



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, May 22, 2024

Day 55

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

First Session

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

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Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)
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Boitchenko, Andrew, Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Boparai, Parmeet Singh, Calgary-Falconridge (NDP)
Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)
Brar, Gurinder, Calgary-North East (NDP)
Calahoo Stonehouse, Jodi, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
Chapman, Amanda, Calgary-Beddington (NDP)
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
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Eremenko, Janet, Calgary-Currie (NDP)
Fir, Hon. Tanya, ECA, Calgary-Peigan (UC)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., ECA, Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)
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Ip, Nathan, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP)
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(UC)
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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC),
Deputy Government Whip
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)

Party standings:

United Conservative: 28

New Democrat: 38

Independent: 1

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Grant Hunter	Parliamentary Secretary for Agrifood Development
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Chelsae Petrovic	Parliamentary Secretary for Health Workforce Engagement
Scott Sinclair	Parliamentary Secretary for Indigenous Policing
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Deputy Chair: Mr. Rowswell

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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Boparai
Cyr
de Jonge
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Deputy Chair: Mr. Long

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Ellingson
Hunter
Ip
Lovely
Rowswell
Sabir
Wright, J.

Select Special Ethics Commissioner and Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee

Chair: Mr. Yao
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Dach
Dyck
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Chair: Ms Lovely
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Boitchenko
Long
Lunty
Metz
Petrovic
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Tejada

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

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Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Sabir
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Haji
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Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Mr. Rowswell
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Al-Guneid
Armstrong-Homeniuk
Dyck
Eggen
Hunter
McDougall
Sinclair
Sweet

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 22, 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.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore has a school to introduce.

Ms Al-Guneid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you grade 6 students from the Calgary Jewish Academy in the beautiful riding of Calgary-Glenmore. Please rise and get the warm reception of the Assembly.

Mr. Stephan: Mr. Speaker, today is a good day to introduce students from Red Deer Escuela Vista school, learning the great language of Spanish. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Slava Ukraini. The students from St. Theresa Catholic school are here visiting, grade 6 students and their teacher. It's a Ukrainian bilingual program, with students that are here settled from Ukraine. So please offer them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour and a pleasure for me to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House my guest, Conrad Sauvé, president and CEO of the Canadian Red Cross, as well as Thu Parmar, vice-president for Alberta and Northwest Territories. The Canadian Red Cross has been a pillar of support in Alberta, aiding with Ukrainian evacuees, Syrian refugees, COVID-19 response, Fort McMurray fire, floods as well as southern Alberta floods. I am honoured to have been a volunteer for the Red Cross. I would like my guests to please rise and be recognized by the Assembly.

Mr. Sinclair: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you some amazing people who joined us here today, people who helped on my campaign: Colten, Sonya, and Travis and, last but not least, his son, James, who is another Indigenous athlete like myself, who I'm cheering for and very, very happy they're here. Please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. the chief government whip.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to rise today and introduce to you and through you Mrs. Uresha Patel. Uresha is an

exemplary entrepreneur who has set up a wellness brand called Soul to Soul, and supports women aspiring in their own franchise.

I also notice a couple of other folks here. I've got Michelle, and I've got Darwin, and I've got Sarah and friends. Would you also please stand up and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Ip: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Stephen Tsang and his family: daughter, Megan Tsang, and wife, Brenda Chan. Stephen is a respected community leader, acupuncturist, calligrapher, and public servant. He is the past president of the Edmonton Chinese bilingual association and long-time volunteer and organizer in Chinatown and across the city. Please rise to receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose.

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to rise today and introduce to you and through you the Garvi Gujarat Association of Canada. The organization has been making significant contributions to the community for several years. Their executive team has joined us today, led by Rakesh Patel. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Chamber.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to rise today and introduce to you and through you my guests from the Calgary-East constituency: Ricardo Asencio, Alejandra Hernandez, and Andrea Hernandez. I ask them to please stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

Mr. Ellingson: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Guru Nanak Free Kitchen, serving Calgary and area since September 2022, with almost 500 meals to people every Sunday: Jaspreet Parmar, Sandeep Singh, Lovedeep Singh, Gagandeep Singh, Avninder Singh, Saroz Khunkhun, Lakhbir Singh, Gurcharan Singh. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier and the minister of public safety.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you with us today two representatives from the American Public Works Association Alberta chapter. Michelle Tetreault chairs the North American Emergency Management Committee, and Darwin Durnie is the former Canadian Public Works president. Today I ask these colleagues to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod has an introduction.

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to rise today and introduce to you and through you, Mr. Ashok Patel. Mr. Patel is one of the founders of Garvi Gujarat Association, and the East Indian diaspora, which this association represents, is one of the fastest growing communities in Edmonton. Mr. Patel, please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my dear friends, Doug Caswell and Al Simmons. Mr. Caswell is a Queen's platinum jubilee medal recipient, a great Albertan, and above all else, my dear friend. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Dr. Elmeligi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you my two favourite Albertans and without whose love and support I wouldn't be here today, my mom, Christine Elmeligi, and my husband Justin Doherty. They for sure think all my questions are the best. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Lundy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you a good friend of mine, Cole Kander. I know that Cole is also friends with many of my colleagues. Most importantly, Cole was my campaign manager last year during the election. I'd like to thank him for his hard work and dedication and ask him to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

Premier's Attendance at Alaska Sustainable Energy Conference

Ms de Jonge: Mr. Speaker, Alberta is the land of economic opportunity, and our province continues to build vital partnerships with jurisdictions around the world. We have learned many times that our province cannot be solely reliant on the federal government to explore new horizons and develop new partnerships for our province. That's why our Premier went to COP 28 this past year to share with the world Alberta solutions to global energy challenges.

This past weekend the Premier travelled to Anchorage, Alaska to attend the Alaska Sustainable Energy Conference. Alberta and Alaska share a number of priorities, and we are always interested in looking at ways we can partner on our common goals like establishing economic corridors for energy and transportation. We are both advancing the energy solutions of tomorrow, and we know we have to create the conditions for a diverse energy mix, one that includes everything from oil and gas to carbon capture utilization and storage to small modular reactors to renewables. Our mutual years of technological innovation and industry expertise means we will continue to capitalize on opportunities to support the energy market of the future.

During this trip the Premier forged new alliances and partnerships with key stakeholders within government, industry, and Indigenous communities, including with Alaskan Governor Mike Dunleavy as they discussed ways we can increase business ties and leverage our mutual expertise in energy production. While the federal government continues to scare away investment and create economic uncertainty, Alberta's government under the leadership of our Premier continues to form new partnerships because we are determined to make the most of our economic opportunities for the benefit of all of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I'm excited about what the future holds for Alaska and Alberta as we build upon this crucial relationship.

Thank you.

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

Government Policies

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After five years of this UCP I can say that we have never seen a government quite like this one. And while I still wouldn't dream . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. The hon. members will know of the long-standing tradition of members' statements being able to be delivered uninterrupted.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has a statement to make.

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, after five years of this UCP government, that still hasn't learned the rules of the House, I can say that we have never seen a government quite like this one. And while I would not dream of breaking into song, to paraphrase the great Marvin Gaye, I just have to ask: what the heck is going on?

Let's recap what happened in just one week over at the government benches. We have a member opposite organizing an antiscience event, supported by the Premier, full of quacks, discredited doctors, and so much misinformation the event promoter website refuses to sell tickets to it. We just can't wait to see – this government is so entitled that they cannot wait to get out of this House and run roughshod over our local municipal governments.

1:40

It's a government that wants to ensure that the UCP ideology gets funded at universities after five years of defunding those same universities. It's a government led by a Premier who was found to have broken the Alberta ethics laws and then turns around and appoints her own former employee, a UCP partisan, as the next Ethics Commissioner. We have a government demanding praise for stepping in after abandoning patients left in motel rooms by a bad-faith provider. If they hadn't ignored the warnings in the first place or the complaints, those same patients would have never ended up in motels. We have a government led by Wildrosers, who are so entitled they hand over taxpayer dollars to their friends and insiders with such ease you would easily confuse them with the four-decades-old PC dynasty that they had once claimed to oppose.

Mr. Speaker, all of this chaos while the Alberta advantage is slipping through this government's hands. People are paying more, earning less, and falling further behind. Albertans deserve better than this ongoing, entitled UCP trainwreck. Albertans deserve a better government.

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 1:41.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Workers' Compensation Board

Mr. Bouchard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When Albertans go to work in the morning, many take it for granted that they will return home without injury. Unfortunately, it's not always the case, and workplace injuries have the potential to profoundly impact workers' and employers' lives. When an incident does occur, Alberta's Workers' Compensation Board, the WCB, steps in to provide benefits, programs, and services to help injured workers return to work and support them during their recovery. While the WCB reports to the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade for administrative and accountability purposes, the WCB is an arm's-length, independent body making independent decisions in compliance with the Workers' Compensation Act.

This is no small task. In 2023 alone the WCB received more than 128,000 new claims, of which over 90 per cent were accepted. Despite this workload the WCB staff have done an amazing job, with an 86 per cent client satisfaction rating, and have made significant progress in reducing medical review and appeal timelines and improving the overall responsiveness of the workers'

compensation system. When disagreements arise, workers have options and resources, including to escalate to a manager or a supervisor, the Dispute Resolution and Decision Review Body, the Fair Process Review Centre, and the independent Appeals Commission.

At the same time we recognize that no system is perfect. This week the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade met with injured workers to hear their experiences, concerns, and recommendations on how to further improve the WCB. Injured workers and employers deserve service that is respectful, fair, and timely. Our government is committed to delivering just that and on ensuring that injured workers have a voice in the continuous improvement of our workers' compensation system.

Hospital Discharge Policies

Ms Goehring: Mr. Speaker: you aren't heroes for fixing a problem you created. This was an e-mail that was sent to the office of the minister of seniors and the Minister of Health over the motel medicine debacle that unfolded under their watch, a situation that saw 27 people left in motel rooms instead of getting the care that they were promised. A stroke patient was left at the Leduc Travelodge in a room that didn't accommodate his wheelchair, where he had difficulty accessing the washroom, and where he was fed fast food. It was a horrifying situation but one that we didn't need to witness.

We learned that in January those ministers were warned that the provider wasn't meeting basic needs or medical needs of the people under their care. Their offices organized calls, developed a response that involved telling those involved that they couldn't help but told them to call 211. Then we had the farce of a blame game with one minister passing the buck to another, and we know that this wasn't the only complaint. The family of a man under the care of this same provider stated that they had been raising concerns for over a year. Over a year.

The UCP aren't heroes. If they had done their job, maybe no Albertan would have ended up in a motel disguised as a care home. But who could forget how the Premier campaigned for the leadership of the UCP, claiming that motel rooms would be a more appropriate place for long-term patients? But while the UCP start up the blame game again, they should go back and read that e-mail. The sender has some sage words. To quote them now: once the dust settles and you all finish blaming each other, maybe you can ensure Albertans don't fall through the cracks that the UCP have created. True words, Mr. Speaker. Albertans deserve better.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka has a statement to make.

Ponoka Stampede

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas, cowboy Christmas maybe. For Albertans, this really gets under way with the Ponoka Stampede, slated for June 25 to July 1. With nearly a million dollars in prize money, this year's top cowboys and cowgirls will give their all for nearly 90,000 fans cheering them on.

This will be the 88th consecutive edition of the annual event, going back to 1936, although the event's history reaches further back, into the '20s. As many previous MLAs have pointed out, the Ponoka Stampede is much more than one of the five largest and best run rodeos on Planet Earth. It's also a major tourism draw, a rural cultural celebration of our shared history, and a family tradition that truly pulls together our community.

Earlier this month I had a chance to meet the best of the best chuckwagon drivers at the Stampede tarp auction. This included

Chanse Vigen and his crew, who are coming off an incredible year. Chanse won his first world championship as a driver as well as three shows, including Ponoka, where he swept all six first-place day monies, breaking a 62-year record in the process. The son of Mike Vigen and grandson of legend Ralph Vigen, Chanse and his team understand the importance of preparation. Chuckwagon championships are won in the off-season, when horses are selected and trained. They're also won over a span of decades as parents raise their children to love and cherish their animals.

The organizers of the Ponoka Stampede certainly know the importance of preparation, especially the recruitment of volunteers. This year's event will rely on the hard work of about 800 sets of helping hands from the local region and across Alberta. These folks know the value of giving back to the community and preserving our western heritage.

On behalf of this Assembly I want to recognize the efforts of all those who support the Ponoka Stampede, making it the best event of its kind in North America.

Thank you.

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

Provincial Immigration Programs

Member Brar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every single person in this Chamber had a different journey to get here. My journey started as an international student hoping to come to Alberta to build a life for myself and my family, a dream shared by many who want to come to this province. Unfortunately, international students in Alberta are going through a very tough time with limited resources. There is currently a massive backlog in the provincial nomination program as thousands of postgraduation work permit holders are waiting for months to get their nominations. Timelines change without notice, and the rules can change at any time with no warning.

Despite Alberta's need for skilled workers the UCP failed to secure an increase in immigration quotas and paused immigration programs. Now many who used to have a clear path to residency are looking into visitor visas or applying for asylum or as refugees, and there are some who try to exploit these struggles through selling illegal LMIs. Delays mean postgraduation work permits for international students are expiring, leaving them with limited options after they have already paid three times the fees of local students.

Other provinces have taken proactive steps to negotiate with the federal government to increase quotas and extend work permits. This government's inaction on immigration and provincial nominations shows complete indifference to the livelihoods, dreams, and aspirations of people seeking opportunities in Alberta. These are people who are working hard to contribute to our economy and give back to their community.

It is time for this government to treat people with dignity and respect, take action on immigration backlogs, build a better nomination system to promote talent and secure Alberta's future prosperity, and show appreciation for those people who want to live and work in this province.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to provide oral notice of Government Motion 41, sponsored by myself, which reads as follows:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 22, Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in

second reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Education Funding

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, in the last five years Alberta schools have had to deal with growing enrolment, inflation, and increasingly complex classrooms, but according to a report by the Calgary board of education the UCP has not increased per-student funding since taking over from our NDP government. The ATA says that "the Government . . . is failing a generation of students through its chronic underfunding of public education," and they are correct. To the Premier: what will it take for her government to reverse course on their attack against our public education?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we know that the last five years have seen a lot of turmoil in our province. First of all, we had year after year, quarter after quarter of people leaving this province under the former government, and then we had two years' worth of COVID, where we had a lot of disruption in school. We did not see the number of people coming into our province. Yeah, we ended up with a surprise last year, 200,000 people coming into our province, and as a result we have now increased our funding for education to the highest level it's ever been, \$9.3 billion.

Ms Notley: Well, in direct contradiction to those assertions, Mr. Speaker, quote: in fact, funding per student has not yet returned to the levels last seen in 2018-19. That's not me. That's the board of education from Calgary. The board now has to dig deep into their reserve fund to make up for a \$2.6 million deficit that the UCP has created for them. To the Premier: while enrolment is pushing our schools over capacity, why is she underfunding them to the absolute breaking point?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Calgary board of education is projected to be funded to the tune of nearly \$1.4 billion this year when it comes to operating funds. That's an \$85 million increase next year, and they have chosen to supplement that from their reserves. They've got \$16 million in reserves. In fact, we've got school boards with over \$600 million in reserves across the 66 school boards, and this is what it's for, to be able to identify short-term pressures and be able to address them on their own, and they have the means to do so.

Ms Notley: Six years of underfunding is not a short-term pressure, Mr. Speaker.

Now, the Premier needs to stop patting herself on the back and get a grip on the reality of her government's record: schools that have been announced but not built, massive cuts to students with individual learning needs, and the lowest per capita funding in the country. To the Premier. The facts, the numbers, the outcomes are undeniable. When will she step up and focus on something that's actually her job, funding the education of the next generation of Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The funding formula we put in place was to be able to provide stability to the various school

boards when they were facing decline in student enrolment, and it worked. Then, with the disruption that happened during COVID, they actually received more money on a per capita basis, a per-student basis, which allowed them to increase their reserves. As I mentioned, their reserves are up over \$600 million right now. We have done additional amounts to be able to address enrolment pressures, additional amounts to address mental health pressures. We will be building schools, so there'll be additional investment in both capital and operating.

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

Ms Notley: The lowest funding in Canada.

Government Contracts

Ms Notley: Now, while the Premier is playing keep-away when it comes to public education, Alberta students could get more funding if they were part of the Premier's insiders club. Along with the minister of energy she gave her close friend and former Wildrose Party president, David Yager, over 200,000 taxpayer dollars in sole-source contracts without competition or transparency. To the Premier. She has called sole-source contracts alarming, appalling, and a danger zone. Do those descriptions not apply when it's her entitled cronyism?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We followed the same rules the NDP did when they were in government. In 2016 the NDP awarded a \$500,000 sole-source contract to a former B.C. NDP MLA to support a legal case. I guess there weren't any lawyers available in Alberta. At the time the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, who was the Deputy Premier at the time, said, "A sole-source contract isn't a bad thing if you're picking the best person to actually move forward with the contract." I can tell you that Dave Yager is the best person: over 50 years of experience in upstream oil and gas; a long-time writer and commentator; founder, executive director of many businesses. He's the right man for the . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Notley: Most importantly, he's the Premier's good, good friend.

Now, in addition to the \$260,000 to Mr. Yager for unexplained services and unreleased reports, the Premier gave her leadership campaign manager over \$140,000 in sole-source contracts, Preston Manning got a quarter-million-dollar, no-bid contract, and a former Conservative staffer got one for \$50,000. To the Premier, who once said, "When you sole source, taxpayers get ripped off," why is it that she's entitled to rip off taxpayers?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, to quote the members opposite, "A sole-source contract isn't a bad thing [when] you're picking the best person to actually move forward with the contract." Unlike what they did when they chose Tzaporah Berman to be on the oil sands advisory group, who compared the oil sands to Mordor; or Karen Mahon, also on the oil sands advisory group, who roped herself to a Kinder Morgan barge to protest Trans Mountain; or Ed Whittingham with the Energy Regulator, who advocated for policies that killed Energy East, we are choosing people who move Alberta forward, not backward, like the members opposite. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Ms Notley: None of those people got the hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars this Premier is giving away.

Now, the Premier herself once said: there's just no way for you to have the competitive tension that keeps prices down if you only have one provider. To the Premier. We don't agree on much, but we once agreed on the high cost Albertans were paying for Conservative Tory land cronyism and entitlement. Why does she now think she's entitled to her own entitlements and the same Tory land cronyism?

Ms Smith: A long-time Saskatchewan NDP cabinet minister hired for lived experience advice: \$25,000 to Pat Atkinson. Mr. Speaker, look, we can justify every person who we hire by this government because, to quote the members opposite, we are making sure we are "picking the best person to actually move forward with the contract." [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a small number of cases being able to identify the best person for the job quickly to be able to move forward on what it is that we need to achieve is what we do from time to time. We followed all the same rules that the members opposite did, and we're going to very rarely use this, but we're going to make sure . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to ask another question, she can do so now.

If not, we'll proceed to the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Al-Guneid: The Premier and the energy minister once opposed the old Tory land style of politics and cronyism. In 2015 the energy minister stated that he was afraid of a PC government being re-elected, but after only a few years this government is acting with the entitlement and the arrogance of the 40-year-old PC government. On Friday the UCP revealed that their own former Wildrose Party president, David Yager, was awarded yet another \$136,000 for a sole-source contract. Can the minister inform the House what professional services he'll be providing for this massive paycheque?

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, I always like getting questions from the NDP about credentials and qualifications and resumés. I often have seen all the NDP appointments; what you need to be able to do is hold a placard and protest things that mean a lot to people. Now, we don't hire those people anymore for expertise, advice. What we hire are the best people for the job. Mr. Yager: well, he's the best person for this job. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Ms Al-Guneid: What are the professional services?

This isn't the first time the Premier has awarded David Yager big bucks, previously over \$140,000 in no-bid contracts. Two of those contracts were for secret reports that Albertans can't get their hands on. Now she's handed over \$136,000 from her own office that he did not have to compete for. The energy minister as a Wildrose leader vowed to, quote: limit this type of sole-source cronyism across government. Will the minister remember his old promise? What changed his mind about giving . . .

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

Mr. Jean: *From Miracle to Menace*, Mr. Speaker. Now, you may think I'm talking about the NDP win to come to this place and form government, but I'm not. I'm talking about one of the best books that has ever been written on oil and gas, and you know who that book was written by? David Yager. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

2:00

Mr. Jean: I'd like to start again, Mr. Speaker, because miracle to menace really does describe the NDP government when they came to power.

But the truth is that Dave Yager is an excellent author. He's a writer, Mr. Speaker, with 50 years of experience in oil and gas. Albertans, oil and gas experts have been reading what David Yager has written for a long time. He gets it right. He's the best person for the job.

Ms Al-Guneid: The Premier's campaign manager received hundreds of thousands of dollars in no-bid contracts. Her pal Preston Manning got hundreds of thousands in a single no-bid contract. The Premier's former caucus mates and now her former party president have been handed hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars. The energy minister once said that contracts like these, quote, smell of corruption and cronyism a hundred per cent. Will the energy minister explain the speed of his transformation from idealistic Wildroser to Tory land insider?

Mr. Jean: Well, I never took that transition, Mr. Speaker. What I did do was live through four years of NDP rule, and that was a disaster.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that with 50 years of experience Mr. Yager went from rig hand to manager to owner to service industry expert. He is a person that actually gets the job – and the leaders opposite are correct. He did take a pay cut to take this job for the government, and we appreciate his public service. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar will come to order. So nice to have you close.

Gaza Protests and Law Enforcement Response

Member Hoyle: Mr. Speaker, it's been more than 10 days since university officials called in riot police to evict peaceful student demonstrators from our two largest university campuses. Students and their families deserve answers and accountability. The Minister of Advanced Education said in this House on two occasions that ASIRT has started its investigation, but ASIRT has not released any information about it. Has the government launched an ASIRT investigation into the disproportionate police response, and if not, why not?

Mr. Ellis: You know, Mr. Speaker, I know it's difficult for the members opposite to understand, but we actually don't interfere with independent organizations. ASIRT is an independent organization. I know they want us to interfere. They don't know. They come . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, ASIRT certainly has this file, they're conducting their preliminary investigation, and the work is well under way. We have to trust the process that ASIRT is going through right now.

Member Hoyle: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Advanced Education knows she has the power to launch an additional investigation into why universities and their boards of governors called in the riot police on peaceful student demonstration. But to this point she has chosen not to do so. Student advocacy has been the cornerstone of free speech in this province. Other examples of this didn't have riot police called on them. But here students calling for a more peaceful world did. Why won't the minister use her power to launch her own investigation?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, as the minister of public safety just mentioned, an ASIRT review has been launched, and that was precipitated on concerns that were brought about by community members. If any more information comes to light which requires further investigation, we will take appropriate action.

Member Hoyle: Mr. Speaker, the calls for accountability and justice from our postsecondary institutions continue. In an open letter from Black faculty members at the U of A, professors say that the riot police deployed on student demonstrators are "a violation of the University's stated commitments to equity, diversity, and inclusion." The minister should be very concerned to hear professors call this out. Will this minister actually listen to concerned faculty members, take accountability for upholding their commitments, and ensure free speech is protected on our campuses?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, of course freedom of speech is constitutionally enshrined and is protected, and we uphold those freedoms of freedom to protest, the freedom to demonstrate. I have read the letters from faculty, and that is why this ASIRT review was launched. Of course, universities do have the right to enforce their standard protocol. They have done that, the review has been launched, and if there's anything that comes forward that requires additional investigation, we will undertake that investigation.

Oncologist Recruitment

Dr. Metz: Mr. Speaker, according to the Alberta Medical Association it takes, on average, up to 13 weeks to be assessed by a radiation oncologist and up to eight weeks to be assessed by a medical oncologist in Alberta. The target is four weeks. Forty per cent of the top five cancer surgeries are performed outside the recommended target times. There are not enough oncologists, and compensation is not competitive with other provinces, particularly B.C. Delayed cancer treatment may lead to death. What is the minister doing to correct this situation?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a cancer survivor myself – I've had eye cancer – I know how important it is to get timely diagnosis and timely treatment. Right now I know from the CPSA that the number of oncologists in Alberta did grow by 33 per cent, from 107 on March 31, 2015, to 142 on March 31, 2024. Currently we have 17.2 FTE cancer Alberta physicians that have been recruited, with various start dates, and we're going to recruit more.

Dr. Metz: Given that the college registration website does not reflect working oncologists – only 17 new oncologists were actually recruited over the last five years, and most replaced others; we actually have only five more oncologists than we had in 2018, and most of them are not here yet – given that the Alberta population has increased by at least 9 per cent during this period, that is not

enough. We also need to increase health funding to hire more oncologists and the teams that work with them. What does the minister plan to do to get life-saving . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is ongoing recruitment, as I indicated, and also there are ongoing negotiations with all of the oncologists that the member opposite has mentioned. In fact, we have three oncologists that have already started or will start by June 1. We also have five additional starting in July 2024, another four in August, another three in September, one in October, one in January 2025, and two others currently awaiting licensure before they can start. We are going to continue. B.C. was way behind us, and that's why they need 60 more. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity is the only one with the call.

Dr. Metz: Given that all of those people mentioned that are coming are replacements except for the total of five new since 2018 but given also that there's no additional treatment space in the Cross Cancer centre and that the Stollery, which is at the same site, will eventually move out and maybe make space for Cancer Care and their teams, what does the minister plan to do to provide treatment space, and will the minister acknowledge that Edmonton actually needs the south Edmonton Hospital to provide care space?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite just don't want to listen to the facts, but the fact is that we are hiring more oncologists. We are actually hiring. It actually will be a net gain of 7.7 new FTE positions. We're going to continue to recruit because by the CCA, which is Cancer Care Alberta, by their own site, they only have 4.9 vacancies that they haven't recruited into. We're going to continue to make sure that we get people into those positions. We're continuing to work with the U of A and the U of C to make sure that we have more students in those much-needed spaces. This is an ongoing process, and we're going to continue to . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie has a question.

Social Studies Curriculum

Mr. Dyck: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Having a strong education system is vital for the success of our province, and our government is committed to ensuring that every student has the support they need to thrive academically so they can step into life after school with confidence. This is being done not only by making record investments into the education system but by developing a curriculum that will modernize the education system to fit the needs of today while empowering students to chase their dreams. To the Minister of Education: how will this new draft K to 6 social studies curriculum set students up for success?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The new draft K to 6 social studies curriculum is ready to be piloted. It'll help set students up for success in a number of different ways. First and foremost, it'll ensure students learn and develop a robust understanding of history. Currently our content does not include a lot of historical information, so that's being updated. In addition,

the updated curriculum will strengthen critical thinking skills, which are essential to students' lifelong success. There are more changes, but those are the main ones.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the new draft K to 6 curriculum will build students' critical thinking skills while empowering them to be engaged citizens and given that the content in the new draft curriculum will help students build their understanding of diversity across Canada and across the world, including learning about the history, contributions, and perspectives of First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and francophone communities, and given that this is content and material that is important to teach province-wide, to the Minister of Education: how widespread will the piloting of the new draft K to 6 social studies curriculum be?

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm excited to update the House and announce that we've received expressions of interest from 51 school divisions across the province to help test and pilot the new K to 6 social studies curriculum. The piloting process is incredibly important because, of course, it will allow teachers to test the curriculum in our classrooms. The piloting will commence in September 2024 and run the duration of the school year. We'll be collecting information as we go through that school year to see where we can make additional modifications.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Dyck: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that 51 school authorities from across the province have put themselves forward to pilot the curriculum and given that this includes francophone, public, separate, First Nations, and charter school authorities and given that the minister will be supporting these school authorities by providing flexibility in piloting and given that teachers also play a key role in the piloting, to the Minister of Education: how will this government ensure teachers have the supports they need to pilot the draft curriculum?

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, there are a number of things that we're doing to help ensure that teachers have the support that they need to pilot the new curriculum. Budget '24 sets aside \$23 million to help support piloting and curriculum implementation. In addition, resources are available online to assist teachers that choose to pilot. As well, other professional development opportunities are available to teachers to help ensure that they can pilot with success.

Seniors and Cost of Living

Ms Sigurdson: Calgary currently has the highest rate of inflation among major Canadian cities. Alberta seniors all over the province continue to struggle with paying for their daily necessities. It is long overdue that the UCP takes action to alleviate this crisis. Will the minister explain why this government is doing nothing to address the affordability crisis seniors are facing in our province?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. This government is actually taking action. A lot of the action that we're doing right now is actually cleaning up that hon. member's mess when she was the minister of seniors, where they invested in no affordable housing, invested in no capital maintenance or renewal when it came to seniors, raised the rates when it came to seniors. The hon. member has asked me to table my budget. I already did when it passed the Legislature, and unfortunately the NDP voted against it. It had a record amount of

spending for seniors. So I think that speaks for itself when it comes to which side of the Legislature is standing with seniors. We're going to continue to stand with the people that built our province.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that we invested \$1.2 billion in affordable housing when the NDP was government and that this government has only put in a quarter of that and given that seniors are struggling to make ends meet and given that seniors of all financial backgrounds are having to cut back on food purchases, especially fresh produce, as the price of essential goods doubles and given that seniors who are renting or are paying mortgages are seeing skyrocketing bills and may become precariously housed or houseless, why is this government so unwilling to help seniors afford costs of living in this province?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the entire time the NDP was in government, they struggled to build a thousand homes in four years. I announced that many in the last week on behalf of this government. We continue to build homes. We've invested in our lodge program. We've increased our rent supplement program. We continue to stand with seniors in our community with large investments that can make sure that they remain in our communities, in the communities that they built. We're going to continue to do that going forward, and we will not be lectured by the opposition, who abandoned the seniors of Alberta.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that the Calgary Kerby Centre has never had a food assistance program in 150 years until now and the need has continued to exponentially grow in the last few years under UCP watch and given that seniors are seeing skyrocketing grocery prices, mortgage payments doubling, and rent increasing astronomically and given that seniors say that their bills continue to grow but their incomes stay stagnant, why isn't the UCP offering solutions to seniors to get through this affordability crisis?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, this government increased Alberta's senior benefits to \$600 million in budget '24-25, again, something the hon. member voted against. It's pretty clear that the NDP don't want to get resources to seniors, but that's okay. Seniors don't need to worry. There's a Conservative government in power in Alberta. We continue to invest unprecedented amounts, lower senior payments. The NDP kept raising senior payments inside the province for everything from medical appointments to drivers' licences. We lowered them all, and we're making life easier for seniors each and every day. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Homelessness Initiatives

Member Irwin: Too many people are being lost. That's the conclusion of Homeward Trust's community plan to prevent and end homelessness in Edmonton. The latest data reports 3,262 unhoused Edmontonians, the highest number on record. More than 300 people died last year on our streets, the highest number on record. Between 600 and 700 people are newly entering homelessness every month in our city, the highest number on record. These are real people, not just numbers. They are Albertans. They are our neighbours. And they deserve dignity, safety, and respect. How can the UCP ...

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

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the NDP fought against our plan to remove people from encampments, because

we knew that was dangerous, where they were being sexually abused, where they were being assaulted, where they were being victimized by gangs. We took action with our partners, with the Edmonton Police Service, set up our navigation centre, took down 700 dangerous encampments. Over 1,200 people have been through that navigation centre, over half of them have been housed, and 97 per cent of those individuals remain housed today. We reject the NDP's philosophy when it comes to keeping people in tents in this province, and we will move forward with our plan.

Ms Gray: Point of order.

Member Irwin: Let's talk about Calgary. Given that in 2023 436 unhoused Albertans, tragically, died on Calgary streets, more than double the previous year, and over 115,000 Calgarians are at risk of homelessness right now – so many Calgarians are panicked, desperately trying to avoid homelessness as their rents skyrocket as high as Toronto levels – and given that so many reach out for help, seeking subsidized housing or rent supplements, only to find they get added to a wait-list that's over 7,000 names long, what does this minister have to say to the hundreds of thousands of Calgarians frantic for some . . .

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

Mr. Nixon: What I have to say, Mr. Speaker, is: don't worry; we're not going to follow the NDP philosophy that you saw in Toronto and Vancouver that has made more people homeless, that has resulted in a 10 per cent decrease in construction in Toronto, a 30 per cent decrease – you know what's taking place in Calgary? An increase of 64 per cent, the highest amount of houses being built in the history of the province, the most building permits ever put forward in the history of the province, and CMHC has said that Alberta is the only bright spot anywhere in the country because we're taking real, concrete action to make sure Alberta remains affordable and all Albertans have a home.

Member Irwin: Let's try rural Alberta. Given the sharp increase in homelessness under the UCP, many rural communities are scrambling. In the past two years in Cold Lake the unhoused population increased from 10 people to 195. Leduc saw a 60 per cent increase in their houseless population last year, and in Strathmore shelters are running at overcapacity. Why won't the minister recognize homelessness is a policy failure of his government, and what will he do now, immediately, to address this growing problem across our province, including in rural communities?

2:20

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to hear the hon. member found rural Alberta. I've been waiting for the NDP to know where that was for a long time. Again, we've invested more money than any government in history when it comes to homeless shelters in this province, not just in urban; also in rural . . .

Member Irwin: Yeah. Because there are more homeless people than ever.

Member Ceci: Bully for you.

Member Irwin: Nothing to be proud of.

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. The hon. member had her opportunity to ask a question. It's reasonable, whether you like the answer or not, for the minister to be able to answer it.

The hon. the minister.

Correction. One moment. A point of order was noted at 2:18, the Official Opposition House Leader, and also now at 2:21.

The hon. minister has 20 seconds remaining in his answer.

Mr. Nixon: The hon. member says that there is nothing to be proud of, Mr. Speaker. She can be nothing further from the truth. This government is proud to invest in proper emergency shelter services across the province to care for people, unlike the NDP, who were fighting to keep them in temporary structures, where they were freezing to death and being victimized. Shame on them. We'll continue with our plan.

The Speaker: Members, the opportunity to catch a breath before we call on the hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Farm-restricted Class 1 Driver's Licence

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government recently announced significant changes to class 1 driver training and licensing by introducing a new made-in-Alberta learning pathway for commercial drivers. This change includes the introduction of a farm-restricted class 1 driver's licence that commenced on April 1. It is crucial to ensure clarity and understanding among our farming communities on these new changes. Can the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors provide more details on how the new farm-restricted class 1 driver's licence will relieve pressures on Alberta farm families?

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

Mr. Dreeshen: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock for his advocacy for farmers. Working with him and so many United Conservative members, we did create a new learning pathway to help train and license class 1 truck drivers in Alberta. Now, this new pathway will ensure that the right training at the right time with the right vehicle is actually happening here in the province, and we will ensure that Alberta truckers are the best trained in the country. We also understand the unique realities of our farmers, and that's why we are exempting farmers and their family members from any type of prelicensing requirement to help alleviate the trucking pressures in that industry.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the exemptions provided by the new farm-restricted class 1 driver's licence for eligible farmers and their immediate family members, including their exemption from the mandatory entry-level training, MELT, program, and given that this government is committed to ensuring the safety of our roads, can the same minister explain the steps this government has taken to ensure that these exemptions to MELT do not compromise the safety of our roads?

Mr. Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, driving is a privilege unless, perhaps, you're the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, who's been relegated to Nenshi's driver.

Ms Gray: Point of order.

Mr. Dreesen: The new farm class 1 driver's licence will allow farmers and their families to operate a class 1 licence only within Alberta and only for farm-authorized purposes. Now, this new driver's licence will alleviate pressures on Alberta farm families by exempting them from preclicensing requirements. Traffic safety is a top priority for the Department of Transportation and Economic Corridors, and that is why we've limited this restriction only to farmers and their families.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:24.

Mr. van Dijken: Given that Alberta's agricultural sector plays a crucial role in the province's economy and given that the farm-restricted class 1 driver's licence for eligible farmers and their immediate family members will be greatly beneficial to our farming communities and further given that these changes aim to help address concerns around trucking shortages impacting farms and ranches, can the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation explain how these changes will benefit Alberta farmers, help to mitigate the concerns about trucking shortages, and positively contribute to our agricultural sector?

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

Mr. Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for these great questions. Now, farming is challenging at the best of times, and transportation is just one of the many hurdles that Alberta farmers and ranchers face. Now, providing Alberta farm families with a new class 1 licence designation will help alleviate financial pressures, time constraints, and, ultimately, reduce trucking shortages. This is a huge step forward in ensuring a healthy agricultural supply chain that feeds families here and across the globe. This Premier, this government recognize the vital role that farmers play in growing our province, and we will continue to support them.

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

Rosebud Race Track Environmental Approval

Dr. Elmeligi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are coming together to address our current drought through water-sharing agreements, voluntary use reduction, and water conservation, but our government isn't following suit. Recently this government's Environmental Appeals Board and the minister approved a contentious auto race track in the Rosebud valley. Even though wetlands are widely recognized as significant solutions to drought and flood, the 425-acre construction site for the race track will fill in two wetlands and modify three others. Why is the minister allowing precious wetlands to be drained for a private race track?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas.

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do want to walk through the process of what occurred in this situation. The original approval for this project was back in 2022 and, of course, was subject to Environmental Appeals Board hearing throughout 2022 and 2023. After conducting the hearings, the EAB amended the approval to include further wildlife monitoring back in March of 2024. There is a clear review process in place. It has worked successfully in this case. Many of the concerns raised by this appeal fall outside of the Environment and Protected Areas jurisdiction, and we would encourage those folks to reach out to their municipality.

Dr. Elmeligi: Well, given that the area where the race track will be constructed is critical habitat for endangered bank swallows, which Alberta is legally required to protect, given that one of the biggest population threats to bank swallows is vehicle collisions and there may be some of those associated with the race track, given that the appeals board refused jurisdiction to protect this habitat, ruling that the Species at Risk Act is not within the director's or the board's jurisdiction to ensure compliance, given that provincial lands are managed by the province and the UCP keeps telling the feds to stay in their lane, whose job is it to protect critical habitat for species at risk?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas.

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, in 2020 my department did issue a Water Act approval that included mandatory measures to protect nearby wildlife and wetlands. The appeal board upheld that decision and added additional monitoring to protect the environment even more. The Environmental Appeals Board, obviously, is an independent board. They reviewed the merits of this case, and when it came to this raceway project, they did amend the approval to include further wildlife monitoring to address and assess potential impacts on wildlife near this proposed development.

Dr. Elmeligi: Well, given that monitoring a drained wetland is kind of a waste of time and given that local residents' opposition is abundant and they question the robustness and transparency of the decision-making process, leading more Albertans to distrust this government, given that impacts to a drained wetland cannot be mitigated or monitored because the wetland isn't there, given that the race track requires 11 million taxpayer dollars to build the access road to a private business and given that the minister talks about balancing the environment and economy yet this development balances nothing, can she explain how this project with abundant negative environmental, economic, and local impacts can even be permitted?

Ms Schulz: Mr. Speaker, once again, back when this decision was made, that Water Act approval did include mandatory measures to protect nearby wildlife and wetlands. Any time we look at a project that comes to our department, we absolutely have to look at impacts of economic growth and development as well as protecting and upholding our environmental standards. That is what the process does. Then the Environmental Appeals Board conducted a hearing on the merits and concerns within this raceway project. They did amend the approval to include further monitoring, and we respect the decision of that independent board. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Electric Power Prices

Mr. Long: Mr. Speaker, electricity prices remain volatile as Albertans are still feeling the effects of the reckless policies of the NDP when they were in government. Members opposite refuse to take ownership of the idiotic – sorry, ill-advised coal power phase-out that has left Alberta subject to rolling outages and record-high prices. Accelerating the phase-out of the six youngest plants, replacing them with less reliable renewable substitutes hiked costs for consumers. Can the Minister of Affordability and Utilities explain what this meant for the energy bills of hard-working Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.
2:30

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP's accelerated coal phase-out not only cost Alberta taxpayers over \$2 billion, but it made life more expensive for every single Albertan. By reducing the number of reliable power generators, the NDP enabled economic withholding, leading to price spikes on power bills, and their lack of planning led to transmission and distribution costs skyrocketing. If Albertans are wondering why their utility bills are so high, they need look no further than the NDP's mismanagement of the electricity system.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Long: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister. Given that electricity prices are a constant cost for Albertan households and given that Alberta's growing population will need more power to keep the lights on and families warm, given that a growing economy will need more power to grow businesses and enterprises, given that most Albertans are unaware that for every megawatt of solar and wind getting paid to be on the grid, ratepayers are paying reliable energy sources to be on standby, can the same minister please explain how this government is going to promote reliable and predictable sources of power in this province?

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

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My top priority is to ensure that Albertans have reliable and affordable electricity for generations to come. With Alberta's competitive tax system, our unique deregulated electricity market, and our government's commitment to reducing economic barriers, Alberta continues to attract investment in the electricity system. As of February 2024 we have nearly 3,000 megawatts of reliable natural gas power plants under construction, which is enough to power roughly 2 million homes.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Long: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister. Given that this government recently passed Bill 19, the Utilities Affordability Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, and given that electricity prices surged last year, causing financial strain to households across the province, and given that the Alberta NDP still scream, "You've had five years; just fix it," showing they really have no clue how an electrical system and market actually work and the damage they caused, can the Minister of Affordability and Utilities please explain to the House how Albertan utility bills will be impacted now that Bill 19 has been passed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the excellent question. By passing Bill 19, our government is lowering and stabilizing local access fees on Albertans' electricity bills. The average Calgary family will save \$145 per year in local access fees alone, and for those on the default electricity rate: those families will save \$937 per year from their power bill. By making these changes, our government is making life more affordable for Albertans today and for whatever may come in the future.

Drug Poisoning Death Prevention

Mr. Haji: Mr. Speaker, newly released data from the province's substance use surveillance system reveals disturbing statistics.

Opioids claimed the lives of 1,867 Albertans in 2023. This is about five deaths per day, the highest number on record. These figures represent not just numbers but real people: our friends, families, neighbours whose lives have been tragically cut short. Albertans are dying. When will this government recognize the gravity of this epidemic?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, I believe every single life lost is a tragedy, in Alberta or anywhere, when it comes to loss because of addiction. The truth is we recognize the gravity of it, and the response that we have taken has been one of compassion and one of hope, one that recognizes the dignity of every single human life, which is why we're recognizing that there are only two outcomes to addiction, tragically, either recovery or death. We have chosen to help all we can to get Albertans into recovery to make sure that they don't pass away. We are taking as many steps as we can, investing at record levels.

Mr. Haji: Given that approximately 70 per cent of opioid-related deaths occur alone in private residences and the ministry launched the DORS app three years ago, given that Albertans are informed that the app was to allow Albertans using opioids or other substances to summon emergency assistance if they become unconscious, given that during Public Accounts last week the department confirmed that over three years only 165 individuals used the app for emergency response, will the minister agree that Albertans are dying and this app is not effectively addressing the problem?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, of course, I understand that our families and our community members are passing away from the disease of addiction. The DORS app is one of many tools at their disposal, including looking at options like the virtual opioid dependency program, that has 8,000 Albertans on any given day getting services. We have hundreds of Albertans who have now entered the doors of the recovery centres in Lethbridge and Red Deer, with nine more to open up in direct partnership with Indigenous, who are disproportionately affected by this tragedy. It's not one size fits all. It's anything that gets somebody into recovery as the only outcome that saves them from the tragic outcome of death when it comes to addiction. We will continue on that hopeful path.

Mr. Haji: Given that it's deeply concerning that this government has not responded to the public health emergency with the urgency that this crisis demands, given that the rising death toll clearly indicates that the current measures are inefficient and given that enhanced supports for the full spectrum of addiction and mental health services and stronger community outreach programs are needed now, will the minister commit to supporting comprehensive, full-spectrum mental health promotion, prevention, and treatment services rather than focusing on a limited ideologically driven approach?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, let me translate what the member opposite is asking for. If they're asking for harm reduction measures, we have many in our system. What we oppose and will always oppose is decriminalization and safe supply of drugs from government dollars, dumping high-powered opioids onto the streets of Alberta and across the country. [interjections]

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

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, members opposite don't like it when we speak truth to their position, their policy position, which is to . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. What I rarely hear is government members yelling at the top of their lungs when they hear something they disagree with. I think it's reasonable for the minister to make a statement, that people might disagree with, without a massive amount of volume coming from those who disagree with him.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, they will oppose our policy and me speaking in this House every time I rise because we speak hopeful opportunity to the addiction crisis, and they speak to a policy that brings carnage and death to the streets. We oppose safe supply. We always will. Full stop. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The only one with the call is the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Arts and Culture Funding

Member Ceci: Thank you. Cuts to postsecondary school budgets have had a severe impact on programs for fine arts like theatre and particularly dance. Unintended or perhaps the intended consequence of the UCP cuts has been the underfunding of postsecondary education for students who wish to study in the arts, like performance, dance, and theatre, in Alberta. This government has failed to meaningfully support the arts and artists. Who could forget the UCP thinking that adding an artist to the economic council was a joke? Will the minister apologize to the arts community for the impacts of years of UCP postsecondary funding cuts?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, I have said many times in this House that we have provided significant funding to postsecondary institutions, particularly through targeted enrolment expansion as well as base operating grants. I'm in constant touch with the board of governors as well as postsecondary presidents to talk about their funding needs. Again, I will stand by what I'm saying, that we do have sufficient funding in the postsecondary sector.

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

Member Ceci: Thank you. Given that we're at risk of losing our brightest and future cultural workers who wish to pursue dance, for instance, to other provinces like B.C., Ontario, and Quebec, where they form lives away from their families, given that, despite the UCP brags, the community is still feeling the impact of UCP cuts over many years and given that the UCP, even with this year's bump to the AFA budget, will still not reach the Alberta NDP AFA 2018-2019 funding level of \$31,510,000, what is the minister doing to push back against this government's several-years-long shortfall to AFA funding?

The Speaker: The hon. the minister of arts and culture.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'm not sure if the member opposite is more confused before he didn't read the budget or after he claims he read the budget.

Ms Gray: Point of order.

Ms Fir: This government will have record-level AFA funding by the 2026-2027 budget year, record-level funding, higher than the members opposite ever did, not to mention the largest cultural infrastructure project in Canadian history in Arts Commons, which, I might remind the member, is in his riding. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Member Ceci: I guess it's 2026 today, is it?

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

A point of order has already been noted.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

2:40

Member Ceci: Thank you. Given that this government has made life harder for students now facing higher education costs, higher life expenses, reduced services, and fewer fine arts opportunities and given that in addition the UCP is now attempting to control the research and thought that occurs on campuses with their gatekeeping Bill 18 and given that many are worried about the impact Bill 18 will have on free speech, will the minister of arts please confirm that she will oppose any further cuts and attacks on the arts community coming from this government? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

For the benefit of members the clock, which generally indicates the conclusion of question period, has expired although there was a malfunction in the bell.

The hon. minister does have 35 seconds to respond.

Mrs. Sawhney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our postsecondary partners are very valuable to us. We have been doing significant engagement with them around Bill 18. We've talked about exemptions, and I can tell you there is support around this proposal in terms of talking about these exemptions for tricouncil funding. We are going to be undertaking more formal engagement over the summer, and all of our partners are very keen to partner with us and talk about what those regulations will look like.

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

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Are there tablings? The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Ms Renaud: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I have a tabling for the Member for Edmonton-Decore. It's actually from the St. Albert *Gazette* by Brett McKay, local journalism initiative reporter, entitled Alberta's Bill 21 Would Confuse and Complicate Emergency Response: RMA. This is dated May 13, 2024.

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

Member Irwin: Thank you. I'd like to table five copies of a letter from Edmonton public school GSAs of M.E. LaZerte high school, Steele Heights school, and Londonderry school. The Member for Edmonton-Decore and I had the opportunity to meet with these students, and I promised them that we would table this letter. I urge the Premier and the UCP members to read this letter.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington.

Ms Chapman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of today's front-page article, *Calgary Herald*, CBE to Pull \$2.6M from Reserves. It highlights just how full and what a crisis situation CBE is facing in education right now.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that brings us to points of order. For the benefit of all members I would like to provide notice to the

Assembly that the Speaker is displeased. I hope that you'll govern yourself accordingly during points of order.

That being said, I received a message from the hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors. He'd like to make a statement.

Mr. Dreeshen: In retrospect, Mr. Speaker, in comments that I made in question period, if Nenshi does win the NDP leadership race, I don't think any NDP . . .

The Speaker: Hang on. Whoa. Whoa. Whoa. If the statement is anything other than a basic apology, we will provide the opportunity for the points of order to be debated, which we now will do. I'm not sure if I was clear when I said: the Speaker is displeased; please govern yourselves accordingly.

At approximately 1:41 the Government House Leader rose on a point of order.

Point of Order Allegations against a Member

Mr. Schow: Withdraw.

The Speaker: This is a point of order. You cannot make accusations, whether it's in a member's statement or during a question, which is exactly what happened. The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West can apologize and withdraw.

Mr. Eggen: I apologize and withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.

That brings me to my second point of order, when at 2:18 the Official Opposition House Leader rose on a point of order.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rose on a point of order because the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services said something to the effect of: I reject the NDP's policy when it comes to keeping people in tents. This language has been debated in this House, and as I understand your previous rulings, suggesting that the NDP policy is for people to live in tents is unparliamentary and not fitting in this place. I raised this as a point of order, and I look forward to your ruling.

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the time noted, I did not hear the exact wording of the minister of community and social services. I know that you have provided caution on this specific language, but without the exact wording I wouldn't be able to comment. I do leave it in your hands to determine if it was, in fact, a point of order.

The Speaker: I do have the benefit of the Blues, and I am prepared to rule. The hon. Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services said the following. "We reject the NDP's philosophy when it comes to keeping people in tents in this province." At the time when this particular language was ruled out of order, I think the hon. Speaker went to great length to speak specifically to the language that was ruled out of order, and that was that the NDP or any facsimile of members' offices, the NDP, et cetera, et cetera, want people to live in tents. What the minister didn't say was that, and while he is certainly moving in the direction of the language that was specifically ruled out of order, which is that people want

to live in tents, what he said was "when it comes to keeping people in tents," which isn't what was ruled out of order. This isn't a point of order. However, I'll continue to caution the minister. There's lots of language to use which won't create disorder. This did to a small degree today.

That brings me to a point of order at 2:21, when the hon. the Government House Leader rose during question period.

Point of Order Insulting Language

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At 2:21 I did rise on a point of order. While the minister of community and social services was answering a question posed to him by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, I believe off the record the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood said something to the effect of: you're such a dork . . .

Member Irwin: I did not say that.

Mr. Schow: . . . or such a jerk. That is what I believe I heard. But, again, it was off the record. I know that you have a hard time ruling on things you didn't hear yourself, but I do believe that if, in fact, the member did say that or something to that effect, it would be a point of order under 23(h), (i), and (j).

The Speaker: The hon. the Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, I did not hear a heckle like that, but I have just now heard my member say that she did not use language like that in this House. I don't believe this is a point of order, but I also did not hear the exact language.

The Speaker: I do have the benefit of the Blues, and I am prepared to rule. Well, I can confirm that according to the Blues the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood did not say what the hon. Government House Leader has made the accusation of. What I could say, though, is that the Blues do have a significant number of other things that the Speaker would consider to be unparliamentary, including making accusations of "Nothing to be proud of," making accusations about bullying. Hon. members should choose to use parliamentary language, whether it's on or off the record. In this case the accusations made by the hon. the Government House Leader were not accurate. However, I think the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood did use some unparliamentary language, but I'll consider this matter dealt with and concluded.

We are now at point of order 4. The hon. the Official Opposition House Leader.

Point of Order Insulting Language

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Under 23(h), (i), and (j), specifically (j), "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder," and quoting from *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, chapter 13, page 623, specifically "personal attacks, insults and obscenities are not in order." I rise on this point of order because at that time the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors, in response to his own member's question, said – and my quote is rough – I believe: the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud relegated to be Nenshi's driver. No pun intended: the minister chooses to insert a drive-by smear of a colleague in this Chamber, needlessly hurling insults in an

unparliamentary way, beneath the decorum that we expect from our colleagues here. I believe that he should apologize and withdraw. This was completely unnecessary and does a disservice to the Chamber.

2:50

The Speaker: The minister of transportation.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I apologize for my earlier response to you. Again, I was commenting on a social media post in which Nenshi himself refers to that member as his driver, but understanding that even though that may in the public sphere be okay, it's not parliamentary here in this House. I do withdraw and apologize for that comment.

The Speaker: I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

At 2:39 the hon. the Official Opposition House Leader rose on a point of order.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Ms Gray: Thank you very much. Under the same standing order and quote from chapter 13 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. At this time the Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women, in response to a question from the Member for Calgary-Buffalo – and I do not have the benefit of the Blues, Mr. Speaker, but what I heard was something along the lines of: “I’m not sure if the member opposite is more confused before he didn’t read the budget or after he claims he [did] read the budget.” She continued to reference him around his riding, and I was not clear if that was an insult, but truly calling the Member for Calgary-Buffalo confused: in this case I took that to be an insult. I thought it was unparliamentary. I was certainly unimpressed with the minister’s response to what I thought was a reasonable question. But I do not have the Blues, and I look forward to your ruling.

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would disagree. I believe that this is a matter of debate. On many occasions members on this side of the House have said to the members opposite, “You haven’t read the budget,” and of course they have also replied by saying, “Have you read your own budget?” This is pretty typical banter back and forth in this Chamber. I don’t think it’s a point of order. I don’t think it was a personal attack so much as a comment as to the nature of the questions coming from the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, which would suggest that the member has not read the budget given the funding that we are putting towards the arts in the province.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others who wish to add any additional information to such point of order?

I do have the benefit of the Blues, and I am prepared to rule. The hon. minister of arts and culture said the following. “Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I’m not sure if the member opposite is more confused before he didn’t read the budget or after he claims he read the budget.” A point of order was called. “This government will have record-level . . .” She continued to go on. Because of the hon. the Opposition House Leader’s comments with respect to her noting his riding, she does go on at the very end of the question to say “in his [own] riding.”

Hon. members, while I’ll provide some caution to the hon. the minister of arts and culture with respect to direct accusations or

otherwise, suggesting that a member is unsure, confused, didn’t read something I think is something we hear on many occasions here inside the Assembly. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo: there’s significant evidence in the Blues of his conduct as well in this same Chamber today. Also, you know, during that very point of order while the Speaker was providing guidance, he insisted on additional interjections. These sorts of things are likely to create disorder. I’ll provide caution to the minister, provide some caution to the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo. This is not a point of order. I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

Hon. members, I will make my own apology particularly to the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West. As it turns out, the Speaker himself has on occasion been frustrated here inside of the Assembly. I let that frustration get the best of me when I required the hon. member to apologize and withdraw for something that the hon. Government House Leader had previously withdrawn. I shouldn’t have taken such an aggressive approach to the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West, for which I apologize. I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.

We are at Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day Government Motions

Time Allocation on Bill 18

37. Mr. Schow moved:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 18, Provincial Priorities Act, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. the Government House Leader has moved Government Motion 37. This is a time allocation motion, and pursuant to Standing Order 21(3) a member of the Official Opposition may respond for up to five minutes to the government motion. I see the Official Opposition Deputy House Leader has risen.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak against this motion because Bill 18 has only been debated for 17 minutes in the committee, and here comes government with the hammer and time allocates this bill for one hour at this stage on an important piece of legislation that changes, alters the way universities receive or apply for funding. It’s a gatekeeping bill that interferes with the academic freedom of postsecondary institutions. The government has faced opposition not just from us but from universities, from academia, and across the province. That’s the reason that they are bringing this heavy-handed motion to curtail debate in this House and silence the opposition. That is unacceptable.

This government, the UCP government, has used time allocation motions more than all the governments combined in the history of this province; I believe it’s the 46th or 47th time that they have used this motion. The reason they are using it is that this is a government that wants to centralize power in cabinet at all costs by limiting the debate and by also limiting the role of this Legislature, by limiting the right of elected representatives of Albertans to debate important matters that come before this Legislature.

I think all members of this House have an obligation to stand opposed to such heavy-handed tactics that curtail debate and that limit the role of this Legislature. As we have seen throughout this session, that government is all about centralizing power, be that Bill 18, be that Bill 20, be that Bill 21. This is yet another example how

government is trying to control every decision, even the right of MLAs to speak on the bills that are brought before this Legislature.

So I urge all members of this Legislature from all sides to oppose this motion and to stand up against this heavy-handed government tactic that has now become government's modus operandi to curtail debate, to limit the role of this Legislature, to limit the role of elected representatives of Albertans in this House. This is unacceptable, and I urge all members to think about what you were sent here by Albertans to do and vote against this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 37 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 2:59 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Johnson	Sawhney
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Jones	Schow
Boitchenko	LaGrange	Schulz
Bouchard	Loewen	Sigurdson, R.J.
Cyr	Long	Sinclair
de Jonge	Lovely	Singh
Dreeshen	Lunty	Stephan
Dyck	McDougall	Turton
Ellis	McIver	van Dijken
Fir	Nally	Wiebe
Getson	Neudorf	Williams
Glubish	Nicolaides	Wilson
Guthrie	Nixon	Wright, J.
Horner	Petrovic	Yao
Hunter	Pitt	Yaseen
Jean	Rowswell	

Against the motion:

Boparai	Elmeligi	Loyola
Ceci	Goehring	Pancholi
Chapman	Gray	Renaud
Dach	Ip	Sabir
Deol	Irwin	Schmidt
Eggen	Kasawski	Shepherd
Totals:	For – 47	Against – 18

[Government Motion 37 carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 20

Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2024

[Debate adjourned May 8: Mr. Ip speaking]

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Government Motion 35, agreed to on May 21, 2024, not more than one hour shall be allotted to further consideration of Bill 20, Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, in second reading.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West had 10 minutes remaining should he choose to use it.

Seeing none, are there others wishing to join in the debate? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak in favour of several initiatives outlined in Bill 20. As with many pieces of legislation, this bill is fairly wide-ranging. Most of it isn't exactly the stuff that blockbuster action movies are made of. It deals with various changes to both the Local Authorities Election Act and the Municipal Government Act. Sadly, there are no Hollywood producers lining up for the rights to such a thriller. If we're looking for debate and drama, media headlines suggest we should cut to the scenes involving the introduction of political parties into some municipal elections. This is an important issue, and it does warrant attention, but for my part I want to focus on a much more important theme: public trust.

Bill 20 proposes several amendments that are designed to help restore public trust in our democratic institutions. This is vital because our democracy cannot thrive without public trust. When I talk to people outside of this Chamber, good folks who are more likely to go to the movies than watch our debates, it's clear that public trust is faltering. Faith in the voting process, whether it's federal, provincial, municipal, or within our political parties, is on the decline.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

Our job as the stewards of our democratic institutions is to look for ways to restore public trust. To keep elections free and fair, the public rightly demands certain standards be met. First of all, the principle of one person, one vote is nonnegotiable. Secondly, voter anonymity must always be maintained. And, thirdly, voters expect an accurate count conducted through a secure system specifically designed to prevent fraud. Even the appearance of fraud is enough to mortally wound public trust.

The concept of a stolen election may make for a good disaster movie, but in practice it just makes for a disaster. When it comes to voting, it's hard to beat the tried-and-true process of marking paper ballots and dropping them into a secure ballot box. Sure, we hear the odd story about bad actors attempting to influence the paper-and-pencil system, but for the most part such attempts are readily apparent and easily detected. It's difficult to hack a paper-and-pencil election. It may be boring, but when it comes to elections, boring is good. It's when we periodically try alternative systems that we get into real trouble. Electronic voting systems in particular have proven expensive, inefficient, frustrating for voters, and easy for hackers to target.

3:20

For the public, fraud is a significant concern. In recent years hackers have demonstrated their ability to sabotage virtually every kind of electronic voting system to change votes. Furthermore, they've demonstrated the ability to launch cyberattacks that spread from machine to machine like a computer virus. In fact, by selectively targeting individual polling locations, hackers can influence elections without changing a single vote. Doing so electronically is actually much easier for them than orchestrating a ballot shortage or, as we saw once in New Jersey, causing a local traffic gridlock by closing a bridge. Now, there's a movie we don't want to see here. Now, with the introduction of AI – and let me be clear, as some of this conversation circles around rural Alberta, that I am referring to artificial intelligence – there are limited guidelines surrounding its proper use, and paper ballots are even more important, hey, Mr. Speaker?

When it comes to the threat that hackers pose, you don't have to believe me. You can read the testimony of technology experts given to the U.S. Congress, or you can watch hackers do it in real time at the annual Def Con hacker convention in Las Vegas. Hacking is now a multibillion-dollar industry. Highly sophisticated organizations are

stealing identities, targeting credit cards, and launching ransomware attacks on a daily basis.

The idea that they can do all this but choose to leave electronic voting machines alone is dangerously naive. Yes, some electronic systems work better than others, but as far as our constituents are concerned, there are no electronic systems superior to the paper-and-pencil method. It brings to mind the famous quote by Sir Winston Churchill, one of my favourites, and I will paraphrase: democracy is the worst form of government except for all those other forms that have been tried. The same might be said of our voting system.

The bottom line is that voters do not trust electronic voting machines, and banning them from the electoral process in Alberta is a good move. That's why I'm glad to see that Bill 20 formally bans the use of electronic tabulators in municipal elections. In fact, I believe similar changes should also be introduced to eliminate any future use of electronic voting systems in general elections, by-elections, Senate elections, referendums, and recall votes.

The other change I strongly support in Bill 20 is the limit with regard to third-party advertising. Under Bill 20 third-party advertisers who are interested in plebiscites must register and report finances. Most importantly, only Albertans, Alberta companies, and Alberta unions may contribute to issues-based third-party advertisers. Why is this important? Because Alberta elections belong to Albertans. They do not belong to eastern Canadian or American interests, and they certainly do not belong to well-heeled global elites.

Bill 20 also seeks to build public trust in other areas, from mandatory criminal record checks for candidates and better rules for vouching. This is especially important in rural Alberta, where there can be up to three and even more variations of a residential address. For example, a box number can appear as a mailing address, but the county may identify you with the legal address while your driver's licence may reflect the blue sign number with range road or township road. All addresses refer back to the same residents and all are valid, yet if there is inconsistency with any of them on a voting day, a voter may be denied the right to vote.

Bill 20 will allow for vouching of addresses to ensure this inconsistency is mitigated. My 90-year-old friend George was prohibited from voting in the last provincial election because his driver's licence address did not match the address on the voter registration list. Although there were many neighbours there vouching for George's place of residence where he had lived most of his life, it wasn't good enough, and he was left bitterly disappointed when he made such an effort to exercise his democratic right to vote yet was denied. Bill 20 will make sure George and others in a similar situation will be able to cast their vote in the next election.

These are positive steps, and none should be viewed through the lens of partisanship. Rather, my hope is that these changes can be a jumping-off point for more efforts to restore public trust in our democratic institutions. While Bill 20 almost exclusively deals with changes to municipal legislation, there is plenty of room for improvement within other legislation. For example, Bill 20 seeks to limit foreign money in third-party advertising municipally, and this amendment would also be beneficial in provincial legislation. Also, Bill 20 doesn't deal yet with the shortcomings in Alberta's Recall Act, which sets unworkably high thresholds for launching the recall process.

There should ultimately be two goals in mind. First, an effort needs to be made to standardize the rules, contribution limits, and financial disclosure regulations in all voting processes. Secondly, changes must be designed with an eye to improving transparency and keeping all elected officials accountable to Albertans. Voters

want their elected officials to put representation first. Public trust in our institutions is lost when voters get the sense that their elected officials are working other agendas. I believe Bill 20 reflects the need to rectify this at the municipal level, and I hope future legislation will do so at the provincial level. Let's call that one a Bill 20 sequel, and I'd buy tickets for that show.

At the end of the day, I'm well aware that most of the media headlines on Bill 20 will concern matters maybe that I didn't directly address today, and that's okay. The minutiae of our electoral processes isn't exactly the stuff of blockbuster cinema. Vin Diesel won't be tackling campaign finance reform in *Fast & Furious 11*, and I'm not just saying that because my husband's name is Dwayne Johnson.

Mr. Kasawski: Are interventions allowed?

The Acting Speaker: If you wish.

Mrs. Johnson: Yes. Gladly.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka. I just have a question with regard to voting machines. How do hackers tamper with voting machines that are not connected to the Internet? I don't understand how that would happen.

Mrs. Johnson: Neither do I; I'm not a hacker. But if you go to the Def Con convention, you could probably learn it there. I thank my colleague for his intervention.

I can't think of a more important issue facing our institutions than rebuilding public trust. That's why I will be voting in favour of Bill 20, and that's why I hope all of you will join me in encouraging the government to return to this Assembly with a sequel.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Any other members wishing to speak? The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in the brief time that we have left to speak on Bill 20, the Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2024. I say "the brief time," yet this is the first time I've had the opportunity to speak to this bill. It is an enormous bill with an enormous impact on local democracy, and it is, I believe, a big travesty of the processes of this House that we have been limited in our debate time. There's so much to cover with respect to the concerns that this bill has arisen, not just with the media, as the member previously has mentioned, but actually with those who are elected at the local level to represent all of our constituents, because we are also represented by local municipal councillors.

Those folks who are at the heart of the local issues affecting ourselves and our constituents every single day have spoken with a near unanimous voice in opposition to Bill 20 and to express the concerns that essentially the UCP government is saying that they are entitled to make decisions for local decision-makers, that they are the ones who are in a better position, that they are able to better determine what their local constituents need, that they are the only ones who are able to do that.

It allows for this government to overturn municipally passed bylaws, bylaws, by the way, that go through processes which are quite vigorous, for those of you who have attended city council or town council meetings, that have passed through that process by individuals elected through the democratic institutions that we've established through legislation. Those bylaws have value and merit

and represent the interests of those constituents, yet we're hearing that the UCP government and their cabinet believes that they know best. Not only that, of course, Mr. Speaker, but Bill 20 allows for municipal councillors to be removed at the whim of the cabinet. All of these things would be happening in secret behind closed doors.

It's not only municipal leaders who are saying this is undemocratic, but it is also Albertans. I've been knocking on my doors in my constituency, and this topic continues to come up. Nobody asked for this. This was not part of the UCP's election platform. In fact, just like with everything else, Mr. Speaker, there are numerous examples of the Premier herself saying differently and saying that she believed in the value of locally elected municipal councillors and mayors and reeves and that more decisions need to be made on a local basis. But there's always a video. There's always a video or a story, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to this Premier. She says one thing one day, and then she says another thing, and all of a sudden she's got the reins of power.

3:30

This is why we continue to highlight that Bill 20 is an example of how the Wildrose section of this UCP Frankenstein party has actually been consumed by the entitled, bloated, arrogant PC Party, which was all very uniformly rejected by Albertans in 2015, yet here they are now taking over and all of these UCP members standing up and saying, "We support Bill 20," when it absolutely contradicts the values and principles of what the Wildrose used to stand for, which was, you know, those individual rights, the local decision-making, grassroots. That's what they claimed to care about, but of course when they get power, they quickly become PCs all over again, Mr. Speaker.

So I'd like to introduce an amendment to Bill 20, and I'll provide that right now. Mr. Speaker, this amendment . . .

The Acting Speaker: Member, just wait till we have the amendment to the table and to myself before we proceed.

Okay. The amendment is in order, and it'll be referred to as amendment RA1.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The amendment reads, on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Manning, that Bill 20, the Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that neither the general public nor municipalities support the amendments proposed by the bill.

Mr. Speaker, this is pretty straightforward. It actually reflects what is generally public opinion right now, which is that, overwhelmingly, municipal councillors and Albertans have spoken out in direct opposition to Bill 20 for a number of reasons, the reasons that I outlined already, but also because none of this was consulted on. No municipal councillors – and I actually got to sit in on a couple of meetings. The Mid-sized Cities Mayors' Caucus: I've been to a couple of those sessions where I've heard the Minister of Municipal Affairs speak. He spoke at those leading up to the spring session, and at no time during that period of time did the Minister of Municipal Affairs indicate to those municipal councillors there that they were thinking of introducing legislation that would allow cabinet in secret, behind closed doors, without any light of day shone on it, to be able to remove a councillor or to be able to repeal a municipal bylaw. There were other discussions that happened. He did allude to the fact that amendments would be coming, but these specific amendments were not brought up.

Further to my own experience, we actually have the Alberta Municipalities, who represents 260 municipalities in this province, and the rural municipalities association, which represents 69 counties and municipal districts, who have all said that they were

not consulted, and had they been consulted, they would have spoken very clearly to say: this is an affront to democracy. How do we know that, Mr. Speaker? Because they've said that. We have example after example of locally elected officials from every part of this province, from Okotoks, Foothills county, High River, Grande Prairie, Diamond Valley, Red Deer, Calgary, Didsbury, Edmonton, Cold Lake, St. Paul, Bonnyville, all speaking out very emphatically to say: this undermines local democracy. Again, it's not just those locally elected councillors who are doing that; it's also those individuals, Albertans. Albertans are saying: "This was not anticipated. The Premier never campaigned on this. She never said this was going to happen."

Now, there are a number of pieces, Mr. Speaker, in Bill 20 that raise concerns for me. I just want to take an opportunity, because I know my colleagues will talk about other pieces and I may not get a chance to speak to this bill again, and I want to raise the issues that have been raised by Dr. Jared Wesley around the changes that this proposed bill make to vouching for ID for individuals who don't have photo ID. Essentially, what this does is that the amendments in this bill make it so that it will no longer be accepted in municipal elections that an individual can vouch for another person's identification when they don't have a photo ID. I want to raise this because this is a very small change that is another way that the UCP government is undermining democracy.

There's sort of an instinctive tendency, I understand, Mr. Speaker, for people to say, "Well, why wouldn't you be able to provide photo ID," right? We want people to be able to provide ID when they're voting, and I understand that. We want to make sure that, you know, we have good systems in place. But the reality is that we do have good systems in place. There's actually no evidence that anybody has falsely voted or has been misrepresented. There's absolutely no information that that has happened or that anybody has used fake IDs, as this is allowed, for breaches of voting rules. This is a problem that doesn't exist but that the government is trying to solve. Now, that may be, in and of itself, okay if they're anticipating a problem that doesn't exist. But this has a very real impact on vulnerable Albertans' ability to vote and to exercise what is a very democratic basic principle, which is being able to vote.

I just want to go through some of the information that Dr. Wesley has provided, that talks about who gets excluded when we say that we no longer will allow somebody to vouch for your identification and you're required to provide photo ID. The groups of people – and it ranges in estimates – in Alberta is between 10,000 to 50,000 Albertans that this would include, and it includes Indigenous people, members of visible minority groups, people experiencing homelessness, the elderly, low-income voters, people with disabilities, and people in rural areas. These are all folks who will have difficulty being able to vote because they don't have photo ID.

Now, it's not easy, Mr. Speaker, to just go out and get photo ID, particularly if you do not already have it. If somebody like myself, if I were to lose my ID, if I were to lose my driver's licence, for example, I'd be able to go to a registry. I live in a city. There are many registries close to me. I'd be able to get there. I'm lucky I have my own vehicle, or I'd be able to afford public transport. I'd get there, and I'd be able to provide several other pieces of documentation that would allow me to then get my photo ID. But the groups of people that I just talked about, those are people who don't already have all those pieces of identification.

I just went through this process with a close family friend, whose mother is trying to get access to some federal benefits and was struggling because she didn't have the right documents. It's very difficult to do that. It was time-consuming. She has language barriers, and she didn't understand a lot of the bureaucratic speak, and she wasn't able to provide that. Now, this was for something

different, but it was a very good example of how difficult it can be for somebody to get access to the right documentation.

The point is that all it does – again, I highlight that there is no historical problem with people being inappropriately vouched for. It requires two people to vouch, right? So you'd have to have a conspiracy, to some extent, in order to allow somebody to fraudulently vote. But this is something that creates an additional barrier. What happens, Mr. Speaker, when those groups of people that I just talked about, we make it harder for them to vote, is that their views and their concerns become less relevant and less important to the decision-makers. We've all heard people talk about: well, who are the people who get out and vote? You know, we always try to counsel young people to get out and vote as much as possible. We say: this is why it's so important that you have your voice heard, so decision-makers take your voice seriously. They need to do that. But when we exclude groups of people or create additional barriers for them to vote, it gives an excuse to some decision-makers to not listen to their voices, and they don't get to have their views expressed.

Let's be honest. I think we all can agree that being able to vote is perhaps one of the most fundamental rights that we have in this country, something that we are fiercely proud of. It might seem like a small thing for the government to say, "We're just going to remove this little piece," but it could potentially be impacting tens of thousands of Albertans from being able to exercise their right to vote. That's just one little piece that Bill 20 has snuck in.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to turn my time over because the government has imposed such limitations on our ability to speak. That is just one piece that I'm deeply concerned about. There are so many others, and for that reason, we should be passing this amendment to say: let's not read this bill a second time. We need to send this back because fundamentally it is flawed and Albertans do not support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Any others wishing to speak to amendment RA1? The Member for Edmonton-Meadows has risen.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in support of this very reasonable amendment. As my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud very effectively put her case, based on the information and based on the feedback that we are getting from Albertans across the province, this is the best thing to do right now, to not read this bill a second time. A lot of the government's own work and documentation shows that there was not enough work done when it comes to communicating with the stakeholders, with the very people that were going to be affected by the bill.

3:40

Bill 20 is part of this UCP government's set pattern. They have set this pattern since they took office in 2023. Every step of the way they look for distraction, how they can do something else other than focusing on the ordinary Albertan's priorities. By doing this, they have gone to the extreme. They want to control everything. When we say everything, that means everything, from top to bottom. They intend to dismantle our very institutions that have been there for centuries, serving the best interests of not only this province but all the other provinces in this country.

That is the reason that not only the big cities', the city of Edmonton and the city of Calgary, councils but also the majority of the municipalities in rural Alberta, from where the majority of the government MLAs come from – and not only that; the government always brags about the representation of rural Alberta. The majority of the rural municipalities and even the president of RMA, who

represents more than 260 municipalities, wrote against it and spoke against it.

This shows that no one, from big to small municipalities, is asking for this bill; rather, they're opposing it. When in February the Premier just talked about her intention to do this, our municipalities in this province reacted right away in March. Not only this; the government has its own survey that was conducted not long ago in 2022, where 70 per cent of Albertans opposed the idea of bringing this sort of bill where government and its cabinet have the powers to remove the elected officials from their office.

Moreover, I see that the government is pretty angry, and they have lost elections in two big cities. So they have been circling around things. They want to bring the party system into the municipalities. If that is not enough, they want to bring dark money back to politics again.

I remember talking to one of the PC MLAs in the past when corporations and unions were allowed to donate to their MLAs and political parties, and the annual donation was \$16,000 – \$16,000 – Mr. Speaker. That's what happened, like, historically, 40 years in the past: one party ruled. The governing party would have two, three, four donors, and the general public, ordinary Albertans, kind of started losing their interest in democracy. Even the voting percentage in those elections kept declining every step of the way. There was an election where their polling was less than 50 per cent, when their polling was around 40 per cent only. So that was a dangerous trend.

When the NDP government came in, they tried to address all those issues. This government wanted to step back, going not only back to the past but, heavy handed, wanted to control municipal politics, the way the local elected officials can make bylaws to address their local issues. The cabinet would have authority not only to overturn their decision-making but also to remove the elected officials from office.

This is not the bill that Albertans are asking to do something about right now. The government is doing this at the time ordinary Albertans are struggling with inflation, the affordability crisis, the housing crisis, wage stagnation, the slowest wage growth in the country, and also the highest inflation in the country, which this province is experiencing. That's impacting the everyday lives of Albertans. They struggle to put food on the table. They struggle to send their kids to schools.

You know, class sizes were about 20 to 25 students in a class when the UCP government took office in 2019. In the last five years that has increased to 40 to 50 students per class. Classes are combined together because there are not enough teachers in the schools, so one teacher has to take two classes. And not only that; the government fired 25,000 school staff by just a single tweet on a weekend. When they got public push-back, they said that they would be hiring back as soon as schools opened in the next school season, but that never happened.

So those are the real problems, what we hear from our constituents every single day. They are asking us about their kid not getting admission into the school next to their house. The school has full capacity. We are not building enough schools, we are not hiring enough teachers for the students in school, and our student funding is the lowest per capita funding in the country. On top of this, this is how this government is reacting to people's demand.

This government was elected just a year ago to address those issues, and those were not the only election issues. Bill 20 was not this UCP's election promise at all. The UCP hid their agenda from Albertans when they came into power. They are not focusing on Albertans' priorities but on their ideological agenda, where they want to control everything in their way. The way they are working: it's impacting everyday Albertans.

3:50

I also wanted to say for the record that this bill is very much against the mandate of the Westminster parliamentary process and procedures. It attacks democracy at large. Mr. Speaker, I do oppose this bill. I think that right now the best thing we can do: we can stop this bill right here and send it back to committee, where we can hear from Albertans and where municipalities, who are stakeholders in this, can give their proper feedback.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

The Member for Sherwood Park to speak.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on Bill 20, on the reasoned amendment brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. This bill needs to be taken back, taken out of this Legislature and returned to a part of the process where you consult and you reach out to stakeholders, where you reach out to voters and you find out: what is it that we can do to improve our democracy in Alberta? That's what we are talking about here.

I've learned so much from the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the most experienced member of the Legislature, on the iterative process of how to bring legislation into the Assembly. Apparently, the best way to do it is to write some legislation and then wait for the feedback. It's quite an iterative process, Mr. Speaker. It's been such a learning experience to watch this member in action on the best and highest way to bring legislation into the Assembly for debate.

What we've seen here is bringing forward legislation that no one expected and then fierce and very vocal opposition. You know, it's been interesting. It's been interesting to watch that member with the legislation. I would say, from the press conference when it was initially announced before a constituency break, that I wasn't sure that the minister was a hundred per cent supportive of the legislation, but as we have been asking questions of him throughout the last few weeks, he is more emboldened and more certain that this legislation is the right legislation.

But I would ask him to take a step back, look at this very reasoned amendment that we've brought forward. Let's take this legislation out. Let's take a breath. Let's look at the legislation. When we come to the debate on the legislation, I would refer to it as legislation that is full of the good, the bad, and the ugly. There is good that can be salvaged in this. There is bad or stuff I don't really understand. The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka was talking about voting machines. It's just not on the radar for my constituents. And there is ugly, where we are getting to the principles of our democracy and we are challenging the traditions and changing the traditions and creating a more authoritarian province.

I'll go to Hanlon's law, the adage: never attribute to malice that which can adequately be explained by thoughtlessness. There are things perhaps, when the minister brought this legislation forward, that were not thought of that are very good points that can't just be dealt with in regulation, that need to be dealt with in the Legislature and need to be dealt with in legislation. We need to decide: do we want cabinet to have so much power? Do we want to run our province where we have the provincial government trying to control everything everywhere all at once? Do we want to have a command-and-control system in our province? In general that's not good for business. I come from a background in business and free enterprise, Mr. Speaker, and democracy is core and fundamental to that. It's something that we all came to this Assembly through, something that we have great respect for but that this legislation does not show any respect for at the municipal level.

We want numerous voices in this province. We want to have multiple ideas. We want new ideas. We want innovation. We want municipalities to be entrepreneurial. We want in Calgary for them to try public transportation one way, find out if it works, and then let's see if it works in Edmonton or Red Deer. We need to have an iterative process in our ecosystem of municipalities. We want them to have ideas that are brought forward by their elected councillors. It's a key part of how our democracy works.

What Bill 20 is going to do is change it so that the accountability of elected officials doesn't go to the voters who put them in office, that we elect; it goes to the Premier and cabinet. It is not something I thought I would be doing when I ran for office, coming here to defend our democracy and our ability to have it operate well.

Something I want to also just bring up, because I know it's come up in discussion, is that this applies to school boards. There is sort of a feeling that, oh, this doesn't really apply to school boards in the ecosystem. This is actually applying to school boards, which brings me back to a core thing. When we were getting ready for this, when the government was giving us some sense that something was coming – the Premier signalled it, and the minister signalled it – we were ready for political parties at the municipal level. And wouldn't you know it? That is the least of our worries. That may be the least controversial part of this bill to me, political parties in the municipal elections.

This bill addressed voter lists, with a lot of uncertainty and a lot of questions around what voter lists will be allowed and will it restrict people from voting? This bill addressed how votes are counted, vote tabulation, which, from what we can tell, is not based on anything, based on evidence, as was mentioned by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. I remember zero scandals after the last municipal election. I remember no controversy with how votes were counted.

It deals with candidate qualifications. Actually, if we align candidate qualifications with the ability to disqualify, that seems like a good alignment, maybe the only good in this bill.

It addresses donations and changes it fundamentally. Right now individuals, people, voters can contribute financially to a municipal election. Now we're going to invite corporations and unions in, and it is not the kind of money we want brought into our democracy, because it does not make it better.

Lastly, the ugly part of this bill is that it fundamentally changes the role of municipal councillors so that they are beholden to the Premier and cabinet. Bylaws can be overturned. Municipal councillors can be removed without a public inquiry that would bring forward how and why we are removing councillors. It opens up an ability for an authoritarian-style of government. Perhaps the members across are genuinely here for the betterment of Albertans, but it does open up a future not too different from the *Hunger Games*, where we dictate to District 12 what their resources are going to be and how they govern themselves.

To the member's offer to have this brought back, the reasoned amendment, I will just say that the Premier and the UCP have complained ad nauseam about overreach into provincial jurisdiction, and when it comes to municipalities, the Premier insists on being the gatekeeper and controller-in-chief. Municipal councils from across Alberta have been very clear. They do not want municipal political parties. They know best how to run their own affairs. When municipalities need appropriate funds so they can fix the crumbling infrastructure in their communities and to pay for programs that Albertans deserve, that's what they need. That's what they ask for. They need the government to step up with resources, not step in and interfere in governance.

Citizens of municipalities elect local representatives to serve the best interests of their community and not because of the colour of

the partisan flag they fly. The Premier needs to realize that municipal councils are not a farm team for the UCP to carry out their wishes at the municipal level. We want numerous ideas and plurality in our society. Municipal councillors have a duty to represent the citizens who elected them, and they deserve a provincial government who supports them as a partner.

4:00

Mr. Speaker, I support this amendment, which will send this bill out of the Assembly to a place in our legislative system where we can get some proper ideas brought forward to improve our democracy and improve municipalities, because it's not Bill 20, that's been brought forward.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

On reasoned amendment RA1, the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and offer my support for this amendment, that was brought forward by my friend from Edmonton-Whitemud. I have two points that I want to make to justify why this bill should not now be read a second time. The first is that Bill 20 is incredibly unfair to the city of Edmonton residents in particular and, secondly, because I think that if government members really think about the implications of this bill and the power that they are giving themselves through measures in this bill, they will quickly realize that this is the kind of power that they don't actually want to have.

To expand on those two points, I want to first talk about why this legislation is unfair to the residents of the city of Edmonton. Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that Bill 20 gives cabinet the ability to remove any municipal councillor, any mayor, or overturn any local bylaw that it deems to be in the public interest to do so with no process whatsoever. It's incredibly frustrating to my constituents, who are not politically aligned with the government of the day.

I was at a meeting of representatives from different community leagues around my constituency last Thursday, and we had a meeting with representatives from all three levels of government. The local city councillor was there, I was there as a provincial representative, and the Member of Parliament was there as well. The number one provincial issue that people wanted to discuss at that meeting was Bill 20. One of the reasons that they were so upset was because they know that within the boundaries of the city of Edmonton the NDP got every seat, and I think we hit 60 per cent of the vote. I know that I got almost 70 per cent of the vote, Mr. Speaker, in my riding, and my friend from Edmonton-Glenora got almost 70 per cent in her riding.

The UCP is incredibly unpopular here in the city of Edmonton, and the thought that now the government is giving themselves the power to remove their duly elected city councillor or their duly elected mayor is incredibly terrifying. A number of members of that meeting said: why is it that somebody from Cardston or Fort McMurray or Camrose or Bonnyville is going to now have the power to remove my city councillor or my mayor? It's incredibly unfair, and the thing that struck them most was the hypocrisy of this. Ever since it's been elected in 2019, we've heard over and over the refrain that governments need to stay in their own lanes, that this government was elected to defend Albertans from federal overreach, yet here they are giving themselves the power to reach into the affairs of locally affected governments.

You know, the people at this meeting that I attended last week rightly said that if Justin Trudeau gave himself the power to remove

the Premier from her seat, the UCP would be strongly against it. But they are giving themselves the power, and the political dynamics are similar. Nobody in Edmonton voted for the UCP. They don't want the UCP to be playing the role of city councillor or mayor now. They're strongly opposed to this, Mr. Speaker. It's this kind of overreach that I think warrants taking this bill and not reading it a second time, giving the government pause to reconsider the implications of the power, the overreach that they're giving themselves.

The second point that I want to make is that if government members think carefully about the implications of this bill, they'll quickly realize that this is power that they don't actually want. You know, I often call them backbenchers, Mr. Speaker. That tends to get their hackles up a little bit. I know that they identify as private members. Now, I personally don't think that they're old enough to be able to choose how they identify, so I try to identify them as backbenchers because that's what they are. That's what God made them; God made them backbenchers. I don't think they're old enough or have the maturity to call themselves private members. I think that they should probably seek parental permission, at least, to call themselves that.

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker: A point of order has been called.

Point of Order Insulting Language

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, I suspect you were listening as intently as I was to the ramblings of the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, specifically talking about having the intelligence and comparing private members of our caucus here on the government side, you know, to children. I think this language definitely rises to the level of a point of order. It would be unparliamentary under 23(h), (i), and (j), and I would ask for that member to apologize and get back to the substance of the bill.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do apologize and withdraw.

Debate Continued

Mr. Schmidt: I would also like to move on to the substance of the point that I was trying to make, and that is that right now backbenchers can rightly tell constituents who call into their office or e-mail their office about issues like potholes and garbage and libraries and mowing the grass on park property or dog bylaws – they can rightly say: “You know what? That's not my jurisdiction. Call your local councillor.” But now, once this bill is passed, they will ultimately be responsible for the decisions that their city councillors, their county councillors, their reeves will be making.

So I ask my friends from the government caucus, especially ones that have a lot of councillors in their ridings – you know, I think of Livingstone-Macleod, which has Claresholm and Nanton and a whole bunch of rural counties, right? That's countless councillors that they're going to have to keep tabs on, field complaints about. What will be even more frustrating for them is that they actually won't have the power to do anything about it because they're not in cabinet, Mr. Speaker.

Take, for example, my friend from Grande Prairie-Wapiti, who has been very vocal as I've been speaking. Let's say that the people from Grande Prairie-Wapiti raise a concern about a local county councillor and want to have him removed. The Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti will duly submit his concerns to his friends from cabinet. He'll go back to his constituents and say: “You know what?

Thank you very much for raising this concern. I share your concerns. I voiced this concern with cabinet."

Then, when cabinet doesn't do anything about it, it's not the councillor who faces the consequences; it will be the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti. He'll be held responsible for decisions that he has absolutely no power to make. Why would he want that? There is no political benefit to him to have on paper this kind of power but, in reality, no power to actually implement these decisions. So, Mr. Speaker, the private members of the government caucus need to think hard about this and think hard about the consequences of giving themselves this kind of power.

To give an example of an issue that I dealt with a couple of years ago, when I was environment critic, I had a constituent from Livingstone-Macleod. I can't remember if that person was from Claresholm or Nanton, but it was one of those towns. She had concerns about the street sweeping machines that the town used to clear the sidewalks. They use a particular type of plastic bristle that leaves all kinds of random bristles on the street, and she was concerned about the level of garbage that was being produced by the town using that specific machine.

4:10

Now, I as environment critic have absolutely no power over that issue. The local representative at the provincial level has no power right now over that issue, so when somebody writes in with that kind of concern, we rightly say: "You know what? This is something that is more properly dealt with by the local authority because they have the power to make a decision that can improve this situation." But once Bill 20 passes, Mr. Speaker, it will be the Member for Livingstone-Macleod who will have to explain to her constituent why cabinet didn't do something about the machine, the street sweeping machine, that was used to clear snow from their sidewalks in Claresholm or Nanton. Why do you want that power?

I know that we are all committed to serving our communities to the best of our ability, but we're here because we want to effect change at the provincial level and deal with the issues that fall under the provincial government's responsibilities, things like health care, things like child care, things like education and advanced education and environment and energy and all of those provincial issues. I didn't run for office because I wanted to deal with street sweeping in my local community. That is the role of a local councillor, and we have many people who are enthusiastic about those issues and are willing to run for office and do a very good job of dealing with those issues. That's not why we're here.

We need to focus on the job that Albertans sent us here to do, and that's to look after health care, education, housing, tackling climate change, all of those things. The private members of the government caucus will find themselves quickly overwhelmed with work that they were not elected to do once this bill passes this Legislature, and I think that they will regret that decision very quickly. That's why I'm giving them a second chance to rethink this, Mr. Speaker, and vote in favour of this amendment so that they can properly spend their time representing their constituents on the issues that are the direct responsibility of the provincial government.

I appreciate the opportunity to offer my thoughts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

The Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs with about five minutes left.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to RA1 regarding Bill 20. Now, I can't start this without saying that you just gave me notice that I have five minutes to speak. That's because

the government put in time allotments so that we can only speak to it for an hour, which goes directly in correlation with this bill, because not only do they not want to hear from us; they haven't wanted to hear from Albertans. They have done no consultation on this piece of legislation. We have heard from so many municipal leaders all across the province that they weren't consulted and that they don't want this piece of legislation to pass, so why would it be any different that they don't want to continue to allow the opportunity to talk about it here in this Legislature?

Well, they want more power, Mr. Speaker. They want the ability to do whatever they want all across the province. I'm just flabbergasted with the amount of power and overreach that this government has put into this piece of legislation. If they took the opportunity to listen to Albertans, listen to our other municipal leaders, they would do the right thing and vote in support of our amendment that this piece of legislation not be read a second time and perhaps get it right.

There is an opportunity that this government is missing by not reaching out to those municipal leaders to talk about what would actually make a good piece of legislation that would actually do something to support them in their capacity to do their jobs. However, it is clear that that is not what this government intends to do. They don't want to listen to Albertans. They don't want to listen to the municipal leaders. The RMA, with 69 counties and municipal districts, called it an "affront to democracy" in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, and the Alberta Municipalities, with their 260 municipal members, called it a "power grab." Hearing those types of concerns, I'm just shocked that this government is continuing to plow forward with this piece of legislation that is incredibly power hungry.

It's not a small piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker. It actually deals with three different pieces of legislation: the Local Authorities Election Act, the Municipal Government Act, and the Referendum Act. All through all three of those pieces of legislation it makes numerous mention of the extra responsibilities and abilities that the cabinet has. Having cabinet be able to remove elected officials, having cabinet be able to approve bylaws takes away Albertans' right to have who they democratically elected represent them and their needs. These are the experts in their own communities, not the cabinet, not a cabinet that should be focusing on things like fixing our health care perhaps, properly funding schools – those are the things that Albertans are talking about – the extensive cost of living that's happening in the province right now. Instead, we have Bill 20, that has this government wanting to do more and have more power all across the province.

A lot of what the minister says when we've asked about the concerns that are being flagged all across the province from these municipal leaders is: just trust us; it's going to be in the regulation. Well, this government certainly does not have a track record of trust, Mr. Speaker. We know that these municipal leadership concerns should be listened to. However, they're not being listened to. We have a major concern in this legislation that people are saying that they have not been consulted with, and when you have leaders all across the province saying that, I believe that this government should support our amendment and vote in favour of it, that this bill not be read a second time.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Government Motion 35, agreed to on May 21, 2024, one hour of debate has now been completed, and I am required to put to the Assembly all necessary questions to dispose of Bill 20, Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2024, at second reading.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment RA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:17 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Boparai	Elmeligi	Pancholi
Ceci	Goehring	Renaud
Chapman	Ip	Sabir
Dach	Irwin	Schmidt
Deol	Kasawski	Shepherd
Eggen	Loyola	

Against the motion:

Amery	Jones	Sawhney
Armstrong-Homeniuk	LaGrange	Schow
Boitchenko	Loewen	Schulz
Bouchard	Long	Sigurdson, R.J.
Cyr	Lovely	Sinclair
de Jonge	Lundy	Singh
Dreeshen	McDougall	Stephan
Dyck	McIver	Turton
Ellis	Nally	van Dijken
Fir	Neudorf	Wiebe
Getson	Nicolaides	Williams
Glubish	Nixon	Wilson
Guthrie	Petrovic	Wright, J.
Horner	Pitt	Yao
Jean	Rowswell	Yaseen
Johnson		

Totals: For – 17 Against – 46

[Motion on amendment RA1 lost]

The Speaker: Members, pursuant to Government Motion 35, agreed to on May 21, 2024, not more than one hour shall be allotted to the further consideration of Bill 20, Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2024. Hon. members, an hour has been allotted, and all questions must be put to the Assembly.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:36 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Jones	Sawhney
Armstrong-Homeniuk	LaGrange	Schow
Boitchenko	Loewen	Schulz
Bouchard	Long	Sigurdson, R.J.
Cyr	Lovely	Sinclair
de Jonge	Lundy	Singh
Dreeshen	McDougall	Stephan
Dyck	McIver	Turton
Ellis	Nally	van Dijken
Fir	Neudorf	Wiebe
Getson	Nicolaides	Williams
Glubish	Nixon	Wilson
Guthrie	Petrovic	Wright, J.
Horner	Pitt	Yao

Jean	Rowswell	Yaseen
Johnson		

Against the motion:

Boparai	Elmeligi	Pancholi
Ceci	Goehring	Renaud
Chapman	Ip	Sabir
Dach	Irwin	Schmidt
Deol	Kasawski	Shepherd
Eggen	Loyola	

Totals: For – 46 Against – 17

[Motion carried; Bill 20 read a second time]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: I'd like to call the committee to order.

Bill 18 Provincial Priorities Act

The Deputy Chair: Pursuant to Government Motion 37, agreed to earlier today, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of Bill 18, Provincial Priorities Act, in Committee of the Whole.

Currently we are debating government amendment A1 on Bill 18. Do we have any other members wishing to make comments or questions? The Member for Calgary-Beddington has risen to speak.

Ms Chapman: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a subamendment to move, and I have the copies here. I rise today on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-South to move a subamendment to A1 to Bill 18, Provincial Priorities Act.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, if you could just hold until we get a copy to the chair.

Ms Chapman: Do you want me to try to wait until they go around?

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Thank you. The subamendment is in order. It will be referred to as SA1.

You may proceed.

Ms Chapman: SA1. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to move SA1 on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-South. SA1 amends section 1 of Bill 18 to strike out clauses (c)(iii) and (ix) and also to amend section 3 (a) in clause (a) by striking out "or provincial entities" and (b) by adding after clause (f):

(f.1) designating a group as an Indigenous group for the purposes of this Act.

This subamendment speaks to some of what are the most problematic sections of this bill, section 1(c)(ix) and section 3(a). These sections really speak to the government's goal to make sure that everyone everywhere can be put under this act through regulation. These sections would allow regulations to be made to designate an entity as a provincial entity even if it's not already captured in this legislation as written.

You know, this bill is already such an incredible overreach with what is written into it. As it is, the bill is already the most far-reaching piece of legislation of its type in the country, but that seems to be not enough for the Premier and for this government. They need to build themselves in a back door in case they miss anyone in this already incredibly broad overreach. The question that we need to ask

ourselves is: where could the power granted in regulations be used? Could it capture grant-receiving nonprofits? Could it capture women's shelters, arts organizations, sports organizations? The answer is that we just don't know, and we won't know until an organization catches the ire of the government of the day.

You know, this government is trying to convince Albertans and the members of their own caucus that the intent of this bill is not to silence and control people in this province. That job is not the job of this Legislature. It's not our job to provide tools to control the people of this province. That is why we need to not just protect Indigenous groups, as the government amendment does; we need to protect our constituents from the ability of the government to punish with the stroke of a pen from a closed-door cabinet meeting while the government says: trust us; we know what's best for you.

Addressing the attack on postsecondaries that we find in this bill: that's another piece of this subamendment. You know, this is the section of the bill that has received the most backlash. The uncertainty for postsecondaries could have long-reaching consequences for an industry that relies on funding from the federal government for the research that drives innovation. Let's not forget that this government has already cut half a billion dollars from the budgets of postsecondaries over the last five years, and now they are literally putting hundreds of millions of dollars of federal research funding at risk.

In addition to the risk to funding sources, Bill 18 also puts academic freedom at risk, which has been identified by research chairs, instructors, academics, professors, presidents both here in Alberta and across the country. Under this command-and-control government I do have to wonder how many academics are going to be willing to stay in Alberta. When every other province in the country can offer up the opportunity to freely apply for research grants, why would academics stay here?

We here in the Assembly have the ability to stop this attack on our postsecondaries. All members, especially government caucus members, should ask themselves: what are they willing to lose just to toe the line of the Premier? Are the members from Grande Prairie willing to gamble the viability of local postsecondaries? From Red Deer? Are there any members here who are willing to lose their relationships with these important institutions?

5:00

I just want to sidebar off this a little bit because we were fortunate on this bill, too, that the bill sponsor spent quite a bit of time walking us through her rationale on Bill 18, and between that and the lengthy press conference we've been granted a pretty detailed insight into the thought process behind this, which can't be said for every piece of legislation that we've been speaking about in the House this session.

One thing I noticed was that one of the first lines of argument that was offered up by the bill sponsor was the Constitution, and the bill sponsor waxed poetic for quite some time about the glory days gone by when the Governor General was able to exercise the powers of reservation. Oh, to go back to the glory days before 1878. Apparently, in the years before 1878 it was common for the Governor General to intervene to use these powers of reservation and disallowance of federal legislation. It was a little bit weird for me – I'm going to be honest – to wax poetic about a time when we were a British colony and the Crown would intervene in the Legislature, but you know what? It's not 1870 anymore. It's 2023, and here in 2023 we . . .

An Hon. Member: It's 2024.

Ms Chapman: It's a good thing we don't have to write cheques anymore, right? It is 2024.

The same was true in 2023 as is true in 2024, though, which is that we operate under a system now of co-operative federalism. I know that the bill sponsor knows this because she does mention it, but I'll give a little quick overview of the concept for anyone who isn't familiar with this idea and because I found a great article in the Centre for Constitutional Studies that has a really great summary of co-operative federalism, which is a concept of federalism based on the federal and provincial governments working together to achieve mutual goals.

The division of powers outlined in sections 91 and 92 of the Constitution Act limit what each level of government has the authority to do. Sure. Although the Constitution sets out what each level of government has the exclusive powers to do in practice, there is significant overlap between the federal and provincial areas of control such as health care. Courts have developed the idea of co-operative federalism into a legal principle to reject strict approaches to interpreting the division of powers. Co-operative federalism reflects the realities in society that often require the federal and provincial governments to establish co-ordinated efforts. The more flexible approach to interpreting the division of powers makes it easier for collaboration between governments.

I will table this article tomorrow so that, you know, the Premier and the members opposite can maybe get a refresher on what can be done when we work under a system of co-operative federalism.

I want to close out on this by saying something that I often say to my children, which is that co-operation is a two-way street and collaboration is only possible when every party comes to the table in good faith. To be fair, when I say it to my kids, it is more like: "Look, kiddo. I get that you want to use your sister's Posca pens. But do you remember last week when she wanted to borrow your Pokémon Fusion Strike battle deck, and you didn't let her do it? You reap what you sow, kiddo. You need to work together." [interjection] Yeah. Go Pokémon.

I don't think that anything that this government has done shows a commitment to collaboration in good faith, which is a shame. It's all posturing and very little focus on getting the outcomes that Albertans want to see. I know that fighting with the federal government is popular, but it is not about the fight, it is about the outcomes. It is getting better outcomes for Albertans.

Oh, when I was speaking about the lost revenue for postsecondaries, which is a big piece as a part of this bill, that risk of losing those hundreds of millions of dollars of research grant money, I have the same kind of concerns about how the province is going to insert themselves in funding agreements between the municipal and federal governments, about how additional dollars that are currently flowing into Alberta could be stopped by that.

I'm concerned in particular about a stream of funding that flows directly from the federal government to the municipal government in Calgary. I'm concerned about \$150,000 that came to Calgary to support – oh, wait. The \$150,000 was actually for Alberta in total. That was for three active mode transportation projects in Alberta. That was an investment by Canada's national active transportation strategy. That's work that supports the planning and engagement activities that will help expand the network of pathways, bike lanes, trails, pedestrian bridges. I know. I'm concerned about the \$1.3 million that flow to Calgary to support active modes infrastructure in the community of Dover. I'm concerned about the \$4.9 million in funding for active transportation infrastructure in Calgary's Beltline.

Why am I concerned? Well, because I have lived in Calgary long enough to know how Conservatives feel about active modes transportation. Just the words "bike lane" are odious to them. Weird. I know. As infrastructure active modes are cheaper to build and cheaper to maintain. Repairs and maintenance to pathways and

bike lanes will run you around \$180 per kilometre. Compare that to about \$1,300 per kilometre for asphalt roadway maintenance.

We also know that the increased use of active modes transportation has a wide range of health benefits, including decreased risk for type 2 diabetes, heart attack, stroke, dementia, heart failure. Physical inactivity is the fourth most important risk factor for premature mortality in the European Union, and the picture is not any rosier here in Canada. We know that physical inactivity impacts both physical and mental health and well-being and is considered a primary risk factor for obesity. We also know that less than half of the Canadian population participates in the minimal amount of leisure time physical activity required to obtain the health benefits of a physically active lifestyle. Active modes infrastructure more than pays for itself in what it saves our health care system.

It's also a program that would fall squarely under the jurisdiction of municipalities. Active modes is a municipal priority, not a provincial priority, so why shouldn't our municipal governments be able to scoop up any dollars available to them to fund that priority? Why on earth would we risk involving the ideology of the provincial government of the day in this process? The risk of missing out on this funding just so we can own the Libs on bike lanes is far too high.

That was a rather long sidebar, Mr. Chair. I'm going to come back to the substance of the amendment here, which is to address the attack on our postsecondaries. The reality is that to move forward, to grow the economy, to ensure that Alberta has the tools we need to be the very best we can be, we need to attract the best and brightest, and that is not going to happen if our public institutions, our academics, our researchers believe that the government will oversee, police, and determine what can be researched, how it can be researched, and where. These researchers have to want to come here, and we cannot compel them to stay if they feel we have lost faith in them.

The members of this Assembly, particularly the members of government caucus, have the ability to hamper the far-reaching, entitlement-based power grab that is Bill 18 by supporting this subamendment, and I encourage all members in the House to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you.

The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek has risen.

Mr. McDougall: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As a proud Canadian I wish to speak in support of Bill 18. It seems to me that members opposite do not understand the Canadian Constitution or the purpose and principle behind Canadian federalism, which is the bedrock for how our country was created and how it's supposed to be governed. They exaggerate and misrepresent the intent of the bill by attacking issues that have nothing to do with the bill, like spending on different government areas, which is a separate issue in terms of how our Alberta government funds different programs and has nothing to do with the bill.

5:10

Now, I understand that many people don't normally spend a lot of time thinking about things like the nature of our Constitution or Canadian federalism and the principles behind why Canada, like many other countries, is created the way it is, so perhaps it would be useful to provide a little bit of background. As somebody with a little bit of grey hair, I happened to be a political science student, an undergraduate, at the University of Calgary in the middle of the constitutional battles in 1982. As you can imagine, to be in that position at that time, there was a lot of conversation, a lot of

discussion within the faculty, within the university, and in Alberta generally about Alberta's place in Canada and some of the problems and reasons that gave rise to some of the issues that were being discussed and battled about in those constitutional discussions.

I would also add that a lot of my perspective came from the fact that in my last year of political science I took a Canadian federalism seminar course taught by a gentleman named Peter Lougheed, so I got the opportunity to spend a semester to hear his perspective as the man who was sitting at the table when we did the constitutional battle. That was augmented by the fact that upon my graduation I worked for a gentleman who was then the provincial treasurer but spent four years as minister of intergovernmental affairs and was a large part of the discussion that took place around that table.

Why do we have a federal system of government? Why does every large country on this planet other than China – say, the top seven, eight geographic countries – have a federal system of government? It recognizes that to have a stable country in a far-flung area, especially when you have a certain majority of the population centred in one particular part of the country and the regions outside the country cannot impact or influence the elections of federal government, you need to have a way to make sure that the regional representations are addressed.

In Canada or in many countries this is achieved by limits on the government power and sometimes things like a Senate, like you would see in the United States, where they will assign each state equal power no matter its population and a certain area of jurisdiction within those states but a Senate that represents those states. As we all know, here in Canada our Senate is dysfunctional; it doesn't do anything, it has no power. It is appointed, in some cases, historically by a federal government that is controlled by central Canadians. This underlines the importance that if you don't have an effective Senate and you will not have an effective Senate, the other solution is to divide the responsibility and jurisdictions for those areas that are most relevant to regions where the decisions can be made by people closer to the decision and the impact on those decisions.

Our Constitution has been historically very clear that natural resources, for example, were the responsibility of a provincial government. But we've also seen that there have been other things that impact in the nature of Canada and the nature of the division of responsibilities, that the federal government can impose itself in those areas of provincial jurisdiction when they have certain jurisdictional issues that impact some of those things that are provincial jurisdiction or, importantly, the power of the purse, because the federal government has the power and ability to tax and to spend. We know and we've seen historically what that has done. Alberta contributes more money on a per capita basis to Confederation. It has for the last 50 years, yet receives less spending per capita than in other parts of the country. So we have a transfer of wealth from Alberta ... [interjection]

The Deputy Chair: There is no intervention in committee.

Mr. McDougall: All right.

The division or jurisdiction is not a perfect thing, and there are other things that can impact on that. Now, did the 1982 constitutional amendments and the changes that happened by bringing the Constitution home fix this problem? I would say not, and any legal expert in the nature of Canada and federalism, including the previous Premier Lougheed, the previous minister of intergovernmental affairs, and Roger Gibbons, who was professor emeritus of political science at the University of Calgary and head of the Canada West Foundation, would recognize, as do all academics recognize, that regional alienation and the inability for

Alberta or western provinces generally, including the prairie provinces, to protect their own areas of jurisdiction and dealing with alienation issues was not solved.

In fact, as Roger Gibbons would say: unquestionably, the most serious shortcoming of the Constitution Act for western Canadians is its failure to address the long-standing problem of regional representation within institutions. Fundamental institutional reforms, including those of the Senate and the electoral system, were not tackled; in fact, impeded by the act. In the future nothing was done to enhance the effective Members of Parliament as regional representatives, to undercut the Premier's monopoly as a regional spokesman in national politics, to encourage provincial champions, et cetera. There's still an issue. There's still a problem that was not resolved.

Currently less than 6 per cent of the federal Members of Parliament in Alberta belong to the Liberal Party federally. In fact, less than 10 per cent of all Members of Parliament in the prairie provinces belong to the Liberal Party in Canada. So what does this mean? Effectively, Albertans and the prairie provinces have shown that they do not agree with the direction and the tone of what the federal government has been doing. I would argue that if there's an election held today, those numbers would even be less.

How do you protect yourself against a jurisdiction controlled and decided by the powers in central Canada that have no understanding of the issues, of the realities that we have here, that try to impose an agenda on us that we don't want? Well, what we have to do is to reinforce those areas in our jurisdiction that we can control. Nobody here is going to debate and argue that the areas that are outlined in this legislation are areas that are controlled and are part of the jurisdiction of Albertans. They're financed by Albertans through tax dollars, and they are there for the purposes of the Alberta residents.

When you have a federal government that's using its power of the purse to intervene and promote policies that are in direct contradiction to the policies of the elected government representing the people of Alberta, the only mechanism effective in our Constitution to protect the interests of our region, what is the problem?

Are you suggesting that we should not use the full authority that we have under our Constitution to represent the interests of Albertans against the federal government that is promoting policies that are in contradiction to the interests of Albertans and to the policies of the Alberta government? Because that's what you're saying.

The reason that we can pass this legislation and that it will have an effect is because we have jurisdiction over these issues. What we're doing is just being explicit with the fact that from now on we're not going to allow the federal government to spend money on areas that conflict or contradict provincial policy.

5:20

Now, you know, I've seen a lot of scaremongering about some things that are not going to be funded or potentially could not be funded by this. That's crazy. Most things, 99 per cent of the elements where we receive federal funding for things, are not going to be issues that are going to be a problem, but there are going to be some key areas, and there have been some key areas – and this was discussed when the Premier introduced this bill – where these problems exist.

You know, as a representative of the people of Alberta, as a representative of the constituency that I represent, I'm going to support this Alberta government to have the authority and have the tools at its disposal to protect the interests.

Federalism. Why do we have federalism? I talked about it earlier. Many countries have federalism. The United States has a federal system where its states have areas of jurisdiction. Different countries around the world change and vary, but what is consistent is that all large countries, except China, have a federal system of government. It reflects the reality that there needs to be regional representation and protection for those regions outside the majority population areas. In academic terms this problem is called a tyranny of the majority. It's not meant to be polemic or to cause concerns. It's a reality that with a large population, the majority of the population is located in one small part of the country or one portion of the country. Who protects the interests of the other parts of the region that are totally different?

As somebody who has lived in Ontario a couple of times – I did my master's degree in Ontario – has represented this province in intergovernmental meetings in this country, one thing that's clear to me is that people in central Canada have no idea, or very few of them have any idea, of what is in the best interest and what Albertans need or the implications and consequences of some of the policies that the federal government is promoting. It's not surprising. I don't criticize them for that. I probably know very little about the auto industry in southern Ontario as well. Frankly, the cultural issues and languages in Quebec are not important to me, so I don't spend a lot of time on it. This is the reality, and this is why you need to have those federal authorities, the regional authorities to protect the interests of areas for those matters that are important to people in those regions.

Bill C-69: what are we facing against, right? The NDP did not protect the interests of Alberta when they were in government last time. I didn't see the NDP fighting against Bill C-69, which we now know clearly violated the constitutional authority of the province of Alberta. They sat there and negotiated. Is that the co-operative federalism that you're talking about? How many hundreds of thousands of jobs did that impact for Albertans, right? You know, it took years for the Supreme Court to finally come to that conclusion, which it did, and then the federal minister says: "Well, I don't care about what the Supreme Court says. I'm just going to reword things and keep the spirit of what they intended. We're going to try to circumvent the principles of our own Constitution and try to pose it down our throat." The NDP sit on the other side of the House and say, "That's okay," even though you represent less than 6 per cent of the seats in this province and are imposing something on us. You didn't do it in 2015, 2019, when Bill C-69 came forward. We saw cancellations of pipelines, that you acquiesce to. This government's not going to do that.

Can you imagine the federal government imposing its will on the province of Quebec in areas of language and culture? It would never happen because they have a number of seats that matter. We know that we know who the next federal government is going to be by the time the vote gets to the Manitoba border. Could you imagine a unilateral federal tax on the hydroelectricity industry in Quebec or tying conditions on housing funding for Montreal by putting in a provision that they prohibit the use of hydroelectricity or something like that? It would never happen, and we know that that would never happen because of the reality of the population and how the federal government is operating. Can you imagine a production cap on the Ontario mining sector or the auto industry? It would never happen, and we know it would never happen there.

Mr. Sabir: Point of order.

The Deputy Chair: A point of order has been called. The Official Opposition Deputy House Leader.

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Chair. Under 23(b). I think we are under time allocation, and the member continues to refer to things that have nothing to do with the amendment that's before the House. It's just a complete waste of limited time that we have because of time allocation. I would urge the members: if they really want to speak that much, they should oppose time allocation motions.

The Deputy Chair: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Chair. A wide berth of latitude has been given to members in Committee of the Whole as they make their points. I don't believe this is a point of order. Though I do understand that we are in time-allocated Committee of the Whole, so I'll sit down – I don't believe it's a point of order – and let the member continue his remarks.

The Deputy Chair: I don't believe it's a point of order, but I do encourage members to use their time wisely and speak to the subamendment.

Debate Continued

Mr. McDougall: Thank you. As I was saying, you would never expect or even dream that the federal government would do something like that to other parts of the country, to other provinces. Therefore, we have to protect provincial jurisdiction because it's the only real tool that we have, and we have to protect ourselves from the imposition of policies that would aim to not only destroy our economy as the federal government did with the national energy program – and that's a problem perhaps that people don't remember. Younger people in this House will not remember what happened in the late 1970s and early 1980s with the national energy program: families destroyed, businesses destroyed, convoys of equipment moving south of the border. Why? Because the federal government and the elites in Ontario and Quebec wanted more of our natural resource wealth.

Now they're trying to propose a number of policies that are going to, you know, restrict and restrain us. So what; so that China can have the freedom to put out as much CO₂ into the air as they want? Is that the rationale? Is that the argument? Explain to me, on a global basis, how any of the policies that the federal government has been following reduce any amount of CO₂ emissions. Does anybody ever hear that somebody could not find any oil in the world today because we've restricted the amount of oil that Canada is producing by pipeline restrictions and limitations? Of course not.

You know, who's looking out for the best interests of Albertans? It's not the federal government, not this federal government, and that's unfortunate because it is possible to work co-operatively. Even Prime Minister Chrétien: we did not have the same issues. It's not that it's a Liberal government issue. It appears to be a Trudeau issue. When those times come, when certain people think that they should be the dictator of this country and impose their will on our areas of jurisdiction, we have to stand up. Bill 18 becomes necessary because we need these tools to fight back against the power of the purse, the federal government using our own money to promote policies that are contrary to our interests. Not only do they take more of our money around taxes; do you know who's going to be paying most of the higher proportion of the debt repayment? It's going to be Albertans as well. We do that to allow them to send money to our province, less than the rest of the country, by the way. [interjections]

The Deputy Chair: Order. Order.

Any other members? The Member for Edmonton-McClung. We are on subamendment SA1.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to rise and speak to the subamendment to Bill 18. Note that we are here at almost 5:30 on a Wednesday afternoon in the Chamber debating a subamendment to a bill that the government has brought, which they chose to amend themselves because they forgot to include Indigenous people in it once again. We're in this Chamber at about 5:30, when a lot of folks are getting home from work and are talking to their spouses and saying: "You know, dear," whether it's the man or the woman talking to their respective spouse, "I got here on time, just like you wanted, and we're here to have a good conversation before supper. Let's get into it, and let's talk about the Constitution."

5:30

That's what Albertans are talking about right now. That's the supper-hour conversation, Mr. Chair, that people are actually wanting to have right now. They're getting home early, at 5:30 on a Wednesday afternoon, turning on the cable channel to the Assembly TV channel or turning on their computer and saying: oh, let's get into a constitutional debate. That's what they're talking about. According to the government that's what's interesting to the people of this province, but it doesn't really seem that way to me. I think that there are other conversations that are going on in those supper-table conversations that don't have anything to do with the conversations that were going on from the government side of the House.

Here we are in this Chamber at a time when food bank use is skyrocketing, where the numbers of homeless people are growing and going through the roof, where we had a government who did a scoop of people off encampments that were basically a community group of self-preservation, and they are now individuals camped out throughout the streets on their own. They saw no reason to preserve the dignities of those individuals, and now they're basically on their own. The numbers of drug poisonings and overdose deaths are on the rise, and they're at an all-time high now. But, Mr. Chair, let's assume that the people want to talk about the Constitution, because that's what's uppermost in their minds. They want to have a debate about the division of powers between governments in this country.

Schools are underfunded, overcrowded, and understaffed, yet, no, let's talk about the Constitution. Nurses, LPNs, other health care workers are burned out, working overtime or double shifts. I know that, Mr. Chair, because I've had family members recently in hospital for extended periods of time, and there were numbers of nurses working 16-hour shifts. It was a shocking experience. Over 40 per cent of Alberta highways are chronically rated in poor or fair condition. No, let's not worry about that, though. Let's talk about the Constitution and the division of powers because that's what Albertans are really interested in right now.

Seniors are stuck in acute-care beds because there's a severe shortage of long-term care spaces, Mr. Chair. Let's talk about that maybe. But, no, the government is intent on talking about how the federal government is pushing them around and that they're going to fight back. Well, I'll tell you what. Albertans are expecting a different fight to happen. They want them fighting for their very livelihoods in this province right now. They want to see that if there is economic growth, the government supports it rather than sticking a spoke in the wheel of things like economic growth in the renewables sector, where we had a seven-month halt on the growth

of renewables. That's not the kind of thing that we expect in this province.

We had the lowest wage growth in the country, but, no, let's talk about the Constitution and the separation of powers and how the federal government has given us a raw deal. Instead of working together and finding out, really, what collaborative and co-operative federalism is all about, let's pick a fight with Ottawa. That's what's going to get us the result that we want. We've got the lowest minimum wage in the country, practically, Mr. Chair – one other province is lower than ours – at 15 bucks an hour. It costs well over 20 bucks an hour in order to survive in a modest way of life for a family of four people.

We have a great fear of repeating last year's wildfire disasters, and we don't feel that we're prepared for it. On this side of the House we're certain that we're not prepared for it. We're certainly not prepared to address the climate change adaptations that we need to address in this province. But, no, let's talk about the Constitution, Mr. Chair, because that's what Albertans at 5:30 on a Wednesday afternoon are driving home to talk with each other about over supper: the Constitution.

Well, I'll tell you what. I'm not sure what twilight zone the government is living in, but it certainly is not the world that most Albertans are living in. Most Albertans are living in a world where they are concerned about being able to find enough money to buy groceries to put a lunch on the table for their kids as they go to school the next day.

I can't fathom, Mr. Chair, why in the world this government sees fit to focus on their own sense of entitlement, why they are so obsessed with their own need for power that they see it necessary to bring in this bill, amongst others, this session so that they can coalesce power unto themselves. In a world where governments are asked to be leaders in getting people through hard economic times and getting those who are least able to support themselves the opportunity to live with some modicum of dignity, Albertans are expecting much more of their government.

They are yet now, though, looking to wake up one morning and find themselves in an autocracy. It doesn't happen, necessarily, overnight unless you go through a revolution, but we have here what happens to be a creeping autocracy. Is it something that you wake up and realize overnight, or are Albertans trying to realize exactly what's happening? Are they feeling that the UCP have reached a full gallop, that this government is doing everything they can to preserve their own grasp on power because they were so full of shock that an NDP government actually got formed and darn near did it again in the next election? My goodness, they are going to make sure that they do everything possible to make sure that nobody but the Conservative Party in this province could form a government. This is the type of legislation, Mr. Chair, that we see that they're using to enable themselves to garner power unto themselves and nobody else.

I can only imagine what small-town governments in this province are thinking. We've heard them loud and clear, Mr. Chair, talking about the draconian measures that are being brought forward by this government to provide a wall between them and the federal government, in particular with Bill 18, by which they must screen everything that is transacted between themselves and the federal government.

I can imagine my late grandmother on village council in Thorhild, what she would have said, Mr. Chair, had she heard this government, this Conservative government, one that she would have probably supported had it been actually a government that she recognized in her days. I can only imagine what she would have said on village council if indeed the provincial government told her: "No, no, no. You cannot accept federal money to transfer your

water supply from a well system over to a city of Edmonton water supply. Federal money is involved in that. No, you can't do that because we don't approve. You have to have that agreement go through us."

I mean, she would know the language to use. I only heard her say those things in very, very limited ways. But, I mean, for a woman who rode a one-eyed pony for two days to get into the Edmonton exhibition in about 1918 or 1919, who won a couple of ribbons after riding that horse for two days, for a woman to be told after having become a village councillor in a small town in Alberta that, no, she had to go through and have her agreements filtered by the federal government, that the provincial government was going to step in and say that you couldn't do that – I could not imagine the language she would be using during that debate. It would be something that you would be amazed to hear.

Mr. Chair, this obsession with garnering power unto themselves: this whole bill reeks of entitlement, as do all the remaining pieces of legislation this government is bringing forward. Albertans are not at the supper table talking about the Constitution or talking about the division of powers. They're talking about how to survive until next week, and it's time this government recognizes that that's what the issue is that's concerning Albertans.

5:40

The Deputy Chair: The Member for Sherwood Park is recognized.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That is a tough act to follow, but I do want to just thank the member for bringing up a really important point; that is, why we brought in this subamendment. We are all treaty people. It is a powerful statement, and it's an important statement we should repeat every day to remind ourselves of how we're here and why we're here.

When our government has these chaotic ideas and they just say, "Oh, you know what; I don't like some legislation coming in from the federal government; I don't like some funding coming in from the federal government; I don't like the federal government," when they have these ideas and they say, "You know what; we're going to get in the way; we're going to throw in a firewall," did they consult with our treaty partners? We are all treaty people in this province, and that is first and foremost in why this subamendment is so important to bring forward. I think all members of the House will easily support it.

It is associated with and tied to a bill, Bill 18, which is a quixotic bill. It is a challenging bill to get behind and support. I think we're often seeing with the UCP that they are trying to solve simple problems with heavy-handed changes to legislation, heavy-handed changes to our traditions of democracy and to our freedom in this province. Maybe we think back to Bill 8. Maybe it's bills that end with "8."

But back to Bill 8. You know, maybe the Premier thought it was dumb that she was restricted from attending and visiting suites at the Stampede. There was a time limitation on that, kind of impractical. "You know what? Why are there gift limits on MLAs? Why are there limits on the gifts that we can receive? Let's just get rid of that." Let's get rid of all restrictions because there was a slight inconvenience in operating as an MLA. Heavy-handed legislation just so that we can attend hockey games.

Member Ceci: Go, Flames.

Mr. Kasawski: Go, Oilers. Go, Oilers. Yeah. Get on the bandwagon. It's really important.

Maybe this UCP government did not want to fund affordable housing. Maybe it came up as there was some money from the federal government to help deal with our affordability crisis, our

housing crisis in this country. “Let’s build affordable housing,” and they said: “You know what? We don’t want to build it to a green standard. We know we’ve set a policy commitment to be net zero, carbon neutral by 2050, but you can’t tell us that we’ve got to build energy-efficient houses. So why don’t we put in some legislation that says that you can’t give us any money, that you can’t give anybody in the province any money without our say-so because – oh, someone, check their notes – we’ve got jurisdiction.” It’s like – well, I won’t get into some analogies. That’s not a good situation. It’s a hard way to govern when, like, there’s a small problem you’re trying to solve and you solve it with authoritarian, heavy-handed legislation.

Then they modelled it after Quebec. I guess the question I’ve been wanting to ask this House: what is the cost of modelling this after Quebec? I’m trying to determine where the benefits are of having legislation that is modelled after Quebec. It keeps on being brought up with university research funding. Quebec gets the third-largest amount of research funding for universities in this country. They have the third-largest amount. This legislation must be working well for Quebec. And then we all look at the books. They have the second-most number of people in the country and not by a little bit; by a long shot. They are a highly populated province, and they’re getting less funding per capita now that they’ve got legislation that shields them from the federal government. I’m trying to figure out where the benefits are going to come from.

I’ve talked to municipalities. The rural municipal association decided to bring in a group of municipal leaders from Quebec on May 18, another use of the word “18,” to find out: is it better? No, it’s not better. They’re terrified. They have so much blue tape they have to go through in order to get funding from the federal government. It has created a level of bureaucracy in Quebec that makes municipal leaders frustrated to no end, so they’re wondering: why are things going to be better here now if we have some more blue tape in? So municipalities do not think they’re better off.

We have this approach with municipalities that – I mean, the members over here often talk about how the municipalities are the children of the province. It is such a condescending statement to make. Cities and municipalities were here before the province, and they stand alone and stand up.

I will just talk about my own municipality of Strathcona county. Can you guess how much funding they receive from the provincial government for their annual budget? How much is their revenue? Let’s just show the percentage. Are we talking about 100 per cent of their money coming from the provincial government? Is it zero per cent? Somewhere in between? Would you guess what it is? Three per cent; they’re getting \$12 million of their annual budget coming from the province. Most of the time right now the councillors are going: “What is the point? Like, where is the province? Why aren’t they stepping up?” They’re not stepping up; they’re just stepping in.

That’s what the mayor of the city of Edmonton said last week, a great line: stepping in. The mayor was great to identify some projects that would not have happened or would have happened in such an arduous, slow process if the provincial government was involved, and they were good projects to identify. The NAIT Productivity and Innovation Centre would not have been built if it wasn’t for the federal government. The provincial government did not step up. At the University of Alberta, the National Institute for Nanotechnology: federal funding; it would not have even been on the radar screen of our provincial government, but the federal government stepped up, and nanotechnology is something that we’re proud to lead on in this province. The investment in Fort Edmonton Park’s Indigenous Peoples Experience: thank you, federal government. How much did the province step in with, right?

Then a large infrastructure project like the Yellowhead expansion: the federal government stepped up. The provincial government has not stepped up and dragged their feet on that and delayed it for a long time till they finally put in a percentage of funding that is probably akin to what Strathcona county gets from the provincial government.

They are insistent on more blue tape, and what is most infuriating about Bill 18 and some of this other trifecta of bad bills is the idea that operationally there will be no additional cost to the provincial government to add these additional oversights. It’s miracle thinking. It’s magical, miracle thinking.

I think that when I’ve dug more into research funding and learned about the tricouncil funding that goes to researchers of universities, the important thing I’ve learned is that it’s not universities that are getting that funding; it’s researchers. The researchers are just administrators of that funding, and those researchers: they have mobility. They can move. They can go other places. That funding, if it is interfered with by a provincial government – there is going to be an exodus of people that leave, and I’m very terrified of it. This quixotic thinking is leading us down a road with heavy-handed legislation.

I just want to say that when I go to my constituents – when the government says that they’re going to introduce oversight over the government, with this magical thinking that they’re not going to be adding bureaucracy, my constituents in Strathcona county and Sherwood Park say one thing: that dog don’t hunt.

The Deputy Chair: Any other members? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has risen.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just out of curiosity, how much time is remaining?

The Deputy Chair: Five minutes.

Mr. Schmidt: Five minutes. Excellent. All of the good stuff will be in the first minute and then the rest of the time will be probably wasted.

I will give my best to speak to the subamendment that was introduced on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-South from my friend from Calgary-Beddington. I do support this subamendment, Mr. Chair. It’s important that we adequately understand who is defined as an Indigenous group and who is not defined as an Indigenous group when it comes to clarifying their role vis-à-vis the federal government under this act.

One of the primary concerns that I have with this subamendment is that it doesn’t address this issue of university research funding, which my friend from Sherwood Park was talking about in his statements. I’ve certainly heard from my constituents a lot of concern about the province inserting itself in between the federal research granting authorities and the universities when it comes to doling out research grants.

5:50

You know, we know that NSERC and SSHRC and the Canadian health research grants are administered by bodies of experts who are not politicians. They weigh the merits of the research proposals that are submitted to them and award them accordingly. It’s not generally based on political ideology or political preferences; it’s based on the merit of the research proposals that are submitted in any given year.

For the province to insert itself and say, “We think that we need to change that because we’re concerned that maybe there isn’t enough research into the truth behind vaccines, for example, or whether or not cancer is your own fault or whether or not smoking

is good for you, you know, perhaps the benefits of children ingesting ivermectin, that those are the kinds of things that researchers and universities are not spending enough time and money on” – the province is going to step in and say: no, federal government; you have to fund those kinds of research projects that we here in the UCP cabinet hold dear, or else we’re just going to deny the funding. That’s not a way to establish and enhance a credible and world-leading research ecosystem here in Alberta.

It’s incredibly frustrating to me and to many people that I’ve been talking to since Bill 18 was introduced that we have yet to see any amendments from the Minister of Advanced Education about carving out postsecondary institutions. She has made that promise several times here in the Legislature, and she’s intimated to her stakeholders that exemptions for university research funding are coming, but we will not see them. Time allocation expires in three minutes, and we will not see any amendments carving out university funding from Bill 18. That’s a real shame. It just underlines the point that we’ve seen over and over again from this government since they’ve been elected, that we cannot trust a single thing that they say that they are going to do. The Minister of Advanced Education has let the people of Alberta down again by saying that she’s going to do one thing and then in practice doing another.

My final point, Mr. Chair, is that we often hear about an analogy given to Quebec and how this is the kind of legislation that Quebec has in place and they get more federal funding than Alberta does, so by bringing in this legislation, we’re going to bring more federal funding here to the province of Alberta. When it comes to university funding, nothing could be further from the truth, as the UCP is fond of saying. In fact, Bill M-30 in Quebec, which is the analogy that the government provides, specifically carves out university funding from the federal tricouncil agencies. Moreover, we should not look to the university system in Quebec as a model that we want to follow. The Minister of Advanced Education said that the universities in Quebec get the third-highest level of funding from the federal government of all the provinces. Well, the last time I checked . . .

The Deputy Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, but pursuant to Government Motion 37, agreed to earlier today, which states that after one hour of debate all questions must be decided to conclude debate on Bill 18, Provincial Priorities Act, I must now put the following questions to conclude debate.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on subamendment SA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:54 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

For the motion:

Boparai	Eggen	Pancholi
Calahoo Stonehouse	Elmeligi	Renaud
Ceci	Ip	Sabir
Chapman	Irwin	Schmidt
Dach	Kasawski	Shepherd
Deol	Loyola	

6:10

Against the motion:

Amery	Johnson	Rowswell
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Jones	Sawhney
Boitchenko	LaGrange	Schow

Bouchard	Loewen	Schulz
Cyr	Long	Sigurdson, R.J.
de Jonge	Lovely	Sinclair
Dreeshen	Lunty	Singh
Dyck	McDougall	Stephan
Ellis	McIver	Turton
Fir	Nally	Wiebe
Getson	Neudorf	Williams
Glubish	Nicolaides	Wilson
Guthrie	Nixon	Wright, J.
Horner	Petrovic	Yao
Jean	Pitt	Yaseen
Totals:	For – 17	Against – 45

[Motion on subamendment SA1 lost]

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

[The voice vote indicated that the remaining clauses of Bill 18 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 6:12 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Jones	Sawhney	
Armstrong-Homeniuk		LaGrange	Schow
Boitchenko	Loewen	Schulz	
Bouchard	Long	Sigurdson, R.J.	
Cyr	Lovely	Sinclair	
de Jonge	Lunty	Singh	
Dreeshen	McDougall	Stephan	
Dyck	McIver	Turton	
Ellis	Nally	Wiebe	
Fir	Neudorf	Williams	
Getson	Nicolaides	Wilson	
Glubish	Nixon	Wright, J.	
Guthrie	Petrovic	Yao	
Jean	Pitt	Yaseen	
Johnson	Rowswell		

Against the motion:

Boparai	Eggen	Loyola
Calahoo Stonehouse	Elmeligi	Pancholi
Ceci	Ip	Renaud
Chapman	Irwin	Sabir
Dach	Kasawski	Shepherd
Deol		

Totals: For – 44 Against – 16

[The remaining clauses of Bill 18 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Any opposed? That is carried.
The committee shall now rise and report.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Airdrie-East.

Ms Pitt: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 18. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. So ordered.

The Assembly now stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:17 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Prayers	1549
Introduction of Guests	1549
Members' Statements	
Premier's Attendance at Alaska Sustainable Energy Conference.....	1550
Government Policies	1550
Workers' Compensation Board	1550
Hospital Discharge Policies.....	1551
Ponoka Stampede	1551
Provincial Immigration Programs.....	1551
Notices of Motions	1551
Oral Question Period	
Education Funding.....	1552
Government Contracts.....	1552
Gaza Protests and Law Enforcement Response.....	1553
Oncologist Recruitment.....	1554
Social Studies Curriculum	1554
Seniors and Cost of Living	1555
Homelessness Initiatives.....	1555
Farm-restricted Class 1 Driver's Licence	1556
Rosebud Race Track Environmental Approval	1557
Electric Power Prices.....	1557
Drug Poisoning Death Prevention	1558
Arts and Culture Funding	1559
Tabling Returns and Reports	1559
Orders of the Day	1561
Government Motions	
Time Allocation on Bill 18.....	1561
Division	1562
Government Bills and Orders	
Second Reading	
Bill 20 Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2024.....	1562
Division	1569
Division	1569
Committee of the Whole	
Bill 18 Provincial Priorities Act	1569
Division	1576
Division	1576

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