, the province of Alberta and, of course, by extension our great nation. There are many shared interests, including

strengthening democracy, human rights as well as the rule of law. It's my great pleasure to welcome him here to Alberta. As well, joining him today is his deputy chief of mission. I invite you to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

I saw the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland on his feet just prior to the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo. I'm sure the Deputy Speaker and the Deputy Chair of Committees on return will be happy to see you.

The hon. member.

Mr. Getson: Excellent. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To our guests: I think I have the opportunity of seeing you tomorrow night for supper. I look forward to it, sir.

Back to Bill 11 and the matter at hand here. This bill: I've heard some debate back and forth from the other side. As an MLA last year or during that fire season, we were caught halfway. To the members opposite: when the fires took place, it was in the electoral cycle, and a bunch of us had either half or most of our constituencies on fire at the time. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, it was tumultuous, to say the least, trying to deal with that.

A lot of folks, when you're in your chairs – and you'll see that, for the newer members – they look to you. You build those levels of trust, those relationships, and they look for you to help them out, to be that conduit. There was, you know, some goofiness there that even, you know, Elections Alberta was kind of concerned about how this might work during that period. A bunch of us: we just literally reached out, and we kept doing what we're doing, and that stuff sorted itself out. But if it wasn't for us taking that initiative and diving in there, we would have missed out on lots of things from people that need us for support.

You know, I remember literally going out that night and helping the folks from Evansburg, the old folks there in the lodge, be moved into Wildwood, and then at 2 o'clock in the morning we're picking them up and moving them into Edson. Those are some of the things that we had to deal with on that side.

Being integrated in that similar role while all those things were taking place, we have mutual aid agreements. The member opposite was talking about that cross-training between structural fires and the wildland fires, forest fires themselves. Not all of them have those proficiencies, but a lot of them do. There is a really weird thing in that white zone where we live, out in those areas, where you have, you know, subdivisions as an example and right next beside it is a bunch of forest anyway. Those folks have to have that training in those areas.

Chief Randy Schroeder: he's the head of the Alberta firefighters. He's actually the chief in our area from Lac Ste. Anne. A lot of the lessons learned that we're talking about here today were because of the town halls that we had, because of the interactions that took place, Mr. Speaker, over that period of interfacing and asking them what they needed, what some of the things would be a little bit better.

The awkward way that the system was prior to Bill 11 here – and, hopefully, everyone can understand some of the reasons – was that it was almost like you have to throw the flag on the play and over the fence before the province can step in in those areas for that state of emergency.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

I can tell you full well of being on a phone call at 9 o'clock at night with three of my county mayors and reeves trying to go through and assess what level of threat, what threshold it had literally reached at that point, before they declared an actual emergency. Again, those mutual aid benefits: typically one county will backstop the other county and the other area if there's something like that event. What

had happened in our area: we had four of them all going at the same time. They literally had no resources. If Sturgeon would have been there, we would have left literally the eastern flank exposed. That's what was taking place. The mayors and the reeves are having to deal with it on the fly when these things are happening.

Again, coming back to that level of threshold, that conversation, to me, was pretty awkward because of the barriers that were in place with the existing laws. I don't think the existing laws had contemplated having that much of an impact all at the same time where those areas couldn't benefit from the other resources they had at their disposal. One of the lessons learned on that was to look at when the province could actually come in and assist, when I've got, you know, mayors and chiefs asking for aerial support and we can't technically give it to them because it's tied up somewhere else and it literally hasn't been thrown over the fence to us to take control and command of it.

The encouraging thing, though, in the Parkland county, when we were there in their area after the declaration of emergency, was how well the provincial services integrated back into the Parkland county's actual assets themselves. The member opposite had concerns about, you know, this cliché '80s cop movie where they come in, and they're asserting their authority. It was quite the contrary. It was very well received by all those folks because regardless of a municipal hat or an Alberta hat they integrated. These folks are trained and equipped to work together to come up to that. What those members had shared to me – we've got some specialists that are scattered throughout the province – was that their level of effort to support was different depending on the sophistication level of those areas. Again, the ones where they had a really good competency, where they had the resources at their disposal, or quite frankly if they weren't burned out from working a ton of days in a row, then they had less control, less assertion in there. The areas where they needed more of that: there was more integration and more forward looking on that and more involvement. So from what I observed in those areas, some of the concerns you had simply don't exist in the field.

3:40

The biggest thing that came when we started bringing in foreign forest fire firefighters, like the group from Montana, for example, when they integrated, is that then you have a ton of moving parts. There were even lessons learned out of that, too, of having one central group that could kind of deploy those assets and integrate them a bit better. You do have differences between. Towns and counties themselves have a little bit of a rub point, and then when you start asserting that provincial umbrella over top, that seems to start to blend a little bit of that better as well. When folks are in those circumstances, obviously everything is in a heightened state dealing with emergencies and issues.

That's kind of the idea behind this. It was almost a stage-gate approach, where you can get in there a little bit quicker, not wait until the last minute, to be able to do that. To put it in context, one of my colleagues just to the south of me, which we share a county line with – Drayton Valley, as an example, was in a very weird circumstance where that fire was coming out of the county itself because of the forest, and then all of a sudden it was going to hit their line. Technically, if you follow the rules – it's written in black and white – it's not my problem until it's my problem. Then you're overwhelmed. And that just does not meet the needs of what our constituents need out there. We need more of an integration in that regard. So that's what we're looking at there.

The other item that we had was moving the date. That came up. One of those things is that we do have – if you look at our historical record, whether it's fire or flood or otherwise, it typically happens

in those areas in that timeline, so shifting it more towards the fall kind of makes sense. It's less of a risk exposure during those timelines. I can say, Mr. Speaker, through you to the other members, hand on heart and the other on the Bible, that living that experience last year first-hand and working through those areas and dealing with not only the reeves and the county mayors, the firefighters themselves, and my constituents, this is something that makes a ton of practical sense. I would encourage folks in here not to politicize this too much because, again, when I'm looking to my constituents, I can say that this makes sense logically. If it were something different, I probably wouldn't be leaving my seat right now, quite frankly, and having this, but for the folks back home that understand that, that's a lived experience.

As far as the consultation and everything else that's going to still keep taking place. This thing is not done yet. We're going to have to tweak the system based on experience, which is one of the benefits of having this Legislative Assembly in order here. When things come up that we didn't foresee at that time, written, we can tweak it and move it along the way.

When it comes to the regulations, as members opposite and on our side know full well, it's more difficult to get a law passed in here because it has to go through those checks and balances, which is good. The regulations allow you a little bit of nimbleness; you're more agile to adapt to do those things.

I would encourage members to support Bill 11. From what I've seen, from the items I've spoken about last year . . .

Some Hon. Members: Twenty-one. Bill 21.

Mr. Getson: Oh. Sorry. I apologize. It's towards the end of the week.

I would encourage you to support the bill because, from what I've seen with the intent and what that lived experience was last year, it'll do a lot of good for Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member. Good thing everybody is paying attention.

I recognize the Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: I've got to debate on 21. Yeah. I'll take my time anyway.

You know, I think it's clear that once again the government wants to control everything around here. Somebody over on the other side last week, I think, said that if it walks like a duck and talks like a duck, it's a duck. This is a duck. This is a power grab.

I want to start by saying that, you know, I was listening to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services talk about how this will make things a lot more transparent. It will be clearer to everyone. Well, what's not transparent is the fact that the other side never talked about this during the election. That's not that long ago.

This is a direct quote from RMA, which typically the people on that side seem to think are their friendlies, you know, county councillors and special districts and all sorts of places in Alberta that have county councils and regional districts and other things like that. The other side seems to think: "Those are our friends. Those are the people we really, really get along with. You know, they turn our crank, we turn their crank, and it's all good. We should just kind of continue on." Well, I can tell you that the RMA's website is not thinking that bills 18, 20, and 21 are anything that they want to see. In fact, a direct quote from that website, and people can go to it themselves: contents of bills 18, 20, and 21 were not included in the platform material for the provincial election just last year; it leaves us wondering who is controlling the policy direction of this

government. That's a good question, and I don't think there's any clear answer from the other side.

It was interesting, too. I was listening to the Member for Leduc-Beaumont talk about living in Calgary during the 2013 flood. Me too. Many people here lived in Calgary in 2013 during the 2013 flood, and that's a real-life example of how things went pretty well. I was also on city council in 2010 and 2007, and the Member for Calgary-Hays was on council at the same time. There were floods in Calgary at those times; they weren't as damaging and disastrous as the 2013 flood.

But it was interesting when the Member for Leduc-Beaumont said that he was living in Calgary and that he can see the need for this act because of what he experienced in Calgary. Now, the same flood: I didn't see a need for this act. I saw and I think a lot of Calgarians and people in this province saw the Calgary emergency management centre doing a stellar job in responding to that emergency and the 2010 emergency and the 2007 emergency as well. CEMA, it's called, did a stellar job. Many of us remember that the mayor at the time, 2013, seemed to be needing a lot of sleep because he was working, it seemed, 24/7 to help the people of Calgary through that flood. Yes, the province and the federal government both were there to support the city of Calgary, but CEMA was the agency in control of that flood response, and they did a great job.

Now, I don't see where this bill, this legislation is necessary.

Mr. Sabir: The fire and the flood.

Member Ceci: The fire, the flood: my colleague here is whispering things over my shoulder. He should stop.

The fire and the flood, particularly the flood, were under the control of the city of Calgary. Mr. Speaker, if you were around and you could have seen the actions that were co-ordinated at that time, it was a sight to see, and the mayor was leading that up. The mayor was seen as totally effective, responsible for making sure that Calgarians knew what was happening, and the response was controlled and directed by the city council at that time in co-ordination with CEMA. So I don't see where this bill is necessary.

I wanted to bring up something just quickly about the fixed election date, that's going to be moved, as a result of this bill, six months back. I started out saying that this is a power grab and a duck and controls everything. Well, I think this is a good example of why that's true. It's clear that this UCP government is just ruling for their own benefit.

When I was listening to my leader yesterday, she was talking about Tory land. It's in *Hansard*. She was talking about Tory land. She reflected. She said, "Some of the observers of that Progressive Conservative government" – and she's talking about the one before 2015, 2014, 2013, '11, '10. Some people here were part of those governments. She reflected, and she said:

Some of the observers of that Progressive Conservative government, as it got longer and longer in the tooth and became more and more comfortable with what was starting to add up to four decades in power, used to refer to it as Tory land.

Now, this is the interesting part of my leader's reflection.

That was a term that was used to refer to a whole bunch of self-serving, nest-feathering decisions taken by a government that had grown far, far too comfortable with power; far, far too entitled to their role; far, far too presumptive about their inalienable right to be elected by the people of this province.

3:50

That's what I see in the extension for another six months. You know, the other side talks about: well, we need to do it for this, that, and the other reason. If that's really your concern, then move it

forward. But it's Tory land; that's what's going on over there. They believe they have an inalienable right to do what they want even though we all have eyes and can see that it's just an extension of their power and a power grab.

I want to reflect on Bill 21, particularly the RMA's concerns with it. It's in their write-up, it's on their website, and it talks about that the legislation, being Bill 21,

does not make it clear whether a provincial decision to take over management of fire outside the FPA ...

forest protection area,

... means they will also [take over] all of the costs of fighting that fire.

That's a pretty big problem for municipalities. Some of them are struggling across this province already because of the decisions of this government, and this is another example of their concerns.

The RMA goes on to say that they – and this strikes me as, like: I can't believe they have to say this – are advocating to the provincial government about the value of municipalities as local decision-makers. Just take a minute to parse that out in terms of what it means. They are having to advocate to the people over there about the value of local decision-makers. It just boggles the mind that they have to say that to these people.

They also go on to say that Bill 21 undermines Alberta's current partnership-based approach to emergency response and centralizes control with the provincial government. Let me say that once more. They say that it undermines the current partnership-based approach to emergency response and centralizes control with the provincial government. How is that a good thing?

In Calgary with the 2013 flood: if that would have happened, do you think any minister of the Crown would have put the time and effort into addressing the needs of Calgarians that Mayor Nenshi did at the time? [interjections] There's no way. Not one of them would have done that. It's a duck. They can say they would, but I know it's a duck.

Just to go on, these are the RMA's words. You can read them; they're on the website. Along with bills 18 and 20 – we're on Bill 21, by the way.

Mr. Getson: It's 12 if you read it upside down.

Member Ceci: Yeah. Just catching you up.

Along with bills 18 and 20, this is the third piece of legislation introduced this session that erodes the responsibility of the local decision-making authority of municipalities. Like, these things jump off the page in terms of how little the RMA and its member counties and municipalities, which are about 66, I think, believe in this bill and 18 and 20.

I'll just go on. I'll get quicker with these. I won't read the whole quote. Well, this one I will, and then I'll get quicker.

Bill 21 is the latest attempt to reduce the authority of municipal leaders ...

Wow. That's pretty big.

... with no clear explanation ...

though the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services says that it's quite transparent,

... as to how this will do anything other than confuse and complicate emergency response moving forward.

Okay. Well, that's their view. I guess that's not really relevant here to the other side.

They go on to say that there's no clarity. They go on to say, "will add an extra layer of stress." They go on to say, "more confusion for residents." They go on to say, "not legislation municipalities asked for." I thought there was a partnership here. Apparently not. They say that it puts an authority "not familiar with the community" in charge of disaster response. That is a problem. If you put an

authority not familiar with the community in charge of disaster response, you get all sorts of unintended consequences.

My colleague here from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview did a masterful job of deconstructing this bill. She talked a lot about the forest protection areas and who's going to pay. She talked a lot about that. We know that the president of RMA mentioned bills 18 and 20 and said, "These acts are part of an alarming trend from Alberta's UCP government." You probably can repeat this one off by heart, I bet, right? We'll see if you can. He said, "These acts are part of an alarming trend from Alberta's UCP government to centralize control and reduce municipal responsibility and authority."

I thought the whole thing was that we wanted to empower municipalities, get the best out of their capacity. They don't believe that. They believe that they're being sidelined, shut out, disrespected, made confused around who's paying for what, and none of that is clear as a result of what the minister said today or what any of the other members from the other side have said when they stood up.

I want to conclude by urging members on the other side to reconsider, to step back, take a well-needed pause, give one's head a shake, listen to RMA, listen to Alberta Municipalities, and then come back with something they're actually wanting in a partnership approach that will make things better for Albertans instead of confusing them when there are problems, when there are emergencies.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

I'm going to recognize the Member for Edmonton-West Henday to speak.

Member Arcand-Paul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to the Emergency Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, and in particular I speak in opposition to this unnecessary power-grab bill that this government has put in tandem with their other very bad, bad bills.

Bill 21 is, among other things, an attack on our democracy, both at the provincial and municipal levels, Mr. Speaker, but what is most concerning is this government's self-extension beyond the set election period, which it set itself, by the way. It's outrageous: six months. If this government wants to save face when they pass this overreaching piece of legislation, they should seriously consider holding the election under this bill in October 2026 so that Albertans can kick this government to the curb and install a strong and caring NDP government.

This government argues that it is because of the same emergencies that they want to meddle in the ability of local responders to – get this – respond to local emergencies. Can someone make this make sense to this government or, at the very least, make it make sense to Albertans? What we are seeing is this government extending its ineptitude in new ways every single day. The minister just rose in this House a few moments ago suggesting that this is not the government grabbing more powers while at the same time saying that the government already has the capacity to do just what it says it's going to do.

4:00

But all you've got to do is read this bill. It's not just that. If it were, why bother drafting this, other than to perhaps change the date of democratic elections, that the UCP set already and are already now moving around, just because they refuse to address the underlying issue of these ongoing emergencies? Hint: it's climate change. I know the other side likes to treat that word as a bad one, Mr. Speaker, but it's a reality that this government refuses to

recognize, aside from using those same disasters created by climate change as justification for expanding their powers that already exist.

I wish I could say that this government would actually be helpful in emergencies, but given the amount of red tape that they have now created with this bill – well, Mr. Speaker, there's a word for this overreach of power, but I don't want to sound unparliamentary, so I'll refrain.

Mr. Speaker, this is an unnecessary piece of paternalistic legislation. The very same concerns that this government seems to have with the federal government are what they are putting on to municipalities. This paternalism is frustrating for municipalities. We've heard from councillors – my friend here has already mentioned them – the regional municipality authority, emergency responders, front-line leaders, and many other advocates who are concerned about this piece of legislation going too far.

Why? Why is this government meddling in areas that have been operating without issue before it decided to interfere in democratically elected municipalities? Well, the ministers opposite say that they have municipal leaders that say that this legislation is good. Where are they? The councillors I'm hearing from are seriously concerned about their abilities to practise the powers that they need to ensure their residents are safe during emergencies. If they can't manage to keep Albertans from suffering under motel medicine for over a year and a half, well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think Albertans have a lot of confidence in this government responding to any issues in a timely manner by this humongous and ineffective cabinet. This is highly concerning.

Now let's turn to specific areas of this bad, bad piece of legislation. With amendments to section 11.21(1)(a) of the Emergency Management Act, which is so broad in its drafting, I would ask this government: why is this even necessary? It is entirely concerning that this amendment is very clearly a power grab and anti local decision-making. It is paternalism in action, folks, and who is going to suffer under this act? Well, it's going to be Albertans, hard-working Albertans that will lose homes, livelihoods, or even worse because this government does not value the decision-making of local authorities.

Worse yet: who is this minister? This minister is going to be absolved of responsibility to make those individuals whole for their losses or, in nonlegal speak, whom the minister won't pay back for the loss of their homes if they so choose.

During the COVID-19 pandemic I know what happened under this crazy situation. I was working as legal counsel for government in the province of Alberta. Under the legislation it was quite clear that local authorities needed to have the ability to be flexible to respond to the changing nature of the information available, the needs of the community, and the ineptitude of governments both provincial and federal to adequately understand the local needs of the community.

Mr. Speaker, this changes the entire ability of local authorities to exercise their own caution, to manage local affairs of their communities, counties, or municipalities. Quite frankly, it's dangerous and unnecessary. Had this overreach existed during that pandemic, I can tell you that many people may have lost their loved ones because their local government would not have had the ability to make day-to-day decisions because the minister would have meddled in their own affairs.

For those who might be watching, you might be asking yourself: well, what is a local authority? Well, article 1(g) highlights what those entities are in the legislation, the Emergency Management Act. That also includes more than just the municipalities that I've mentioned. They also include Métis settlements, a superintendent of national parks, and even, yes, First Nations chiefs and councils.

Mr. Speaker, this is absolutely contrary to the paternalism that I fought against while being a lawyer for First Nations, and it is an overreach that this government should be ashamed of and one that Albertans should be concerned about as it causes unnecessary distress.

Mr. Speaker, this House has not had Indigenous voices with expertise like mine in a very long time, and it shows when I visit First Nations and they tell me that they are being left ignored by the provincial government despite the minister's best efforts, I might say. Sadly, their perspectives fall onto a government unwilling to incorporate meaningful change. This piece of legislation does nothing more than the same old status quo but extending it now on to municipalities, other Métis settlement councils, national park superintendents, and, yes, even those First Nations chiefs and councils, that I mentioned.

I would urge the other side of this House to seriously consider what that's going to look like for the rural communities that you represent, the county councillors that you represent, and the mayors or reeves of the small towns that you are supposed to work with. I can tell you that although you have one or two friendly voices, I bet you those friendly voices will not be standing with you when the minister gets to absolve themselves of their obligations by amendment 4(7), which amends section 19(3.1) of the Emergency Management Act.

What happens when the minister acquires, utilizes, damages, or destroys property that is owned by the municipality, an individual, or a corporation? Well, let me tell you. During a state of local emergency the minister "has no obligation to pay compensation." However, amendment 4(13) puts that liability on a local authority. What is the fairness here? The way that this is drafted, the minister, if they so choose, can make the decision not to pay a local authority back. We all know how this government works or doesn't work with municipalities and the purse strings, which we do not need to get into today; I'm sure we will at some later date.

Just wait. I know you're sitting at the edge of your seat about what else this government will do to local authorities under this bill. Well, let me tell you, my friends. Amendment 4(12) amends section 24 by adding subsection 1.011 and subsection 1.012(c). Those local authorities, that I mentioned earlier in my remarks, are going to have their powers stripped from them when there is a state of local emergency. This is harmful to those local authorities and certainly another attack on Indigenous peoples in this province and certainly on those individuals who have been democratically elected in their community, the people that were elected to represent their local community. It is mind-boggling for us to sit here and say that democracy is not under attack by these grabs. It is, and it's very clear in the legislation. Albertans: read this. It's bad.

I'd also like to raise the concerns around subsection 1.014 and the broad language included with respect to communication during these emergencies. I recognize that during emergencies there is a need for us to communicate effectively with our constituents, but giving the minister and their office the sole obligation to communicate and determine the best type of communication, instead of allowing local authorities to determine the best routes for communicating with their constituents, is nonsensical. I've done this work. It is difficult to communicate during emergencies. People don't have reliable access to the Internet. People don't have reliable access to news delivery systems. Heck, we don't even have circulated newspapers at the moment to be able to get folks the information that they need. I can tell you that had we not relied so heavily on Facebook at the time of the pandemic, much of the information would not have gotten out, when people were being respectful and social distancing, to understand what the evolving needs of the community were.

But now – you know what? – I’m done with the Emergency Management Act. Let’s now turn to the Forest and Prairie Protection Act amendments, namely 5(6), which inserts after section 7 a new section 7.1 by adding a requirement for municipalities to report any information requested to the minister while the municipalities are trying to – get this – manage an actual wildfire. Sorry; this is making me really angry.

An Hon. Member: That’s the tea.

Member Arcand-Paul: It’s actually Pepsi, or Bepsi, as we call it.

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of having brothers who are firefighters. I know how quickly things can change with a forest fire. I know how dangerous it can be for our firefighters or first responders during an emergency like an out-of-control forest fire. I’ve been told about how my brother almost lost his life because of how quickly the fire moved and put him on an island of dry grassland, surrounded by the fire, actually, to the member opposite who just spoke, in God’s country. The last thing that he would need is to be put further at risk by a minister who wants to micromanage and demand information from a municipality when that entity should be just focusing on helping those that need the assistance to be safe from the fires and deploying those resources and personnel where they are needed and not putting people’s lives further at risk.

4:10

Mr. Speaker, this is concerning. This legislation goes well beyond what the minister rose and spoke to earlier, and Albertans should be concerned about what this will mean when this government uses this legislation to potentially even extend the length of time of forest fires for their own political gain. I would not put it past the UCP to do this.

Finally, I must raise the concerns that arise with this bill amending the Water Act. The province has known about First Nations’ concerns about access to water under this act. There’s case law. Communities have been asking for it. Nations have been asking for it. We know the regime with the federal government is coming down, and First Nations are concerned about water access in this province. The way the Water Act operates – I’ve done a bit of this work when I first became a brand new lawyer, and it was concerning. First Nations are not included in this conversation. Again, this bill does not include them whatsoever.

When an emergency occurs or use of water needs to be impacted, First Nations are not kept front of mind. I remind this House and I remind you, Mr. Speaker, that my expertise and the work that I have done shows that this province and this government need to be reminded that there are specific needs and demands, that First Nations need good legislation. They need good amendments to this type of legislation to ensure that they can have safe access to water, especially in emergencies but even in nonemergencies.

You know, it was this government’s chance to include First Nations in a very meaningful way in respect to emergencies related to water, but, alas, they were again excluded. The province is continuing with its paternalistic ignorance. I hear multiple times from the other side that they care so deeply about their relationship with First Nations. This was your chance to include good amendments. You still have a good opportunity to make those amendments.

My question to the minister on amendment 6(2), which amends the Water Act at 107(2.1)(i)(B) to designate the priority of diversion or uses of water: well, Mr. Speaker, who is going to tell the First Nations, who have been demanding to be included in water access in an equitable manner, a resource which, I might remind this House, is also part of our traditional territory, that it was this easy

for the government to make those amendments to the Water Act? I certainly will. Maybe the minister could drum up some actual good legislation to work with First Nations, with amendments to the Water Act, that have been so desperately needed in this province. I’m happy to make those introductions if the members opposite would request.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I’d like to urge this House to oppose this legislation, an overt power grab by the UCP government, that seems to never end.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

The Member for Edmonton-South to speak.

Member Hoyle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise here to speak to Bill 21, the Emergency Statutes Amendment Act, 2024. To start, I would like to send my sincerest condolences to all the people in Fort McMurray who are currently evacuating due to an ongoing situation and the need for us to control the wildfire. I hope every individual is able to find somewhere to stay while our brave firefighters battle this wildfire and that everyone is able to return home as swiftly as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I must say that I am gravely concerned at the lengths to which this government continues to go to consolidate the power under the Premier’s office and her cabinet. Somewhere along the way the UCP seems to have forgotten that the best path forward to challenges facing our province is through collaboration and not authoritarianism.

I’d like to start by sharing comments made by the president of the Rural Municipalities of Alberta because I highly doubt that this government took the time to consult with stakeholders before introducing Bill 21, as we’ve seen time and time again with many bills that have been brought forth. Paul McLaughlin stated that in recent weeks, we’ve seen an alarming trend from this government when it comes to how they view municipalities. Bill 21 is the latest attempt to reduce the authority of municipal leaders, with no clear explanation as to how this will do anything other than confuse and complicate emergency response moving forward. Our provincial government seems intent on overreaching [its] powers while accusing the federal government of doing the same to them. This pattern of centralization and big government flies in the face of conservative principles. Since the content of bills 18, 20, and 21 were not included in the platform material from the provincial election just last year, it leaves us wondering who is controlling the policy direction of this government.

Time and time again we see the Premier’s desire to control everything without any consultation – in fact, zero consultation – with key stakeholders before introducing increased restrictions. Bill 21 is part of a concerted effort to diminish the autonomy of municipalities in Alberta, and it is unacceptable. The expanded powers in this bill will further erode the local authority of municipal decision-makers. Let me just add that these decision-makers are duly elected by Albertans, chosen by Albertans to lead and serve and protect them.

This bill’s expanded powers will also complicate emergency response efforts. That’s because it will give the government the power to assume control of emergency situations if a state of emergency is declared by a municipality. While, yes, the provincial government has more resources necessary to grapple with emergencies, it’s evident that Bill 21 really has nothing to do with safety. This is about tightening the reins of power and binding municipalities down.

The UCP has suggested that – well, I’ll actually say even before that that Bill 21 will allow the province to assume authority over local emergency response during wildfires, floods, and drought.

The UCP has suggested that the powers of Bill 21 will only be exercised in extreme circumstances such as when local resources are depleted, where help is requested, or where local actions overlap with broader regional and provincial actions.

So what are the criteria necessary to make decisions in these circumstances? Is the government actually going to be transparent with that, or are Albertans expected to just trust that they'll show discretion only because they say they will? To be fair, we are talking about a UCP government that continues to say one thing and then do the complete opposite. Are they really hoping that we'll just take their word for it? It's important to note that a municipality would not have to agree to the province taking control during an emergency.

The minister stated today, "What we are doing is introducing a reporting process that improves clarity, that improves transparency as well as consistency." What Bill 21 will undoubtedly create is less transparency, less clarity, less consistency and more stress and confusion for municipalities and Albertans. They'll be left wondering if the government will arbitrarily step in and cause more confusion for residents as to who is in charge during local emergencies. Municipalities may even be confused on whether they should respond or if they should wait and what happens in those conversations and who takes care of Albertans. Can Albertans trust this UCP government?

4:20

Another problematic component of Bill 21 is to shift the timing of provincial elections, in particular the next election from May 2027 to October 2027. Last year the provincial election did overlap with out-of-control wildfires that left thousands of Albertans displaced from their homes, but I don't think it's a long shot to see that the UCP is fully aware that wildfire season is getting worse every single year. We're seeing more people displaced, more property damaged, and more days where Albertans can't leave their homes. Why is that, Mr. Speaker? Because the UCP doesn't once acknowledge that climate change is contributing to increasingly disastrous wildfire seasons and because they know that their record of responding to and properly planning for wildfires is abysmal.

Bill 21 would amend the Forest and Prairie Protection Act to give the province more authority to take control of emergency wildfire responses. This includes taking over firefighting efforts on wildfires on any provincial land, including Métis settlements. You know what we really need to address the growing challenges of fighting wildfires in Alberta? I'll give you a hint: it's not Bill 21. We need a comprehensive wildfire strategy that's well planned.

Member Arcand-Paul: Will the member accept an intervention?

Member Hoyle: I will.

Member Arcand-Paul: Thank you to the member talking about Métis settlements. I think it is a really important point. When we talk about Métis settlements, there are different perspectives on which Métis settlements accept their jurisdiction and understand their jurisdiction. Not all Métis settlements respect or understand that they are subservient to the provincial government.

I know that we have had discussions in this House about jurisdiction and about the primacy of sovereign nations, particularly First Nations, and our relatives, the Métis. I think that for the member I would like to remind this House that Métis settlements are also very unique in the way that they respond, and getting rid of council's decision-making capacities is deleterious to their democratically elected functions of the settlement. I think for us to have this conversation, we have to be very careful to not wade into the prescriptive ways in which this legislation is doing for Métis settlements.

Thank you.

Member Hoyle: Jumping off from we need a comprehensive wildfire strategy, we also need year-round wildland firefighters to ensure they are ready and trained boots on the ground for the start of every wildfire season. But calls for a plan are falling on deaf ears because there is no plan. The Premier has said many times that she doesn't run from her record. Well, Mr. Speaker, it looks like she's running far from it now.

This year's wildfire season was declared 10 days earlier than the typical start of March 1, and we're at risk for severe fires this season due to province-wide drought conditions, warmer than normal temperatures, and below average precipitation in many parts of our province.

Residents in Edmonton-South remember the devastation of last year's season, and they've reached out to me because they not only want to make sure that Albertans are kept safe but to not have to stay in their homes for days on end because the sky is thick with smoke. I had one resident reach out to me because her son is a severe asthmatic, and she said to me: "How many days more are we going to deal with this, and what is our government doing to plan? My kids can't even go outside and play." Most of the summer went by, and he was stuck indoors.

Each year we break record after record and see thousands of Albertans displaced because of the severity of wildfire season. Not only does it put people's lives at risk; it impedes our economy as businesses are also forced to shut down and millions of dollars in damages are caused. This isn't even touching the costs related to the impacts on physical health as a result of inhaling wildfire smoke, as I just spoke about with my resident's asthmatic son. These costs are estimated to range from \$410 million to \$1.8 billion of acute impacts and \$4.3 billion to \$19 billion for chronic impacts per year, like asthma, for example.

During the 2023 season 1,092 wildfires burned a record 2.2 million hectares. That's about 10 times the five-year average.

Mr. Ellingson: I wonder if you will accept an intervention.

Member Hoyle: Please.

Mr. Ellingson: Yes. I'd actually like to maybe just ask the member. We know that this bill is allowing the government to step in and take control in emergency situations and make the unilateral decision on whether or not a state of emergency should be declared. I know the member had actually previously run for council and probably has a lot of thoughts and opinions about the authority of council and duly elected members of council to be considering the need for declaring a state of emergency, be considering how we're using municipal resources and how those municipal resources might be working in conjunction with provincial resources. I'm wondering if you might be able to share with me and this House your thoughts on how we might be working together and sharing those resources and the responsibility of a duly elected council member.

Member Hoyle: Yes. Thank you for that. It's great. It's great. I do have a lot to share on that.

You know, one of the things, and many discussions I had with residents in Edmonton-South – and what's very interesting about the area I represent: not only have I lived there for going on the past 20 years, but it's also half of the ward I ran in in the municipal election. I ran as an independent, proudly so. One of the reasons I did that was that I wanted all Albertans to see me for the values that I represented and to make sure that their voices were very much heard.

One of the things that I encountered door-knocking in that ward, which is now representing Edmonton-South, was that voters were very adamant about who they chose and that care into that type of leadership. Many had told me that they were voting for me because

of the type of leadership I had exhibited for, at that time, well over 20 years in this city, and the fact that I was speaking on behalf of their needs, that it wasn't partisan: many people really respected that, especially when we're talking about municipal elections.

So the idea that a provincial government would want to override when citizens have made the effort and time to connect with those candidates, candidates have put in their time and resources into campaigns to connect with voters on what are really issues that impact day-to-day living of residents, the everyday issues that we feel – this would be an atrocity of Bill 21 to now jump in and say literally to Albertans and those in Edmonton-South: your particular opinion and your choice of leaders are irrelevant here and their

perspectives are irrelevant. You know, this sets a precedent of really muzzling Albertans, of disregarding Albertans' opinions. We as politicians: that is our number one job, to serve, to listen, to respect and include the opinions of Albertans. We wouldn't have a job without those voters, and we must respect that.

With that, I cannot support and do not support Bill 21.

The Acting Speaker: Members, pursuant to standing orders 3(3)(a) and 4(2) the Assembly stands adjourned until Tuesday, May 21, at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 4:30 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 31st Legislature - 1st Session (2023-2024)

Activity to Thursday, May 16, 2024

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

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

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

Bill 1 — Alberta Taxpayer Protection Amendment Act, 2023 (Smith)

First Reading — 10 (*Oct. 30, 2023 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 57-58 (*Nov. 1, 2023 aft.*), 96-97 (*Nov. 2, 2023 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 145-47 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft., passed*)
Third Reading — 147-54 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft., passed on division*)
Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on December 7, 2023; SA 2023 c6]

Bill 2 — Alberta Pension Protection Act (Horner)

First Reading — 89-90 (*Nov. 2, 2023 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 154-55 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft.*), 274-85 (*Nov. 21, 2023 aft.*), 336-43 (*Nov. 23, 2023 aft.*), 394-400 (*Nov. 28, 2023 aft.*), 424-30 (*Nov. 29, 2023 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 522-30 (*Dec. 5, 2023 aft.*), 552-59 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., passed*)
Third Reading — 565 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve.*), 583-90 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., passed on division*)
Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on December 7, 2023; SA 2023 cA-29.5]

Bill 3 — Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Amendment Act, 2023 (Williams)

First Reading — 22 (*Oct. 31, 2023 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 90-93 (*Nov. 2, 2023 aft.*), 180-87 (*Nov. 8, 2023 aft.*), 272-73 (*Nov. 21, 2023 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 307-09 (*Nov. 22, 2023 aft., passed*)
Third Reading — 334-36 (*Nov. 23, 2023 aft., passed*)
Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on December 7, 2023; SA 2023 c10]

Bill 4 — Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2023 (\$) (Horner)

First Reading — 55 (*Nov. 1, 2023 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 159-63 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft.*), 155-56 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft.*), 187-90 (*Nov. 8, 2023 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 309-13 (*Nov. 22, 2023 aft., passed*)
Third Reading — 336 (*Nov. 23, 2023 aft., passed*)
Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2023 c13]

Bill 5* — Public Sector Employers Amendment Act, 2023 (Horner)

First Reading — 55-56 (*Nov. 1, 2023 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 156-57 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft.*), 190-97 (*Nov. 8, 2023 aft.*), 265-72 (*Nov. 21, 2023 aft.*), 403-09 (*Nov. 28, 2023 aft.*), 430-35 (*Nov. 29, 2023 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 456 (*Nov. 30, 2023 aft., passed*), 519-22 (*Dec. 5, 2023 aft., recommitted*), 559-62, 563-64 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., passed with amendments on division*)
Third Reading — 515 (*Dec. 5, 2023 aft., recommitted to Committee of the Whole*), 564-55 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve.*), 575-83 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., passed on division*)
Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on Proclamation; SA 2023 c12]

Bill 6 — Public Health Amendment Act, 2023 (Amery)

First Reading — 90 (*Nov. 2, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 157-58 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft.*), 313-20 (*Nov. 22, 2023 aft.*), 435-38 (*Nov. 29, 2023 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 456-62 (*Nov. 30, 2023 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 462 (*Nov. 30, 2023 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on December 7, 2023; SA 2023 c11]

Bill 7 — Engineering and Geoscience Professions Amendment Act, 2023 (Sawhney)

First Reading — 111 (*Nov. 6, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 158-59 (*Nov. 7, 2023 aft.*), 273-74 (*Nov. 21, 2023 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 400-03 (*Nov. 28, 2023 aft.*), 423-24 (*Nov. 29, 2023 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 514-15 (*Dec. 5, 2023 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on December 7, 2023; SA 2023 c7]

Bill 8 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2023 (Amery)

First Reading — 209 (*Nov. 9, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 299-307 (*Nov. 22, 2023 aft.*), 438-41 (*Nov. 29, 2023 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 515-18 (*Dec. 5, 2023 aft.*), 546-52 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 564 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve.*), 569-75 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2023 c8]

Bill 9 — Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2023 (Schow)

First Reading — 478 (*Dec. 4, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 513-14 (*Dec. 5, 2023 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 546 (*Dec. 6, 2023 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 590-92 (*Dec. 7, 2023 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on December 7, 2023; SA 2023 c9]

Bill 10 — Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (\$) (Horner)

First Reading — 673 (*Mar. 12, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 705-16 (*Mar. 14, 2024 aft.*), 868-73 (*Mar. 26, 2024 aft.*), 904-05 (*Mar. 27, 2024 aft.*), 899-901 (*Mar. 27, 2024 aft.*), 970-75 (*Apr. 9, 2024 aft.*), 1003-05 (*Apr. 10, 2024 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1005-09 (*Apr. 10, 2024 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1040-43 (*Apr. 11, 2024 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 16, 2024 aft.*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2023 c4]

Bill 11 — Public Safety Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (Ellis)

First Reading — 685 (*Mar. 13, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 976-90 (*Apr. 9, 2024 aft.*), 1009-15 (*Apr. 10, 2024 aft.*), 1091-96 (*Apr. 16, 2024 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1217-20 (*Apr. 23, 2024 aft.*), 1334-1341 (*May 7, 2024 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1448-55 (*May 14, 2024 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 16, 2024 aft.*) [Comes into force May 16, 2024, except section 1, which comes into force on proclamation; SA 2023 c4]

Bill 12* — Consumer Protection (Life Leases) Amendment Act, 2024 (Nally)

First Reading — 727 (*Mar. 18, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1015-22 (*Apr. 10, 2024 aft.*), 1043-46 (*Apr. 11, 2024 aft.*), 1096-102 (*Apr. 16, 2024 aft.*), 1135-40 (*Apr. 17, 2024 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1220 (*Apr. 23, 2024 aft.*), 1239-48 (*Apr. 24, 2024 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1367-74 (*May 8, 2024 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 16, 2024 aft.*) [Comes into force May 16, 2024; SA 2023 c3]

Bill 13 — Real Property Governance Act (Guthrie)

First Reading — 779 (*Mar. 21, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1102-09 (*Apr. 16, 2024 aft.*), 1132-35 (*Apr. 17, 2024 aft.*), 1161-63 (*Apr. 18, 2024 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1220-28 (*Apr. 23, 2024 aft.*), 1341-43 (*May 7, 2024 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1395-1400 (*May 9, 2024 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 16, 2024 aft.*) [Comes into force May 16, 2024, with some sections deemed to have come into force on March 21, 2024; SA 2023 cR-5.3]

Bill 14 — Appropriation Act, 2024 (\$) (Horner)

First Reading — 791 (*Mar. 21, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 855-63 (*Mar. 26, 2024 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 887-93 (*Mar. 27, 2024 aft., adjourned*), 903 (*Mar. 27, 2024 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 920-24 (*Mar. 28, 2024 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2024 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on March 28, 2024; SA 2024 c1]

Bill 15 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2024 (\$) (Horner)

First Reading — 841 (*Mar. 25, 2024 eve., passed*)

Second Reading — 863-68 (*Mar. 26, 2024 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 893-99 (*Mar. 27, 2024 aft., adjourned*), 901-04 (*Mar. 27, 2024 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 924 (*Mar. 28, 2024 aft., passed*), 920 (*Mar. 28, 2024 aft.*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2024 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on March 28, 2024; SA 2024 c2]

Bill 16 — Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (Nally)

First Reading — 935-36 (*Apr. 8, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1127-32 (*Apr. 17, 2024 aft.*), 1248-53 (*Apr. 24, 2024 aft.*), 1279-82 (*Apr. 25, 2024 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1456-60 (*May 14, 2024 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1490-92 (*May 15, 2024 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 16, 2024 aft.*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2023 c7]

Bill 17 — Canadian Centre of Recovery Excellence Act (Williams)

First Reading — 959 (*Apr. 9, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1156-61 (*Apr. 18, 2024 aft.*), 1272-79 (*Apr. 25, 2024 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1361-67 (*May 8, 2024 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1464-66 (*May 14, 2024 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 16, 2024 aft.*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2023 cC-1.5]

Bill 18 — Provincial Priorities Act (Smith)

First Reading — 993 (*Apr. 10, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1122-27 (*Apr. 17, 2024 aft.*), 1209-17 (*Apr. 23, 2024 aft.*), 1253-60 (*Apr. 24, 2024 aft.*), 1329-34 (*May 7, 2024 aft., adjourned on amendment*)

Bill 19 — Utilities Affordability Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (Neudorf)

First Reading — 1177 (*Apr. 22, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1344-48 (*May 7, 2024 aft.*), 1400-03 (*May 9, 2024 aft.*), 1455-56 (*May 14, 2024 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1460-64 (*May 14, 2024 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1492-96 (*May 15, 2024 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 16, 2024 aft.*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2023 c8]

Bill 20 — Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (McIver)

First Reading — 1271 (*Apr. 25, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1374-82 (*May 8, 2024 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 21 — Emergency Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (Ellis)

First Reading — 1394 (*May 9, 2024 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1508-19 (*May 16, 2024 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 22 — Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2024 (LaGrange)

First Reading — 1447 (*May 14, 2024 aft., passed*)

Bill 201 — Alberta Health Care Insurance (Access Fees) Amendment Act, 2023 (Brar)

First Reading — 90 (*Nov. 2, 2023 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 114-25 (*Nov. 6, 2023 aft.*), 234-37 (*Nov. 20, 2023 aft., reasoned amendment agreed to on division; not proceeded with*)

Bill 202 — Education (Class Size and Composition) Amendment Act, 2023 (Chapman)

First Reading — 209 (Nov. 9, 2023 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 237-46 (Nov. 20, 2023 aft.), 358-64 (Nov. 27, 2023 aft., defeated on division; not proceeded with)

Bill 203 — Foreign Credential Advisory Committee Act (Dyck)

First Reading — 111 (Nov. 6, 2023 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 364-70 (Nov. 27, 2023 aft.), 479-86 (Dec. 4, 2023 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 730-43 (Mar. 18, 2024 aft., passed)

Third Reading — 805-12 (Mar. 25, 2024 aft., passed on division)

Royal Assent — (Mar. 28, 2024 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on June 28, 2024; SA 2024 cF-16.5]

Bill 204 — Municipal Government (National Urban Parks) Amendment Act, 2023 (Lunty)

First Reading — 332 (Nov. 23, 2023 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 486-92 (Dec. 4, 2023 aft.), 649-58 (Mar. 11, 2024 aft., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole — 812-17 (Mar. 25, 2024 aft.), 938-48 (Apr. 8, 2024 aft., passed on division)

Third Reading — 1059-66 (Apr. 15, 2024 aft., passed on division)

Royal Assent — (May 16, 2024 aft.) [Comes into force May 16, 2024; SA 2023 c5]

Bill 205 — Housing Statutes (Housing Security) Amendment Act, 2023 (Irwin)

First Reading — 510 (Dec. 5, 2023 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 658-62 (Mar. 11, 2024 aft.), 948-50 (Apr. 8, 2024 aft.), 1066-71 (Apr. 15, 2024 aft.), 1178-81 (Apr. 22, 2024 aft., defeated on division; not proceeded with)

Bill 206 — Child and Youth Advocate (Parent and Guardian Advisor) Amendment Act, 2024 (Cyr)

First Reading — 917-18 (Mar. 28, 2024 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 1181-90 (Apr. 22, 2024 aft.), 1294-1300 (May 6, 2024 aft., passed)

Bill 207 — Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Education (Valuing Skilled Workers) Amendment Act, 2024 (Hoyle)

First Reading — 1152-53 (Apr. 18, 2024 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 1300-09 (May 6, 2024 aft.), 1417-20 (May 13, 2024 aft., defeated on division; not proceeded with)

Bill 208 — Psycho-Educational Assessment Access Act (Hayter)

First Reading — 1359 (May 8, 2024 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 1420-29 (May 13, 2024 aft., adjourned)

Bill Pr1 — St. Joseph's College Amendment Act, 2023 (Sigurdson, L)

First Reading — 289 (Nov. 22, 2023 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills), 421 (Nov. 29, 2023 aft., reported to Assembly; proceeded with)

Second Reading — 455 (Nov. 30, 2023 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 515 (Dec. 5, 2023 aft., passed)

Third Reading — 530 (Dec. 5, 2023 aft., passed)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 7, 2023 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on December 7, 2023; SA 2023 c14]

Bill Pr2 — Community Foundation of Medicine Hat and Southeastern Alberta Amendment Act, 2024 (Justin Wright)

First Reading — 918 (Mar. 28, 2024 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills)

Bill Pr3 — Providence Renewal Centre Amendment Act, 2024 (Calahoo Stonehouse)

First Reading — 918 (Mar. 28, 2024 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills)

Bill Pr4 — Rosebud School of the Arts Amendment Act, 2024 (Petrovic)

First Reading — 918 (Mar. 28, 2024 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills)

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