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The 31st Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, May 12, 2025

Day 110

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

First Session

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New Democrat: 36

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, May 12, 2025

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Please be seated.

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, I would like to call the committee to order.

Bill 47 Automobile Insurance Act

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? I will recognize the Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Member Kayande: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I've already spoken at some length, I believe, about the challenges with no-fault insurance, especially because this particular approach that the government is taking to no-fault insurance prevents any judicial oversight at all. It prevents any recourse or redress to the courts and really relies on a tribunal for which – oh, my goodness; what's the act? – the Arbitration Act does not apply nor the rules of evidence. This is the problem with starting from a cold start.

I just want to highlight one piece of a ruling in Judge Eidsvik's analysis of Jones versus Stepanenko. In clause 45 it says:

With respect to his opinion that she did not suffer from a "serious impairment" [the doctor] testified that he based his decision on the medical model – NOT the definitions in the Regulations. Further, in his view, if one suffers from a strain or sprain, this cannot lead to disability and therefore cannot be a "serious impairment". "As long as you can do it" is his bar. As a result, [the doctor] admitted that in his 15 years of assessing strains and sprains ... he has never found someone who has suffered a "serious impairment."

This is an insurance company doctor who has never in 15 years of practice, according to the ruling in Jones versus Stepanenko, ever found somebody who met the bar for being permanently injured. Fifteen years.

With that, Mr. Chair, I would like to propose an amendment to at least make this act a little bit more honest.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, the amendment will be referred to as amendment A1, and I would ask the member to read it into the record while the pages distribute.

Member Kayande: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Member for Calgary-Elbow to move that Bill 47, Automobile Insurance Act, be amended as follows: (a) in section 1(x) by striking out "care-first" and substituting "no-fault," (b) in part 4 by striking out "care-first" wherever it occurs and substituting "no-fault."

Basically, this is a very simple amendment. What it does is that it makes very clear that the province is implementing no-fault insurance. They can use whatever terms they want. They can call it care-first. They can call it – I don't know – Disneyland insurance. You know, it could be the happiest thing in the world, and the Oilers win the Stanley Cup, but in reality this is no-fault insurance. It walks like a duck. It talks like a duck. It sounds like a duck. It's probably a duck.

I believe that the people of Alberta are much better served by simply being honest with them rather than dressing it up with some fancy words like "care-first," which we don't know if they're actually going to be, and just calling it what it is, which is no-fault insurance. So it's probably appropriate that we just change the name of the panel from care-first panel to no-fault panel.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? President of Treasury Board, Minister of Finance has risen.

Mr. Horner: Yeah. Well, I'll be very brief. I won't be supporting this amendment. It's very important to us that, you know, people know and understand and get to know that this is a care-first system. Fault still matters in this system. It'll matter in the cases of egregious traffic acts where the tort system will still be available, but it'll also matter in that bad drivers will pay higher premiums. This is about getting better care to Albertans quicker, in a way that they can return to their lives in as fully a way as possible. If they're unable to recover, then they'll have support for the rest of their lives till they're 65. We think it's the right thing to do. I won't be supporting this amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you.

Any other members wishing to provide comment? Seeing none.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Deputy Chair: Back onto the main bill. Are there any other members wishing to provide comment? The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Member Kayande: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Disappointing. I mean, if the minister says that, you know, fault doesn't matter, then it kind of sounds like no fault to me. It was just a little amendment that would have helped bring some honesty to the model of insurance that the province is coming up with.

The challenge here and the B.C. implementation of no fault that is partially being modelled in this legislation means that people who – it leaves a carve-out to allow people to sue in the case of a criminal conviction. Now, the challenge is that the bar for criminal conviction is very high, as it should be. Somebody can be not convicted of a crime if their Charter rights were violated in the collection of evidence, for example, which is as it should be. But what it means then is that under this system somebody who is hit by a drunk driver who is not actually convicted of drunk driving cannot get the benefits and cannot get recourse to courts and cannot sue for damages such as pain and suffering.

I want to really emphasize how much pain and suffering matters. Like, this can't be minimized. If somebody is hurt by someone acting negligently and intentionally in the course of driving their vehicle irresponsibly – like, suppose somebody lives for playing the guitar and can't do that anymore because of their injuries. Is that person not entitled to some form of compensation? That's all being taken away. Basically, the whole notion from this government is that: look, driving is so dangerous; it's so incredibly dangerous that we simply as a society cannot afford to compensate people for their losses if somebody is hit by a bad driver.

So I would like to propose an amendment to at least fix the worst of these problems.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, the amendment will be referred to as amendment A2, and the member can proceed to read the amendment into the record please.

Member Kayande: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Member for Calgary-Elbow to move that Bill 47, Automobile Insurance Act be amended in section 80(1) by adding the following after clause (c): “(c.1) a person, other than a third party referred to in clause (c), whose use or operation of an automobile intentionally caused or contributed to the bodily injury.”

7:40

Mr. Chair, what this amendment does is that it reserves some right to recourse to tort law. You know, tort law goes back a very long way. Torts are basically the law of injury. It predates our system of democracy. It's basically based on the principle that if somebody hurts you, they're required to make it right. What this amendment is doing is adding one very small piece that was missing from the original legislation, which is that somebody who intentionally harms someone – so we can think about, for example, the horrible incident in Vancouver just recently against the Filipino community, where it's uncertain whether that driver will be found criminally responsible and will be criminally convicted, and so those people who were hurt in the operation of his motor vehicle, which was intentionally driven into that crowd, may not have a right to sue or get recourse for their injuries which could be lifelong.

“Intentionally” really keeps us very narrow. It doesn't include negligence. It's just a matter of intent, and I certainly hope that the entire House can support this, because I think that it is actually adding something to the bill that is currently missing. I will say that in B.C. right now, the rule put in by regulation is that there is an ability to sue in the case of criminal conduct. However, the insurance company is not required to indemnify for that, so it would basically be a person who is hit by a drunk driver suing that drunk driver and getting no recourse to that drunk driver's insurance company. So guess what? They could sue, but they could probably get \$4,000 or \$5,000 for it depending on how much wealth that they have. This closes that loophole and makes it makes it possible for somebody who is hurt intentionally to get the insurance company to indemnify them.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Any other members wishing to make comment? The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Horner: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Happy to stand and speak to what I believe was amendment A2.

I won't be supporting this amendment. You know, this has been well thought out in the areas where tort access would still apply. The member spoke to the horrific act that we saw in B.C., the intentional attack on the Filipino community, and that did – I know there were articles written, and it forced us to, you know, look at what the circumstance would be under Alberta's care-first system. The truth is that all would be far better off under the care-first model.

What happens now in an intentional act, you know, is they're forced to go after a different pot of money. It's different than your standard third-party liability. In those cases when you have all of these victims, in the case in B.C. it would have been about \$200,000 that would have been split 26 ways, I believe, amongst the victims. Pardon me. That's under our current tort model. For an intentional act you can't go after the same pot of money. Under ours not only is there, you know, substantially better benefits for those that were deceased, but there's also the care and permanent impairment benefit.

The member mentioned that there's no compensation under this model. That's not the case. There is the income support piece, which is substantial and can last until someone is 65, up to \$120,000

or whatever delta exists, plus there's the permanent impairment piece. So, in most cases, people would remain far better off under this model, and that's the very high percentage. That's why this works. We're paying the full ride, but we're just cutting out the litigation to get there.

I appreciate what I think is the intent of this, but under our model it would be far better than the current tort system, and so I won't be supporting this.

The Deputy Chair: Any other members wishing to provide comment on amendment A2?

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Deputy Chair: Back onto the main bill. I will recognize the Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Ellingson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I, too, have also had the opportunity to speak a couple of times on Bill 47 and chat with quite a few people about Bill 47. I guess I'll just start out by hoping that – and I think the minister appreciates that what we're doing is putting forward some proposals that we think could potentially strengthen the bill.

We do know, as the government also knows, that Bill 47 is not particularly popular, that people are perceiving, when surveyed, that this is not a bill that's going to help them out. In fact, in the *Drayton Valley Western Review* it was published in research conducted by Nanos Research that 47 per cent of Albertans believe that it is unlikely that premiums will go down with the enactment of Bill 47. Only 19 per cent believe that premiums will go down.

Further, it kind of, like, reinforces a little bit of what my colleague from Calgary-Elbow was saying about how Albertans value their legal rights. Seventy-five per cent believe that they should have the right to sue an at-fault party for compensation when they're injured in an accident. As we've just discussed, there are very narrow kind of, like, definitions of when people will have the ability to sue within the context of Bill 47. Albertans really do believe that the ability to sue an at-fault party is important to them to keep accountability and to know that their insurance system is working.

While the definition of when you can sue is quite narrow, Bill 47 does create a tribunal which is going to be hearing cases. It'll be quasi-judicial, and it'll be hearing cases with respect to claims and compensation from accidents.

I also have an amendment for this bill.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Members, this will be referred to as amendment A3.

The hon. member can proceed to read it into the record, please.

Mr. Ellingson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that Bill 47, the Automobile Insurance Act, be amended in section 83 by striking out subsection (3) and substituting the following:

(3) Subject to subsections (3.1) and (3.2), the Minister may appoint persons under subsection (2) that meet the prescribed qualifications and eligibility requirements.

(3.1) The members of the Tribunal must include at least one of each of the following:

- (a) an individual who, at the time of the appointment, is a lawyer actively practicing in the area of personal injury law;
- (b) an individual who was in an accident, within the 7-year period prior to the time of the appointment, and filed a claim for compensation under a motor vehicle liability policy or in a court in relation to that accident.

(3.2) No more than half of the members of the Tribunal may be employees or representatives of an insurer or an insurance agent, as those terms are defined in the Insurance Act.

Mr. Chair, what I'm proposing here is that in Bill 47 it leaves the composition of the tribunal to the regulations. This is just, I think, providing some guidance to when that regulatory work is done in creating the composition of the tribunal. What I'm proposing here is to make sure that we have some impartiality, that we're drawing from a broad range of experiences for people who are on the tribunal.

7:50

I'd like to read for a moment, Mr. Chair, a blog from full disclosure, a personal injury lawyer blog. One of his clients, where "normally healthy and active," finds themselves "still recovering despite timely and comprehensive treatment," including "medication, therapy, and home exercise." Their "acute neck and back injuries unfortunately evolved into chronic pain" and "ongoing postconcussive symptoms include sleep disturbance, persistent headaches, concentration and memory issues, and posttraumatic stress disorder."

Chronic pain and brain injuries are not minor matters; they effect one's ability to function, enjoy, and contribute fully in every area of life. To suggest that serious injuries such as [theirs could] be categorized as 'minor,' and that compensation... from the careless driver's [insurance] be artificially capped [in] a tiny fraction of [the] fair value is ill informed and reprehensible.

What we're proposing is that if we ensure that there's some impartiality on the tribunal and that not every member of the tribunal is from an insurance company, we might be able to counteract some of that and perhaps give the opportunity for this proposed care-first model, as the government calls it, to really work the way it's intended.

I hope that the minister or the government will give this amendment due consideration and vote in support of the amendment. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Any other members wishing to provide comment on amendment A3? The President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Mr. Horner: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that I think this is another amendment that is well intentioned. We aren't at a place right now where we want to be that prescriptive. A lot of this consultation is still ongoing, but I will take this forward. I won't be supporting this today, but I appreciate your thoughts here, and I'll have a conversation with the department when we do get to that place in the regs. But I won't be supporting this today.

The Deputy Chair: Any other members wishing to provide comment?

I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

The Deputy Chair: We are back on the main bill, and I see that Edmonton-Castle Downs has risen.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to rise tonight to speak to Bill 47, the Automobile Insurance Act. I have to say that I'm a little bit disappointed that we have put forward three amendments which, I would like to note, were done in consultation with experts, and they were all defeated. Unfortunately, that's something that we watch this government do over and over as they put forward legislation without really a lot of consultation or any

sort of – I'm not going to say that. They put forward legislation without consultation.

We have done some extensive consultation in talking with those experts that are involved in automobile insurance, specifically different sections of the act that they are changing, and this government decided: "Nope. We're not going to do that. We're just going to go ahead with what we've put forward."

There are some significant concerns with this piece of legislation. I'm hearing it in the community all the time, Mr. Chair. The cost of living in Alberta continues to go up, and we're watching a government that is doing nothing to impact that. What we're seeing is pieces of legislation like this, which is ultimately going to cost Albertans a lot more money. It's hard to sit in this place and watch a government that is hearing the same concerns from Albertans that we are and doing nothing about it. Instead, they're putting forward pieces of legislation that, unfortunately, have negative impacts on Albertans that are simply struggling to just make ends meet. When we were listening to the arguments for the amendments, I find it concerning that it was just a straight-out: no, we're not going to do that.

We've seen this government over and over put forward legislation related to insurance that is really in the best interest of insurance companies. In the last Legislature, the 30th Legislature, we watched them take away the rights for Albertans to have multiple physicians bring forward concerns when there was an automobile accident. What that meant was that if there were multiple experts, multiple injuries they had to choose one that was allowed to come forward and provide information. That has a direct impact on the ability to move forward in any sort of litigation or compensation for that accident that people are entitled to.

We watched this government in the previous Legislature take away concussion as a serious injury. With the more and more research that's done on concussion, we know that it has significant impact on an individual's day-to-day life. I know I've spoken in this House before about being a coach in football for my youngest, and in order to be a coach for football, one of the first things we had to do was take concussion training. It's significant what happens to your brain, yet the science that supports concussion was completely disregarded, and this government went ahead and took it away as part of an automobile accident as a serious injury.

Here we are again with Bill 47, where the government is saying: you know, we're doing this in the best interests of Albertans. Well, they don't have a really good track record when it comes to supporting Albertans. It's concerning, Mr. Chair, that continuously we watch this government do things that are in the best interests of insurance companies.

When you talk to people who have been impacted by automobile accidents, there can be some significant impact. The member that was speaking before me was talking about PTSD. Now, that is something that we're just now starting to really understand, and there's nowhere in this legislation that supports any of those types of injuries, Mr. Chair. There's nothing that's talking about payments for medical care, equipment, medication, income replacement. None of that is in this piece of legislation. The reality is when someone is in an automobile accident, that is the real-life consequence of that, yet it's not addressed in here. We have a piece of legislation that favours insurance companies and does, really, nothing to support Albertans.

Now, there are so many that have come to me saying how the cost of their insurance has put them in a place where they literally have to decide if they can drive their vehicle or pay for housing. That should never be something that an individual has to contemplate, Mr. Chair.

It's concerning. When we were government, we implemented a cap to premiums, and one of the first things that the UCP did when they became government was get rid of it. What happened? Well, insurance rates skyrocketed, and we sat back and watched this government – we didn't sit back, to be clear – just completely disregard what Albertans' reality was.

8:00

People are struggling to pay for things like utilities, food, housing, and when we ask them about it, they get up and they talk about all of these amazing things that they're doing to help the average Albertan. It's not true, Mr. Chair, and this legislation specifically speaks to that. If they think that having skyrocketing insurance is to the benefit, we're not seeing it.

When we did the cap when we were government, we had asked for data to support that decision, and we asked for data from insurance companies to prove that they needed to increase rates. We wanted it based on information. That to me makes sense. That's how decisions should be made. The UCP didn't seek any data when they just removed the cap. Again, that was a benefit to insurance companies.

Now, there's a lot of concern when you have government that's making decisions not in consultation, not based on data, and this is what leads us to this piece of legislation. We had, like I mentioned, three amendments that wouldn't fix this piece of legislation, because we're hearing loud and clear that Albertans don't want this, but it could have made it a little bit better. They voted no. They said: no, we're not even considering that.

Now, when we have insurance rates that are currently fluctuating between the highest to the second highest in the country, that should signal something to the government to say: maybe we need to look at that and have a real decision that has an impact to reduce those rates. That hasn't happened, Mr. Chair. For many, many drivers in the two major cities, Calgary and Edmonton, they live in the most expensive cities in the country for insurance. That's concerning, that the government has this information and still goes forward with this piece of legislation.

When I talk about what the impact of the cap removal was, people felt it. They knew that it went up. Well, there's data that supports that rates went up an estimated 35 per cent between 2019 and 2024; 35 per cent increase. That is significant. That should tell the government that they need to do something about it, yet we're not seeing that action. We see a government that has their mind set on doing something without data, without support, without consideration to how it impacts drivers in our province, and that to me is concerning, Mr. Chair.

When it comes time to vote for this, I really hope that there's some consideration in voting no. I can't support this piece of legislation, and, with that, I will take my seat and listen to the rest of debate.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Any other members wishing to provide comments or questions? I will recognize the Member for Calgary-North East.

Member Brar: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Today I rise not just as the MLA for Calgary-North East but as the voice of workers, parents, and elders, not the ones who make headlines, but the ones who make Alberta run. I speak for the mother in Cityscape who finishes her hospital shift, then starts her evening driving for Skip just to cover the insurance premium of her family's only car. I speak for the retired couple in Redstone whose savings now go more towards the premium than prescriptions. And I speak for the young

newcomer in Cornerstone who just got his license, got his first car, and then got quoted more for insurance than the car is worth. These are not anecdotes; they are Alberta's reality.

A few weeks ago I sat with a dozen Calgary cab drivers, the kind of folks who kept our cities together during the chaos of COVID-19, along with my colleagues from Calgary-Falconridge and Calgary-Bhullar-McCall. While some politicians were hiding behind the podiums, these folks were behind the wheel with their masks on, hazard lights blinking, driven by pure courage. What did they get for their service? Skyrocketing premiums, layers of red tape, and a government that watched them get drenched in hailstorms in 2019, 2020, and 2024.

Mr. Chair, Bill 47 is being sold like a care-first policy, but it looks more like a profit-first and people-last policy. The UCP says that it's modelled after Manitoba, but in Manitoba insurance is publicly delivered, publicly accountable, and publicly affordable. This bill is Manitoba in name but Mississippi in method.

Let me share with all my colleagues how it is. This bill proposes a no-fault system. Under Bill 47 if someone crashes into you while texting, you are out of luck unless they are criminally convicted. No lawsuit, no pain and suffering claims, no justice, just paperwork.

The Canadian Bar Association has already warned that no-fault systems often shift costs from insurers to public health systems. Think about that. We are not eliminating costs. We are relocating them from the profit columns of insurance companies to the pockets of hard-working Alberta taxpayers.

Dr. Elaine Bernard, labour expert from Harvard University, once said: "no-fault insurance is less about fairness and more about finality. It closes cases, not wounds." That's exactly what's happening here.

Now, let me talk a little bit about the so-called Alberta's care-first tribunal. It sounds gentle. It sounds fair. But let's decode that. Every member on this tribunal is appointed by the minister. No transparency, no public oversight. If your claim is denied, you just get 30 days – 30 days – to file, appeal, and gather every receipt and report. That's not a tribunal, Mr. Chair; that's a trap clock. Who will sit on this tribunal? Will it reflect Alberta? Will it include voices from Skyview, from Cityscape, from Cornerstone, or will it be a few folks whose only commute is from a boardroom to a golf cart?

Let's talk about some of the most outrageous sections in this bill. Section 10 allows insurers to stop your treatment if they decide it's not likely to help. What does that mean, "likely"? Likely by whose standards? Doctors' standards, an adjusters' standards, or the insurance companies' spreadsheet's standard?

Section 33. This section says that if you are over 65 and unemployed, you don't qualify for income replacement. So if you are a senior working part-time to keep the heat on, you're out. Try GoFundMe. That's what the UCP says in this bill.

8:10

Section 49 puts a five-year cap on noncatastrophic injuries, but trauma doesn't follow time cards. Ask a physiotherapist. Ask a trauma counsellor. Ask a survivor. Mr. Chair, I spoke to Baldev Singh, a local truck driver in my riding of Calgary-North East. He was rear-ended in 2021. He went to physio, struggled to return to full work, and after six months his benefits were challenged. Under this new system his pain would have been dismissed with a denial letter. This bill is not designed with Baldev Singh in mind. It's designed for boardrooms.

Now, the government boasts that this will save Albertans \$400 a year. Let's decode that, and let's look at the math, Mr. Chair. Rates are going up 7.5 per cent this year and again next year. That's a 15 per cent hike on a \$2,500 annual premium. That is \$375. So congratulations, Albertans; you get a \$400 rebate after paying \$375

more. It's like getting a coupon for a steak dinner after the cow has already been sent to the lobbyist barbecue.

Mr. Chair, let's learn from our neighbours, not copy their failures. Michigan had the most expensive car insurance in the U.S. until it reformed its no-fault system in 2020 because that entire model became a scam. Florida's no-fault model turned into an insurance fraud playground with fake clinics and staged accidents. Colorado, Georgia, Connecticut: all scrapped no-fault. Why? Because it didn't work. Here in Alberta we are copying their models, the failed models from the U.S.

Why not choose to use a public delivery model like Manitoba's? The government's own commissioned report says that a public model would have saved \$732 annually and would have created 5,000 jobs. That's the government's own report. Why did they turn it down? Because, Mr. Chair, the UCP is not here to build systems. They are here to build spreadsheets for the shareholders of the insurance companies. Albertans are not naive. They see it. They feel it. They know this is not a reform.

Mr. Chair, our job is not to protect the powerful. It's to protect the public. To the families of Calgary-North East, to the cab driver in Cornerstone, to the Uber driver in Taradale, the single mother in Cityscape, and the grandfather in Savanna trying to stretch every CPP cheque: I hear you. I hear your struggle. I feel your exhaustion. You deserve better than a policy wrapped in red tape and sealed with corporate signatures on it.

Today I say no to Bill 47, no to rising premiums, no to eroded rights, and no to tribunals stretched like a deck of cards. More importantly, I say yes to fairness, yes to transparency, yes to publicly delivered insurance in Alberta, yes to putting people back in the driver's seat.

Let's stop this crash before it happens. If you're heading towards a cliff, the solution isn't to press the gas and close your eyes; it's to hit the brakes and make the U-turn. Let's put the public back in public service, let's put compassion back into policy, and let's build a system that protects Albertans, not just insurers' bottom lines.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you.

I will recognize the Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. My brother was killed by a drunk driver in 1977. Kevin Dach would have been 66 years old right now. He was 17 years old, just graduated from high school, and in the fall of 1977 was attending Lakeland College in Vermilion, hoping to be trained as a park warden. I imagine him regularly as a reluctantly retired park warden these days at age 66, as I think of him often as a very successful warden in one of Canada's national parks.

He and three others were driving to a hockey game in Mannville while students at the college, and an opposing vehicle struck the vehicle my brother was a passenger in. The driver killed three people and maimed another one for life and survived himself, as is often the case with drunk drivers who don't brace themselves for the impact. That driver received a \$1,500 fine and a six-month licence suspension. That was the way things were in 1977 in the courts. My family received \$1,000 from the insurance company. That was how much in Alberta an insurance company thought a life was worth in 1977. It seems to me that the UCP, by passing Bill 47, seems to agree with this sentiment.

This is one family's story, Mr. Chair, but it is multiplied thousands of times over. What this bill is doing – this care-first bill really means that, in my view, the government couldn't care less about the rights of Albertans to full compensation for injuries caused by the driver to others. What this bill does is totally

disregard the story behind my family's and thousands of other Alberta families' stories, who suffered tragic losses which are life-changing, never forgotten incidents.

When that phone rings, Mr. Chair, and the family is together in the house, and it's 10 o'clock at night, you know – you just know – something terrible happened. I'll never forget walking over to the community hall where my dad was volunteering at a community event, having to tell him the horrible news after ushering him out of the hall. The whole hall fell silent because they knew and they recognized a community member going into that hall, and they knew something was wrong. I had to tell him, sitting in a truck, that his son, my younger brother, probably wasn't going to make it, then gather the whole family to get down to the emergency room at the general hospital to see him one last time. Of course, when you're ushered into the quiet room, you know where you're going. Of course, the news came, and we knew that he had died.

His five siblings and my parents were forever shocked and saddened and changed, and our family never was the same again. I mean, just any family that goes through that, when you're that close, losing somebody at that age, it's never, never the same. I shudder to think to myself, Mr. Chair, how many families will be denied the right to full and fair compensation not only for those that are killed as a result of the actions of another driver but for the severely injured. The individual who survived that crash received little to no compensation.

8:20

This legislation, this no-fault legislation is something that should not be considered lightly. We're going down this road in Alberta apparently to save people money on their insurance rates. That is a debatable point, Mr. Chair, as to what actually people might save as a result of adopting this no-fault insurance. What are we giving up in exchange, and what rights are we burying forever if this legislation is passed? It's a right of a family to justice by way of compensation, probably not being paid for by the individual who caused the harm but that individual's insurance company and perhaps the unsatisfied judgment fund in Alberta in the event of an uninsured driver.

But what we're actually giving up is the lifelong ability for somebody who's injured severely in an accident such as this to live a life with dignity, Mr. Chair. Injuries suffered in motor vehicle accidents are consequential, and they are debilitating, and they are expensive. They are not covered anywhere near to the extent that they need to be by no-fault insurance rates, that set the ceiling for certain compensatory damages for injuries suffered as a result of somebody's negligence in a car accident. It doesn't come even close to allowing a person to live with dignity after being ravaged by a motor vehicle accident and suffering devastating injuries.

So I call upon the government to give some sober second thought to what they're doing here and pull this bill. Pull it even at this late stage, Mr. Chair. It's a mistake, it's wrong, and Albertans will hold them accountable for it, because I am not alone. My family is not alone. We potentially had the opportunity to sue for greater damages even back in 1977, but going through that trauma – it was a decision made primarily by my parents – was something we couldn't contemplate, the trauma of years and years of litigation for an unknown potential result in 1977, when an insurance company could potentially drag things out longer than a family who was victimized could withstand.

In the whole context of this bill, Mr. Chair, I wanted to bring it home; I wanted to make it real. This is what Albertans are thinking about in their homes, in their living rooms, in their coffee shops. When they're talking about their insurance and they're talking about the rights of those who were harmed in a motor vehicle

accident to actually sue for damages, believe me, everybody in those conversations, including many in this room who are members of the Legislature, will know somebody who knows somebody, if they don't actually know somebody intimately, who has been damaged in a motor vehicle accident and has suffered great injury. What they are thinking about now is wondering whether or not, if that happens to somebody else in their family, this individual will be denied their right to full and fair compensation, and the answer is yes. That is what this legislation will do. It removes the right to full and fair compensation from a family, from an individual if indeed they've been injured in a motor vehicle accident by somebody else's negligence.

I implore the government to really think hard about the consequences long term for themselves as a government, as a party in an election campaign, to hearken as to what they might have done better had they really thought about what Albertans feel about this legislation, because they're not in the majority in support of this legislation, Mr. Chair. Far from it. It is the majority opposing it, and I know why. My family is a prime example of why we want to retain the right to full and fair compensation for those in motor vehicle accidents.

I know there are lots of folks who wish to go ahead and speak more to this piece of legislation. I'm looking to see if indeed others wish to get up. I think they do, so I'll sit down now, but hopefully I brought some semblance of the reality that Albertan families face when they look at the government deciding to do away with this right, that Alberta families should retain, to full and fair compensation in the face of injuries caused by a driver who's negligently caused them.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you.

I will recognize the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Mr. Horner: Yeah. I'll be very brief, Mr. Chair. I know we have limited time, and there are other people that want to speak. I just want to address some of the comments I've heard from the previous two speakers if they truly are confused. The way that was just described: that sounds like a terrible deal for Albertans, and that is not what Bill 47 is. We're talking about prompt, better care. I feel terrible for the story the member told about the brother he lost. Very, very tragic. I'm sorry to hear that story. Under Bill 47 there still is tort access for egregious traffic safety violations like DUI. You can still sue in that circumstance.

What's more important is that you're going to be provided prompt care and great compensation. There's still permanent impairment. There's still income support. Previous speakers said that there's no income support in here for Albertans. There's the highest level in Canada. We took the benefits framework from Manitoba. The one tweak that we made to align with higher incomes in Alberta was to increase it up to \$120,000. That's over the course of your life. If you're injured as a young person, that's till you're 65 and other federal benefits take over. So this is about taking care of our people. This is about making sure that they can recover to the most fulsome level that's possible, and then this is about making sure that that delta is dealt with through compensation.

I have a different takeaway from some of the surveys that have been done. Albertans may like the right to sue, but they would rather not have a reason to sue. They would rather have prompt care, great benefits and compensation and not be in a system where if you need more than \$50,000 of care you have to get a lawyer and go through the system; it may take three years minus 30 per cent plus disbursements. We're cutting right to it and making sure Albertans

get the care they need so they can recover to the highest level as soon as possible. That is what this bill is about. We wouldn't be doing it otherwise. This is about Albertans.

The comments about, you know, the system being expensive, why don't we do something about it: that's exactly what we're doing. We're stuck in the second highest premiums in the country because of the system we're in. This is about a system change, and it'll go live January 1, 2027. I worry that some haven't read the bill or they're confusing the situation that we're in now with where we're headed.

This is about Albertans. It's about the highest level of benefits in the land and making sure people are cared for quickly with the best care and not needing to enter the legal system to get it. I'll leave it there. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: The Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: Yep. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity briefly to touch base here. Sorry to hear that story, too, from my colleague from Edmonton-McClung. Such a tragedy that your family faced, and I'm sorry they had to go through all of that and the loss of your brother.

My colleague to my left here talked about the experience that we had when we were government in terms of seeing insurance companies ratchet up their premiums on a yearly basis and looking to them for answers around all of that and then getting into a committee with us and then pulling out of that when the Kenney government was elected. They didn't move forward with it, and prices, cost, premiums went up exponentially under the UCP government at that time.

I just want to address the whole issue about regulation. Too much, I think, is being left to regulation in this bill. There are 14 times where reasonable and necessary expenses will be left to regulation or the setting of regulation, and I started to go through and find some of those myself.

8:30

I can see under section 38, determination of entitlement to permanent impairment benefit, towards the end of that section it says, "calculate and determine the amount of a permanent impairment benefit to which an insured is entitled in accordance with the regulations." I don't know what that's going to be. I think that would be really important for people to understand.

Section 45, determination of entitlement of death benefit, payment, or reimbursement, 45(1)(b) talks about, "calculate and determine the type and amount of a death benefit to which a person is entitled in accordance with the regulations." Those aren't before us. Those will be drafted, brought forward to the Executive Council at some point probably and approved there.

End of income replacement benefit, noncatastrophic injury. It starts with section 49(1), "subject to this section and the regulations." I could go on, Mr. Chair. There are many, many instances here where Bill 47 talks about the regulations that will be developed in the future and brought forward, but I can tell you that at this time I won't be supporting this bill because I don't know what any of those numbers and amounts are going to be. They may be talked about. They may be working them up, but they're not in this bill.

You know, we're at a time when we need to, as colleagues here have said, assure Albertans that their paycheques can cover all their costs. What we know is that we're the highest premiums for insurance in the country, and Albertans are suffering under that as well as other costs that have gone up under this government.

Again, with that being said, and my, of course, feelings and condolences to my colleague, I'll sit down.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: I will recognize the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that the committee rise and report progress on Bill 47.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 47. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. That is so ordered.

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 45

Critical Infrastructure Defence Amendment Act, 2025

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and move third reading of Bill 45, the Critical Infrastructure Defence Amendment Act, 2025.

It's no surprise, Mr. Speaker, that our government believes in a strong Alberta within a united Canada. That's why we have the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act, to defend Alberta's interests by giving our province a legal framework to push back on federal laws or policies that impact our province. That's why we introduced Bill 45, to support our work under this important piece of legislation to protect Alberta's interests and ensure continued economic growth and the ability for us to continue producing responsible energy to meet the growing global demand.

Earlier this year we created a two-kilometre deep zone on Alberta's side of the Canada-U.S. border and deployed the interdiction patrol team to secure it. Now we're moving that zone into the Critical Infrastructure Defence Act so that the definition of essential infrastructure is listed in one place. This is simply some legislative housekeeping. Second, Bill 45 will also designate oil and gas production sites and facilities where emissions data and records are held as essential infrastructure. Updating the definition of essential infrastructure would help secure our province's economy and provincial jurisdiction.

Not only are we ensuring that our oil and gas facilities are safe from trespassing and interference; Bill 45 would also apply to the federal government, which would further protect Alberta's economy and citizens from a federal oil and gas emissions cap. That's why Bill 45 is important, Mr. Speaker. The Premier and my cabinet colleagues have spoken at great length since we formed government but especially in recent months about how we cannot let Ottawa continue to stand in our way. We will not tolerate the continuous unconstitutional overreaches made by the federal Liberal government.

That's why I encourage all members of this Assembly to vote in favour of Bill 45, so that we can continue producing energy for the world and protect our province and all Albertans from more disastrous Liberal policies.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to make comment? The Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to offer some brief comments on this bill. This bill does nothing of the sort that the minister mentioned. It is a political stunt. It's political theatre. It only helps this government to distract from the issues that Albertans are facing, be that the cost-of-living crisis, be that threats coming from south of the border, be that Albertans' access to health care, access to education, and other things that we hear routinely from our constituents.

What does this bill do? It designates all lanes within two kilometres of the Alberta-U.S. border as essential infrastructure. This was already done through regulation earlier this year on January 29, 2025. If the government was doing anything in those two kilometres, they already designated that land as critical infrastructure. They had that in place. But again they just thought that it would be a good use of this Legislature's time to qualify something that they already have in the regulation.

The second thing is that it classifies oil and gas facilities where production and emissions data are stored as essential infrastructure. Government did not consult on this change, and that data doesn't belong to this government. This government, I guess like any other right-wing government, champions free market economy, where investors are free to invest as they see fit and government facilitates them with lower taxes, government facilitates them with less regulations, government facilitates them with all kinds of sweet deals. But here government is taking over the data of private businesses, that doesn't belong to government, and those businesses are not happy about it. I think again that's a constitutional – that's government overreach. Government is failing to stay in its lane, that they always preach to everyone else. Government is going quite far off here, and they are declaring private businesses' data as their own.

The third thing that it does is that this bill also binds the government of Canada. That's something new. The last school I went to, they said that that would be something that's not constitutional, that would be something that's not legal, but somehow government and its lawyers think that they can bind the government of Canada with their bills.

8:40

The way constitutional division of power works: sections 91 and 92 specify the exclusive jurisdiction of the Parliament and provinces. The way the Constitution works is that Parliament can legislate whatever is set aside for them in those sections, and provinces can do so within their own jurisdictional competence. It's unheard of that a province can put together a piece of legislation that would bind the federal government. Again, that's something that may be good for the government's base, the UCP base, to show them that we are passing legislation that will bind the government of Canada, but in fact it does nothing at all to protect Albertans or their interests.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

This policy of political stunts and confrontation with Ottawa might help the UCP to whip up their base, but it doesn't help us address the issues that are facing this province, be that issues of

responsible, sustainable development of oil and gas in this province, be that tariffs from the United States. All those things need thoughtful leadership. All those decisions need this government to step up, show leadership, and work with other orders of government to work in the best interests of our province and Albertans. Again, this bill does nothing to help Albertans in any way, shape, or manner. It doesn't help address issues that Albertans are facing. This is just a performative political stunt. I urge all members of this House to think about this, that their constituents elected them to get behind that kind of legislation or they expect them to focus on issues that they are facing.

With that, I am urging all members of the House to oppose this piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members to Bill 45? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Haji: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 45. As the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall alluded to, the bill designates all land within two kilometres of the Alberta-U.S. border as essential infrastructure. The question is: what does this bill address that we have?

The two-kilometre designation is not about public safety, in my view, Madam Speaker. It is about political optics. In the wake of Donald Trump's looming tariffs, that's when this government felt that they needed to do something, and they came up with this plan of creating this critical infrastructure, that they have included the U.S.-Alberta border. It is about protecting an image of toughness, not about sound policy or actual needs that Albertans want to see this government put forward as a priority. It is nothing different than the Mar-a-Lago visit, it's nothing different than the selfies in Florida, and it is nothing different than sharing a stage with Ben Shapiro, which has nothing to show for it, whether it is diplomacy or whether it is U.S.-Canada relationships.

What Albertans actually need and expect from this Assembly, Madam Speaker, is: does this bill make health care more accessible? The question that we all need to ask is: does this bill lower the bills? Does it address the housing shortages? Does it address the food prices that are going up? The answer is no, Bill 45 doesn't. What it does is it spends public dollars on symbolic enforcement zones, which don't improve the public safety and don't improve the livelihoods of Albertans.

So, Madam Speaker, governance should be about results, not headlines and not political optics. Governance is legislation that should solve problems, not inflate fears. Bill 45 is theatrical, it is reactive, and it is a distraction from the real work that is needed to address affordability. Therefore, I urge all members in the Assembly to ask the hard question and say: if this bill doesn't address affordability, health care, public safety, and many others that Albertans are asking, I ask all members to vote down this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members to join the debate on Bill 45?

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:47 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Jones	Sawhney
Armstrong-Homeniuk	LaGrange	Schow

Bouchard	Loewen	Schulz
Cyr	Long	Sigurdson, R.J.
de Jonge	Lovely	Singh
Dreeshen	Lunty	Stephan
Dyck	McDougall	Turton
Ellis	McIver	van Dijken
Fir	Nally	Wiebe
Getson	Neudorf	Williams
Glubish	Nicolaides	Wilson
Horner	Nixon	Wright, J.
Hunter	Petrovic	Yao
Jean	Rowswell	Yaseen
Johnson		

Against the motion:

Arcand-Paul	Elmeligi	Kasawski
Brar	Ganley	Miyashiro
Ceci	Goehring	Pancholi
Chapman	Haji	Sabir
Dach	Ip	Tejada
Eggen		

Totals:	For – 43	Against – 16
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[Motion carried; Bill 45 read a third time]

Bill 51

Education Amendment Act, 2025

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm delighted to stand in the Assembly today and move third reading of Bill 51.

Now, over the course of the debate of this bill we've heard a lot of different commentary and a lot of comments from the NDP as they relate to the bill. Unfortunately, nothing really productive, nothing really beneficial; just a lot of talking points and useless information. But this is something that we've come to expect. I don't think we even saw any amendments to the bill during committee. So nothing really shocking and surprising there.

But as a quick highlight in this final stage, having had the opportunity now to move through second reading and debate the general scope and principles of the bill, subsequently debate and discuss the bill in committee, the specific clauses, have the potential to explore any amendments, we now find ourselves, of course, at third reading, where we can summarize the completed bill with any and all changes and amendments. I just want to encourage all members of the Assembly to support the bill.

Bill 51, of course, makes a number of very important changes to the Education Act. One of those, as we've said, Madam Speaker, provides that a school board cannot remove a duly elected trustee for a breach or violation of the code of conduct. Why? Because we on this side of the House, unlike the NDP, believe in democracy. [interjections] They're laughing because they don't, of course. We believe in the importance of the democratic principle, and we believe that only voters should have the ability to remove a duly elected individual, not a board who decides that there's been a contravention of a code of conduct and just makes the decision in a closed meeting and removes someone who's been duly elected. The only people who should make that decision should be the voters. They can do that during an election or through a recall initiative.

The bill, of course, also makes a number of changes to the Alberta Teaching Profession Commission to help eliminate some red tape, help streamline processes there, and ensure that if there are any allegations directed towards teachers, the commission has the

ability to proceed with investigating those allegations with expediency. We are removing duplicative reporting requirements there.

So a number of important changes. I won't at this stage go through all of those. I did have the opportunity to do that in second reading. I just want to encourage members of the Assembly to vote in favour of it. Again, it will really help to move our education system forward, is responsive to concerns and feedback that we've heard directly from our partners and stakeholders, who have requested many of these changes be made. Happy to see the final vote of the Assembly.

Thank you so much, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms Chapman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Nothing productive or useful: a little rude. I asked some really specific questions in second reading. Now, the minister has only given us about eight minutes of his time on this bill. I guess he thought it wasn't worth his time to answer the specific questions that I raised in second reading.

Specifically, we talked about these changes to the Real Property Governance Act. Again, this was something in the piece of legislation from the last session, but this is now enshrined inside the Education Act. One of the questions I had for the minister is this change on schools being able to deal with surplus school sites. What I learned from consultation with school boards is that when they did have the opportunity to dispose of a surplus school site, they would use those funds to do the fit-up on the new school, right? The government will build them the school, but they will not actually give them all the money they need to get all the stuff in the school. It's a lot of stuff. Kids and their stuff.

I had a question about whether or not there were going to be any changes to how funding for school fit-ups were going to happen given that we're removing this revenue stream from school boards. We didn't hear an answer to that. [interjection]

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms Chapman: On the Alberta Teaching Profession Commission, now, the minister had just mentioned an elimination of red tape. Of course, there are some really specific concerns around the Alberta Teaching Profession Commission right now, the biggest of which is that it is completely incompetent under this government's control. I had mentioned that when the ATA managed this process, they were able to hold between 25 and 30 hearings per year, and now the best data that we have has shown that under the government's control they've had two hearings – two hearings – in 18 months.

9:10

Again, we talked about this a lot at second, that, of course, it's very rare where we have a serious case come before this professional code of conduct board, but of course when that serious case does happen, we actually want to make it to a hearing, right? It's very important. This is about the health and safety of our kids.

I had specific questions for the minister about how the bill was going to address the backlog of complaints that we know still needs to be dealt with, whether this bill does anything to set timelines on those complaints. Again, I'll remind the House that there are some teachers who have had a complaint before this commission for over 300 days, right? These are, obviously, not reasonable timelines for someone to have, like, a professional code of conduct violation just sort of hanging over their head. I didn't get to hear an answer from the minister on that, unfortunately.

The minister just mentioned concerns from stakeholders, and I think maybe here he was just mentioning – I think he was talking about e-mails. He got some e-mails. When we're talking about this change to the school, the ability to remove a school board trustee for violating their code of conduct – and, of course, we've talked about the example. It's pretty much the only example, the school board trustee who was removed after she – and a lot of people say "compared," but that's not the right word. What she did was equated. She equated the Nazi flag to the pride flag – right? – so she was removed. After ignoring sanctions from her fellow trustees, she was removed from her position.

Again, as we raised in debate, this was not a concern that was flagged by stakeholders. This was not something that the government did any kind of consultation on. The minister had received some e-mails. That was what that change was based on. I think it's a bit rich to stand up and talk about concerns from stakeholders when we're just talking about – who knows? – one, two, three e-mails? Who were they from? We don't know. No consultation was done. The government didn't bother to do consultation. They didn't bother to give us any information about this change.

To suggest that that side of the House believes in democracy more than this side of the House: we have Bill 54 in front of us right now, where we are making it harder for people to vote, right? The Chief Electoral Officer has flagged specific concerns around access to special ballots. That's supposed to be what makes the whole getting rid of the vote anywhere – gosh. Why make it easy for people to vote? If you love democracy, you make it hard for people to vote. You make it work. They've got to want it to be able to vote. Ridiculous.

Obviously, to vote anywhere is something that promotes actual democracy. Students should be able to vote on their campuses. Oil field workers should be able to vote at their work sites. What is the rationale for taking that away? We don't know. We don't know. No rationale is provided. We're told . . .

Ms Pancholi: There was probably an e-mail.

Ms Chapman: There was probably an e-mail. The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud just nailed it, I think. There was probably an e-mail about it, and that's where that came from.

The line we're sold on that is, oh, expanding this access to special ballots. Well, except it turns out the Chief Electoral Officer tells us no. That's not what's happening, right? The timelines on special ballots are actually going to make it harder. So, please, do not stand up and try to lecture us on a love of democracy when you are actively trying to make it more difficult for people to vote.

Oh, and the final question. Sorry; I really don't need to go on and on. I'm just a little bit irritated. When we're talking about that removal process of school board trustees – right? – first of all, to suggest that the recall petition is a legitimate way to remove anybody from public office is absolutely laughable. A 40 per cent bar on voters? Now, I think we have legislation in front of us right now that's changing it, right? They do want to make it easier, but the complication, of course, with school boards is that you don't know who the electors are. There are up to three boards in any given area. So how do you know? How do you know who votes in public, Catholic, or francophone? How do you identify the voters that you need to get signatures from to remove a school board trustee?

Now, I raised this in second reading as well, hoping that the minister would come back with some information on how exactly that process was going to look for Albertans.

Mr. Kasawski: He's a busy guy.

Ms Chapman: He's too busy to answer the questions, unfortunately. But to stand up in here and suggest that nothing productive or useful was said, that we didn't have valid questions about this bill, is a little bit frustrating. It's a little bit frustrating, Madam Speaker.

We've still got a few minutes here, so I'm going to sit down and I'm going to see if the minister feels like it's worth his time to pop up and answer some questions about his so-great bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others to join the debate?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:16 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

Arcand-Paul	Elmeligi	Kasawski
Brar	Ganley	Miyashiro
Ceci	Goehring	Pancholi
Chapman	Haji	Sabir
Dach	Ip	Tejada
Eggen		

Totals: For – 43 Against – 16

[Motion carried; Bill 51 read a third time]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise to request the unanimous consent of the Assembly to move to one-minute bells for the remainder of the evening sitting, including the first bell in Committee of the Whole.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Government Motions

Time Allocation on Bill 46

65. Mr. Amery moved on behalf of Mr. Schow:
Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 46, Information and Privacy Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, 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 Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Thank you again, Madam Speaker. I rise to move Government Motion 65 on the Order Paper on behalf of the Government House Leader.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much. The motion that was just moved by the Minister of Justice, which I understand to be debatable, is a motion to limit debate on this bill. When we talk about limiting debate, it's important to understand what we're talking about in terms of a bill.

This is a government that just three days ago was found to have violated sections of the freedom of information legislation. Albertans were seeking information from their government, and this government withheld it, in violation of the law, that included, you know, essentially limiting requests, restricting the time frame for records, splitting requests. Essentially, it was a government that was hiding information even as set out in the act. What did the government do about it? Well, they've come before us to change the law, not to change their actions, not to be more transparent but to change the law so that the action which they took previously, which was illegal at the time, will no longer be illegal. That's some pretty bad behaviour.

The government doesn't want to talk about that. They don't want the public to know about it. They don't want us to talk about it. So what they're going to do is limit debate. The purpose of debate in this House is to bring this to the public's attention, to have conversations so that not just the people who are being illegally denied information by this government are aware of it but that everyone is aware of it, because the public would not be supportive of this.

This bill also contains something called a King Henry VIII clause. These are very bad clauses. It is essentially executive branch overreach. It is named for King Henry VIII, who attempted to appropriate the powers which rightly belong to the Legislature. A bit of an odd choice for a supposedly libertarian government, but here we are. It's incredibly problematic. It was so problematic, in fact, that the last time this happened, the King Henry VIII clause – it was called Bill 10. It was under the Kenney administration. They actually repealed it. They walked it back because they realized that it was the wrong thing to do.

This is a government that's trying to pass legislation to become the least transparent government in history. I mean, they already were the least transparent, but apparently that wasn't enough. They needed to be even less transparent. Now they're coming forward and saying: oh, we don't even want to be transparent enough to let the public know that we're trying to hide things from them, so we're going to limit debate. It's incredibly problematic. It is absolutely a violation of all members – all members – of this Legislature, not just the ones on the NDP side.

Madam Speaker, I'm honestly really surprised that we haven't seen anyone from the government side, any of the private members over there get up and object to this. It's their privileges that are being taken away, too. It's their ability to see and understand what is happening with the laws that are being taken away, too. These clauses in this bill that remove the rights of members of this Legislature affect government members just as much as they affect members of the opposition.

We were all sent here by constituents. We have or ought to have in a representative democracy the right to represent those constituents. But this government is moving closure not just on this incredibly problematic bill but on a bill that will allow a separatist referendum, on a bill that will create private American-style, two-tier health care, that will deny access to health care for Albertans, on a bill that is the worst of all worlds in insurance.

There are a number of incredibly problematic things that this government is doing. I would expect all members to vote against this motion. It is an incredibly problematic motion. Madam Speaker, I certainly won't be supporting it. I would really love to see some of the private members on the government side stand up for democracy.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others?

I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 65 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:40 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

Arcand-Paul	Elmeligi	Kasawski
Brar	Ganley	Miyashiro
Ceci	Goehring	Pancholi
Chapman	Haji	Sabir
Dach	Ip	Tejada
Eggen		

Totals: For – 42 Against – 16

[Government Motion 65 carried]

Time Allocation on Bill 50

68. Mr. Schow moved:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 50, Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, 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 Deputy Speaker: Any members to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak against this time allocation motion on Bill 50, which is limiting the debate in this House to just one hour. If you divide that hour on the members who are representing this Legislature, you get less than a minute to speak about Bill 50. That's a bill that could potentially restrict the voting rights for the First Nations, their participation in the decisions of local municipalities that impact them in every way. It will give more control to the UCP over the local government decision-making such as their code of ethics, such as their land use and municipal bylaws.

This is a legislation that's part of the pattern of legislation that we have seen from this government that is designed to consolidate control within the government, and they did not consult anyone on this bill. Municipalities are against it, Calgary is against it, Edmonton is against it, First Nation communities are against it, and Albertans are against it. They want to use this time allocation motion, use and abuse their majority to limit the debate in this Legislature so they can ram through their agenda, their centralization of the power.

Second thing. I think this bill represents government overreach. That's why government is seeing that they are having a hard time passing it through the legislation. They are having a hard time selling it to the stakeholders that are impacted by this piece of legislation. We are opposed to it. Albertans are opposed to it. Municipalities are opposed to it.

Instead of focusing on centralizing power, I think what government needs to do is stop using these heavy-handed and undemocratic motions and stop suppressing the dissent and democratic accountability that comes through debate in this Legislature. That's a trend that we have seen from this UCP government. We were in government 2015-19. Time allocations were used only on one bill. The UCP has used time allocation more than 62 times – 62 times – over the last six years. That is taking us more towards authoritarian kind of government than bringing things before this Legislature, letting the members who are duly elected to represent their constituents debate in this House.

I would urge all members of this House, especially the UCP backbenchers and private members of this House, to think about why you're elected to this House. Think about the impact this motion has on the powers and privileges of the members of this House and the democratic accountability that comes with the debate in this House. I urge all members of this House to think about your constituents, think about the role Albertans elected you for, and do not just give the UCP everything they want because this one is not good for our democracy. This one is not good for debate in this Legislature.

I urge every one of you to vote against this motion.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 68 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:49 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Jones	Sawhney
Armstrong-Homeniuk	LaGrange	Schow
Bouchard	Loewen	Schulz
Cyr	Long	Sigurdson, R.J.
de Jonge	Lovely	Singh
Dreeshen	Lunty	Stephan
Dyck	McDougall	Turton
Ellis	McIver	van Dijken

Fir	Nally	Wiebe
Getson	Neudorf	Williams
Glubish	Nicolaides	Wilson
Horner	Nixon	Wright, J.
Hunter	Petrovic	Yao
Jean	Rowswell	Yaseen
Johnson		
Against the motion:		
Arcand-Paul	Elmeligi	Kasawski
Brar	Ganley	Miyashiro
Ceci	Goehring	Pancholi
Chapman	Haji	Sabir
Dach	Ip	Tejada
Eggen		
Totals:	For – 43	Against – 16
[Government Motion 68 carried]		

Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole
(continued)

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

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

Bill 46
Information and Privacy Statutes Amendment Act, 2025

The Chair: I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South West rising to speak.

Mr. Ip: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am rising to introduce an amendment, if I may, to Bill 46. I have it right here.

The Chair: Hon. members, this will be known as amendment A5.
Hon. member, you may proceed.

Mr. Ip: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to introduce the following amendment to Bill 46, the Information and Privacy Statutes Amendment Act, 2025. I'll take a few moments to sort of explain my rationale. I should mention that this marks the fourth amendment or maybe even the fifth amendment, I believe, we have brought forward to this legislation, each an attempt to protect the democratic principles that my hon. colleague from Calgary-Mountain View mentioned earlier and that all Albertans hold dear.

To remind colleagues in this House, we began with two amendments which sought to remove the sweeping Henry VIII clauses outright, clauses that would allow cabinet to rewrite legislation without public debate or legislative approval. Now, when those were rejected, we offered another amendment, a measured compromise that would have significantly narrowed the scope of these powers, allowing for limited technical updates while safeguarding against abuse. Again, that too was rejected. Here we are presenting yet another amendment, one last opportunity perhaps on this piece of legislation for members on the government side to demonstrate any remaining integrity and backbone, but I'm not holding my breath.

Madam Chair, this amendment does not limit or remove any powers. It simply requires that when the government chooses to exercise the extraordinary regulatory powers, they must publish a copy of the regulation, explain the changes, and provide the rationale within 30 days on a publicly accessible website. If this

government insists on keeping these extraordinary powers, if it refuses to accept reasonable limits, then surely it must be willing to tell Albertans when and how it uses them. Amendment A5 is a democratic safeguard, really a basic standard of democracy. I know government members would like to dismiss this as all much ado about nothing, but government overreach isn't much ado about nothing.

Allow me to continue to make this case, that my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View so eloquently began in her remarks. I want to start with first principles. When a government asks for extraordinary power, in a democracy it must earn the trust of the public. It must demonstrate that it exercises power with restraint, transparency, and integrity. That's how a transparent, accountable democratic government should behave. But this government has not earned that trust. In fact, it has done quite the opposite.

I'll just start with a bit of a track record. They've rejected every amendment we have brought forward in good faith. They have refused to commit to public accountability. They have repeatedly shut the door on the very idea of legislative scrutiny, and they're basically saying to Albertans, you know: "Trust us. Trust us. This is just administrative." Let me remind all members of this House that this current government is under fire for violating its own freedom of information laws, for refusing a public inquiry into the corrupt care scandal, and for replicating the same overreach that they once admitted went too far under Bill 10. This is not how a trustworthy government behaves, and it is exactly why this amendment is needed.

Madam Chair, the minister has argued that information about regulatory changes will be made available in annual reports or other year-end disclosures, but frankly that's not good enough. When laws are changed, especially laws that affect the public's access to their own information or their right to privacy, Albertans deserve to know in real time, not six months later, not buried in an appendix to an annual report. Transparency that comes too late is no transparency at all, and by the time year-end disclosures are compiled, the public has already lived under those regulatory changes without knowing what changed or why. Journalists can't ask questions, legal experts can't weigh in, legislators can't respond, and the public is kept in the dark. This amendment, amendment A5, ensures that disclosure is timely, accessible, and meaningful, and that's important.

10:00

Let's begin with this government's record. I have to say that the most damning evidence of this government's failure to uphold transparency comes directly from Alberta's Information and Privacy Commissioner, Ms McLeod. In her report released just days ago, she found that all 27 government departments were failing to comply with Alberta's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Just think about that. Departments were instructing staff to reject broad requests, force applicants to split their questions, impose arbitrary limits on timelines or topics, all of which are not permitted under the FOIP law. In fact, Commissioner McLeod wrote, "these public bodies are not permitted by sections 7 and 10(2) to refuse access requests and . . . they contravened their duties to assist under section 10(1)."

Madam Chair, this wasn't a mistake; it was systematic obstruction. And now this same government, caught in a co-ordinated effort to block access to public information, is asking for the power to change laws in silence, without scrutiny, without debate. This amendment simply says – it's a very reasonable, simple amendment – that if you want to make a change to the law, you must tell us and the Alberta public and members of this House what you did and why.

Let me dig a little deeper into the recent report released by Alberta's Information and Privacy Commissioner. There are some key findings that I find troubling. First, the commissioner's investigation uncovered several areas where the government of Alberta's practice has deviated from the requirements of the FOIP Act. There was systematic noncompliance, and the investigation found that the government of Alberta adopted practices and interpretations that are noncompliant with the FOIP Act. They also found that there was inappropriate use of exceptions, that public bodies were found to be applying exceptions to disclosure in a way and a manner that was inconsistent with the FOIP Act and that this included overuse or misapplication of discretionary exemptions to withhold information that should have been disclosed. On top of that, there were delays in responses and a lack of proper documentation.

Madam Chair, this is incredibly serious. If a government cannot enforce its own laws and we are a province where the rule of law is paramount, how can we expect to trust that they will do the right thing when given extraordinary powers?

The findings of the investigation that was released by the Privacy Commissioner have serious implications for the transparency and accountability for the government of Alberta. This government could have used the opportunity of Bill 46 to address the gaps to ensure that they are respecting the rule of law, but instead they are doubling down on their desire to obfuscate, to make it more difficult to hold the government to account, and they are making the process less transparent, not more.

There are existing challenges with bills 33 and 34, that the government passed a few months ago. Bill 34, for example, raised significant concerns regarding the potential to undermine the principles of transparency and accountability. For example, Bill 34 expanded exemptions for cabinet and political staff records. They also broaden the discretion to disregard access requests. Frankly, this specific provision could lead to the dismissal and has potentially led to the dismissal of legitimate requests and limit the public's ability to obtain information and reduce accountability.

Bill 34 also increased restrictions on the Information and Privacy Commissioner's oversight. Section 50(6) specifically limits the commissioner's ability to review certain records during investigations, including records of communication with political staff, records subject to legal privilege. The risk here is that this restriction hampers the commissioner's oversight capabilities, potentially allowing public bodies to withhold information without independent verification. On top of all of this, if this weren't enough, Bill 34 extended timelines for responding to access requests, and these changes could result in significant delays in accessing information, undermining timely transparency.

Madam Chair, with very flawed bills, that bills 33 and 34 are in their current form, not only did the government not attempt to actually improve upon these pieces of legislation and ensure that Albertans' privacy and access to information are protected and ensure that this is a government that is accountable and transparent; instead, they doubled down. This government included Henry VIII clauses that actually erase any mechanism of accountability at all, and they're doing it in secret.

That is why on this side of the House we have introduced amendment after amendment after amendment, because this is an issue that goes beyond partisanship. This is about the foundations of democracy. This amendment that we're introducing today, amendment A5, gives this government an opportunity to do the very basic – basic – work of ensuring that the public is informed when a change is made, and I encourage all members of this House to vote in favour of it.

Thank you.

The Chair: Hon. members, I forgot to mention at the beginning of Committee of the Whole that pursuant to Government Motion 65 not more than one hour shall be allotted to further consideration of Bill 46. That will be 10:54, for members to note, when the time is up.

Are there any other members wishing to join debate on amendment A5? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. This is a bill that aims at the heart of our democracy, which relies on transparency and accountability. What the bill does is it tries to further hide information from the public. That's, obviously, pretty problematic. The whole point of freedom of information laws is to allow the public access to government information. Democracy itself is actually premised on people having the information, people making an informed decision, but this is a government who's hiding that information from the people. One might argue it's because they don't want them making informed decisions because informed decisions would not be voting for the UCP. It's problematic. It's a very problematic piece of legislation.

When you add to that – one of the specific pieces I want to talk about here is something that people call a King Henry VIII clause. It's kind of a long term for it. Essentially, what it's talking about is massive executive overreach, so the executive reaching into the powers that properly belong to the Legislature. It gives the cabinet power to write laws, a power which the Constitution says that for elements within the jurisdiction of Alberta this body, this Legislature, ought to have. But the UCP want to take that away.

10:10

The funny thing is, Madam Chair, if you'll indulge me in a bit of a story, that the UCP tried this once before, but the former Premier Mr. Kenney had the good grace to admit he'd made a mistake and walk it back. I don't really think we're going to see that from this government. I think it's pretty illustrative of the difference between – and, like, to be clear, I didn't love the UCP before this, but I think that even a neutral observer with no political opinions could see that this is worse than it was before and getting steadily worse, frankly.

In April of 2020 Bill 10 passed through this Legislature. It gave the minister powers to do what only the Legislature should do, to create a new law. It's a King Henry VIII clause. The public backlash was swift and not just from the Official Opposition but from many groups throughout the province, including many who study and advocate on constitutional law, some of which are, honestly, extremely far-right groups, libertarian groups, but basically it received opposition from all corners. Honestly, I think that this is a very similar thing.

Now, this amendment that we have proposed doesn't repeal the problematic clause – we tried multiple amendments to get rid of the problematic clause, to limit it – but it at least requires that this government publish when they change the laws. That doesn't seem like a ridiculous request. You know, if you're going to grant the executive powers that belong to the Legislature to pass laws that people have the right to know about, the least you can do is publish them so that people know the law has changed. I mean, this seems pretty noncontroversial.

Anyway, back to the story. At that time in 2020 Bill 10 was before the Legislature, and we proposed many amendments to limit those powers. In fact, we proposed an amendment just like this amendment. All of them were rejected. Government members were put up to rail about how it was ridiculous and unnecessary and we were creating a stink over nothing and no one should be concerned. Just trust them; they wouldn't use the powers. Well, it turns out the public did not trust them, and with good reason.

Ultimately, the outcry became so loud – and I sincerely hope, because there are members who are still in this Chamber today who rose in their places to tell us how ridiculous our objections were to Bill 10 at the time, that they feel some level of regret for that because they were wrong, and they were shown to be wrong by their own folks.

The UCP had to strike a committee to consider what would be done with the bill, and I was privileged enough to sit on that committee. The committee got a lot of media coverage. Now, for anyone watching this anywhere else, you may not be familiar with legislative committees. They don't generally get a lot of attention. This just showed how interested the public was in this massive government overreach. The public was interested, and who wouldn't be? This is a supposedly libertarian government – they're supposed to be shifting further to the right of the old Progressive Conservatives – engaging in one of the worst instances of government overreach in decades.

The case was made clear before the committee despite the fact that the UCP members limited significantly what experts could contribute, basically to people that they thought constituted as experts, not people that would have been deemed experts by some neutral third-party observer or by the opposition. They limited who could contribute. Nonetheless, the case was made extremely clearly, I would say, that this government overreach was unconstitutional, it was unlawful, and it was just wrong. The UCP had given themselves, essentially, the power of kings. That's why it's called the King Henry VIII clause. It's named for the historical figure who attempted to divest the Legislature of its rightful ability to pass laws.

The importance of the laws coming through the Legislature, just for clarity, is that the public gets a chance to see them. It's public oversight. It's the opportunity for the public to know and understand what's going on. In fact, the fact that we are putting before this House this amendment, an amendment that would require the UCP cabinet to publish the laws within 30 days, I think illustrates the problem, that they can change legislation, that they can change those laws without even publishing them, without even letting the public know.

Back to the committee. The committee considered the matter, and the opposition recommended the removal of powers for ministers to write laws. Very surprisingly, the UCP voted against that. In fact, some of those members are still in the House today. The Minister of Affordability and Utilities, the minister of children's services, and the members for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright and Camrose all sat on that committee, all voted against the powers. Now, I say it was surprising not because I particularly expected the UCP to reach deep down in their souls and find the right thing and do it but because the private members voted against executive branch overreach, voted against their own rights. I can only hope they were whipped to do it; otherwise, this makes no sense at all, particularly in light of the fact that only 17 days later the then Minister of Health, as he was then, indicated that he would repeal those powers, and he ultimately did.

What is the point of this somewhat lengthy digression? Well, the point is that a clause like this, a clause that takes the powers of the Legislature and vests them, concentrates them in the hands of cabinet, hadn't come before this Legislature in decades. It is very rare for things like this to happen. The UCP did it under Premier Kenney, and they were ultimately forced to walk it back. They were forced to admit they were wrong. I assume those members on the committee, the ones that I have just listed, those who survived the last election, probably felt embarrassed getting massive feedback from their constituents, getting told that they were violating their supposedly libertarian principles. It was some significantly right-

wing stakeholders who were against this. I expect that they were very embarrassed to then find themselves hung out to dry when the minister decided to reverse position. I'll never know what caused them to vote in that way.

I would say to members of this House – like, those names are on the record forever. Those people are on the record as having voted against the interests of every member of this Legislature, in favour of executive overreach, and then had the executive itself turn around and say: "You know what? That was actually way too far. We're going to go ahead and walk it back." I would urge the members of this Chamber to consider this tale and to consider that they can do better, that they don't have to vote in favour of this bill, they don't have to vote in favour of this overreach or, at minimum, they could vote for this very simple amendment, an amendment that doesn't scale back the executive powers, but it does require them to publish the laws.

I mean, I don't know. As someone with a law degree I'd have to say that I find it, like, absolutely absurd that we would govern ourselves in this manner, that we would find ourselves in a situation where a government is passing a law to limit access to information, but beyond that, gives their cabinet the ability to pass more laws to limit the public's access to information. They don't even feel like they should have to publish that so that the public knows why they're being denied.

My point here is that the UCP have tried this before, and they walked it back. Premier Kenney, as he then was – I may not have agreed with him on much, but I do agree with the fact that he apologized to Albertans, and he reversed course. I hope some members over there can learn a lesson from that, because they should do exactly the same thing.

10:20

I mean, this really gets to the purpose of Legislatures, at the end of the day, which is essentially to allow public transparency. I mean, the bill itself is meant to quash public transparency, to prevent people from getting access to information from their government, a government that is supposed to govern for the people. That's what they're trying to prevent us from getting access to information on. But beyond that, this would potentially be even further, even more laws, and being passed without any debate. I mean, we've limited debate. We have limited debate here, so they're trying to limit the amount that we can say, limit the amount that the public can see, limit the amount of consideration. But beyond that limiting, it is a bill that itself gets to the heart of what the public is entitled to.

What I would say, Madam Chair, is that it's incredibly problematic. It's a problematic bill. It's a problematic clause. The amendment is the smallest – the smallest – possible improvement, and I really think members of this House should consider doing it. There is a lot of bad legislation passing through here right now. There is legislation to allow a separatist referendum. There is legislation to create American two-tier health care. There is, well, the same piece of legislation that limits people's rights to vote. Fundamentally, what we're seeing moving through this House, it's not just an attack on democracy; it's an attack on accountability. It's an attack on our values as Canadians: getting rid of public health care, talking about leaving Confederation.

This government is – well, I mean, I guess I understand why they're passing this particular FOIP legislation, right? Because freedom of information would give the people access to information, and why would this government want the people to have access to information? They're embarrassed by their own actions. They're embarrassed by what they're doing. I'd be embarrassed, too, if I was them. Separatism, two-tiered health care – gosh, there are so many more. The worst of all possible universes

for insurance: it costs more, and it does less, much like their two-tier health care system will do. Yeah, I guess in some ways I do understand why the UCP is doing this, because I wouldn't want the public to see what I was doing if I were them. I would be embarrassed if I were them, so I understand why they're trying to cover it up.

[Mr. Rowsell in the chair]

Mr. Chair, at the end of the day, this amendment is very simple. Members should vote in favour of it. It takes the smallest slice out of a massive government overreach, something that the former Premier, Mr. Kenney, knew was wrong. But, apparently, our current Premier doesn't have any idea what right or wrong is. I would urge all members to vote in favour of the amendment.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Any others that want to speak on amendment A5? We have the Minister of Technology and Innovation.

Mr. Glubish: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I just felt that I needed to come and bring a little bit of balance to the conversation tonight about Bill 46 and the proposed amendment because I think it's important to have a balanced perspective before we make our decisions and before we vote in this Chamber.

The Member for Calgary-Mountain View had a lot to say that I'd like to address. First of all, the member went on and on about this Henry VIII clause. Now, I know the member has got a background in law, and I would think, you know, that in law words are important; the specifics of the words that we use and the way we frame a sentence is important because it affects interpretation. The way we use a word in a sentence conversationally, Mr. Chair, is very different than the way we frame a sentence in legislation and the way that lawyers interpret them, and it's important that in the context of making laws, we talk about the way we framed it from the perspective of interpreting law.

The clause that they're concerned about literally says, "For the purposes of making any necessary changes as a result of this Act." Any necessary changes, not any changes, Mr. Chair. There's a big difference between saying any changes that the government wants no matter what versus any changes that are necessary as a result of this act. There is a very big difference between those two statements, and this legislation says, "necessary changes as a result of this Act."

I've explained this in this Chamber before, but the members opposite don't seem to listen. The explanation is that there are literally hundreds of references across every piece of legislation in the government that refer to the old freedom of information and privacy act, which, as a result of bills 33 and 34, once they are proclaimed, no longer will exist, so we need to make sure that all those old references now refer to the correct reference of either the Access to Information Act or the Protection of Privacy Act of Alberta.

This is a simple find-and-replace exercise that will go through hundreds and hundreds of references. This is the most efficient way for Leg. Counsel to be able to go through and make all of those changes and to give them full force and effect in the time frame within which bills 33 and 34 and their associated regulations will be published and will come into full force and effect upon proclamation, hopefully later this month. That is the sole reason for this clause.

To that end, I'm happy to say in this Chamber if it will give folks a little bit of comfort on the other side, that in a future red tape reduction bill in the fall, I would be very happy to repeal this clause because we're not going to need it a month from now, but we do

need it in order to make sure that everything gets proclaimed quickly because there are literally hundreds of references that need to be updated. To do every single one of those through legislation is simply not practical, not realistic in terms of time frames.

So there you have it. I'm on record saying that we're happy to repeal the clause once we're finished with the simple find-and-replace exercise. Happy to do that this fall, Mr. Chair, in a red tape reduction bill. I mean, this is a perfect example of why the work that our Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction is doing is so important. The fact that we have a standing red tape reduction bill every session – every spring session; every fall session – is a perfect opportunity to take care of small, little tweaks like this.

I hope that will give the members opposite some comfort because we are not at all interested in using this clause to do anything we could dream of relevant to privacy and access to information laws. That's why we defined it the way we did, "any necessary changes as a result of [the] Act." Once we're done this one exercise of updating the hundreds of references to the old FOIP legislation, we won't need this anymore and we will happily get rid of it.

To the points the member raised about publishing the changes, look, yes, they proposed an amendment on that, and we decided not to support that amendment. You know why, Mr. Chair? These changes will all be done by an order in council which will be published the way they always are. These changes will be published later this month upon proclamation of bills 33 and 34 and upon the publication of all of the associated regulations. So they're already getting what they're asking for. We don't need to make an amendment to the legislation here in Committee of the Whole to make that happen. That's the way the government already works. It's the way that we're going to continue to do things.

Mr. Chair, this is why I felt it was important to bring some balance, because there was a ton of overheated rhetoric coming from the other side trying to make it sound like the government is trying to give itself extra powers. We don't need those extra powers. We don't want those extra powers. We simply are looking for the most expeditious way to update hundreds of references in dozens and dozens of pieces of legislation and to do that quickly and in a responsible way.

Now, the member went on to talk a bit about how this government should be embarrassed. Well, look, you know what I think? Let's talk about something that's worth being embarrassed about. Let's talk about the NDP track record when they were in government, Mr. Chair. They chased away well over 100,000 jobs from this province. They chased away tens of billions of dollars of investment from this province. They even went so far as to tell Albertans that they should move to B.C. to go and get a job. Shame on them. That's something to be embarrassed about. Mr. Chair, that is why the NDP were the only one-term government in the history of this province. That is something to be embarrassed by. Not only then do they talk about things like that, but then they go on to threaten Albertans by saying that the United Conservative government is trying to impose a two-tiered health care system.

10:30

Mr. Chair, the member opposite is a lawyer. The member opposite should understand that there is a Canada Health Act that is the federal government's jurisdiction, and that legislation explicitly prohibits a two-tiered health care system. We don't make those rules, we can't change those rules here in Alberta, and we follow those rules here in Alberta. We have committed, ever since we formed government in 2019, that we would have a universally accessible, publicly funded health care system, and everything we have done over the last six years continues to build towards a

stronger health care system that is universally accessible and publicly funded. Any allegations by members on the other side of the House of a two-tiered health care system is by definition fearmongering.

Ms Pancholi: Point of order.

The Acting Chair: A point of order.

Point of Order Relevance

Ms Pancholi: Mr. Chair, the minister is not speaking to the amendment at hand or the bill that's before this committee for debate.

Mr. Glubish: Mr. Chair, I think the point is that I spoke at length to the bill and to the amendment, and now I was addressing comments made by the member opposite previous, which were not talking about the bill or the amendment. I'm just simply planning to bring this full circle to explain that all of the arguments presented by that side are fallacies and that Albertans should not take them seriously and then essentially bringing it back to my arguments about why we should vote against this amendment and why we should support this bill.

The Acting Chair: Thank you very much. I did hear references to those things, so I won't call it a point of order.

You can proceed and get to the point.

Debate Continued

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I was saying, when the members opposite go and try and criticize the government and say that we should be embarrassed, I have offered some great explanation of what embarrassment by definition really would be, and it is the NDP's track record when they were in government. Then they have gone on to use allegations of a two-tiered health care system to malign our government and to fearmonger with Albertans, which is not helpful in public discourse.

Mr. Chair, I caution the members opposite through you to say, "Yes, let's focus on this bill." Let's focus on what we're trying to do to strengthen privacy protections for Albertans and to modernize access to information legislation and to facilitate a simple and straightforward process to make sure that all legislation in the government of Alberta properly refers to the new pieces of legislation that bills 33 and 34 create and that will come into effect later this month, assuming that Bill 46 passes, and that all of our regulations are published in that time frame. That's what our commitment is to Albertans, that we are going to get all of that done.

Now, the whole point of Bill 33, Mr. Chair – I don't hear the NDP talking about strengthening of privacy protections for Albertans. But that was the whole point. The whole point is that we know that privacy legislation was sorely out of date. It was over 20 years old, and it did not properly address the kinds of advances we have seen in technology in the modern age. It does not deal with social media. It does not deal with artificial intelligence. It does not deal with all of the new tools and technologies that Albertans use and take for granted every single day. That was why Bill 33 was so important, so that we could bring it into the modern day and bring the appropriate definitions so that Albertans knew exactly where they stood and they knew exactly what to expect from their government and from public bodies.

With the changes in Bill 33, Mr. Chair, Albertans will now have the strongest privacy protections in the country. [interjections] I know that the members opposite are having a little fun over there at our expense. But the good news is that we are on this side of the House making the decisions, and they're over there complaining about it because they're sad that they lost the election twice in a row.

Mr. Chair, we are focused on making the tough decisions to strengthen privacy legislation for Albertans so that they can be better protected, and that is exactly what we are going to continue to do. I'm proud of the work that we've done with Bill 33 on the privacy protection; I'm proud of the work that we are continuing to do to prepare for updates to PIPA, for the private-sector privacy legislation later this year; and I'm proud of the work that we're doing through Bill 46, making sure that all legislation in Alberta properly reflects the changes that we've made in bills 33 and 34.

These are important steps forward, Mr. Chair, and we're proud of the work that we've done. I refute the claims from the members opposite to say that we need this amendment, and I refute the claims from the members opposite that this government should be embarrassed, that this government is trying to bring in two-tiered health care.

I think we should focus on privacy. I think we should focus on access to information. I think we should focus on bills 33, 34, and 46, which is the matter at hand. I look forward to the remainder of the debate this evening.

The Acting Chair: Any others want to speak to amendment A5? Member for Edmonton-West Henday, go ahead.

Member Arcand-Paul: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise today to get back to this Bill 46 and to speak in favour of this amendment that my friend the Member for Edmonton-South West has proposed. During second debate the minister confirmed this bill to be a housekeeping bill to two pieces of legislation passed during last fall's session, the Access to Information Act and the Protection of Privacy Act. I would add that it is a bill that goes too far, but this amendment will temper that, and I urge all in the Chamber to support it.

I know the minister just went on about the necessary changes versus any changes the government wants. I find it interesting that the minister rose to debate this bill in second reading and started off his remarks by stating that these amendments are "minor but necessary" when, in effect, he has not actually produced any substantive changes to this legislation other than open it up without any legislative scrutiny via these Henry VIII clauses. While the minister has said that these clauses are specifically to deal with language and updating the relevant pieces of legislation, why wouldn't the minister just include this type of language in it then?

I do believe that we need to support this amendment because Bill 46 is a correction that I find quite concerning given the lack of engagement this government failed to undertake prior to hastily passing the Access to Information Act and the Protection of Privacy Act during the fall session. Why should Albertans believe that this government is doing everything adequately enough, even in this bill, when Bill 46 is in itself proof that the UCP has already had to fix some of its own mistakes? Why are we repeating this? I think that doing this multiple times is the definition of insanity. Mr. Chair, that creates an absence of confidence for those keeping score at home.

I, like my colleagues on this side of the aisle, raise a particular point of concern around section 97.1(1) of the Access to Information Act and section 62.1 of the Protection of Privacy Act, which is amended by section 2(9) in this bill. My friends have raised

these sections as the Henry VIII clauses, which would permit the UCP government to make any number of regulations relating to Executive Council's whims of the day, in particular, amendments to the Access to Information Act, the Protection of Privacy Act.

Of course, the Supreme Court of Canada has weighed in on this topic, most recently in a decision that this government might actually light their hair on fire over, the *References re Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act* from 2021. In that decision the majority wrote that there were no issues with permitting Henry VIII clauses but that the government does so at their own political peril. Certainly, this government is doing so at its own peril.

In dissent Justice Côté wrote a pretty expansive dissent to the ruling and highlighted a few things that I found rather pertinent to this discussion before us today. Justice Côté went through the relevant law over the years, and I found that a Privy Council decision from 1919 had some really helpful things for the UCP to consider in this bill.

In re Initiative and Referendum Act, [1919] ... Privy Council [decision] reviewed the constitutionality of Manitoba's Initiative and Referendum Act,

and found that section 92 of the Constitution Act, 1867,

vested the power of law making exclusively with the Legislature and the Legislature could not confer that power upon any other body.

In this decision Viscount Haldane held that section 92 of the Constitution Act, 1867,

entrusts the legislative power ... to its Legislature, and to that Legislature only ... it does not follow that it can create and endow with its own capacity a new legislative power not created by the Act.

In another decision from the Supreme Court of Canada in the 2018 decision of *West Fraser Mills Limited and British Columbia Workers' Compensation Appeal Tribunal* Justice Côté wrote in a dissenting opinion:

I would also urge the Court to rethink its eschewing of any capacity to probe the motives of multi-member bodies charged with the exercise of broadly-based or open-ended discretions and those conferred on the Governor General and Lieutenant Governors in Council in particular ... As well, I would ... condemn the use of Henry VIII clauses and, indeed, in at least some circumstances, the conferral of unstructured broad discretions.

Dr. James Johnson writes as well that:

Legislatures have a responsibility to draft enabling provisions that have content, and not simply pass on difficult conflicts in undigested form to executive decision-makers. Courts have a responsibility to ensure that the requisite content is present.

In these current drafts of Bill 46 that content isn't there, and that should leave us all concerned.

10:40

This debate about the use of Henry VIII clauses continues the concerns that I've raised in debate of both the Access to Information Act under Bill 33 and the Protection of Privacy Act. During that debate just last year we discussed the very real concerns that we all had with the act and, in particular, my concerns about transparency, and I echo those sentiments today. We must always be very clear and ensure that Albertans are aware of changes in legislation when it comes to their data, and Mr. Chair, this bill and these two clauses remove any shred of transparency over Albertans' data.

An oft-quoted line in this House when it comes to our conduct is relevant here: you cannot do indirectly what you cannot do directly. That is appropriate in this circumstance because these regulations that are forthcoming are something that every Albertan should be concerned about, with the executive making decisions without

public debate, without scrutiny of this Chamber, and without the decision-making authority that is vested in this Chamber.

Mr. Chair, while the case law is settled on this matter, it is not prudent for the exercise of our Legislature to be prevented from discussing potentially concerning amendments to these two specific pieces of legislation that deeply affect Albertans. That is the reason why my good friend put forward this amendment, and I do believe that we need some checks and measures in place to ensure that this executive decision-making of cabinet is not done in secrecy. This is why I'm opposed to the bill, but I would really hope that this amendment gets passed and I could support this bill.

I do suppose that the continued use of Henry VIII clauses and legislations can be the cause for political conversations because I know I've been having them with our constituents. I will certainly continue having them around the changes to the Access to Information Act and Protection of Privacy Act and any other bills that this government puts forward with regulatory inclusions.

This is especially concerning lately given that the Information and Privacy Commissioner's report after two years of investigation has found that the UCP government has implemented internal procedures and policies that allow government employees to wrongfully deny freedom of information requests and – get this – found they were noncompliant with their own freedom of information rules. This is egregious. While this is not a topic that is as attractive as some of the more ideologically backward pieces of legislation that the UCP is passing, it should cause concern to every single Albertan because the UCP are showing time and time again that it does not have transparency on its agenda, that it does not have the democratic rights of Albertans to know what their government is doing, that it does not respect Albertans' Creator-given right to hold their government accountable, and these amendments to the bill only further consolidate power into the UCP cabinet in more cloak-and-dagger manners.

This is why this amendment by my friend is so necessary. Allowing the government to make decisions behind closed doors and in manners that relate to the privacy of Albertans should raise alarm bells for every Albertan. This is why this amendment is so necessary.

Legislative drafting is an art, and plain meanings need to be adopted. We heard from the minister just moments ago that the drafting of this is supposed to be clear, but it's not. The ambiguity under 97.1(1) alone, "amend any Act or any regulation filed under the Regulations Act" causes one to think: well, what else is this government doing behind closed doors? I know that legislative drafting requires a law degree. I know the clerks in the room might also respect and understand that, but the plain meanings of these two sections are far too broad and indeed lead me and my friends on this side of the aisle to consider the potential nefarious activities that might arise under these clauses. I do believe that Albertans should be aware and to keep an eye on any regulations that stem out of this piece of legislation, given the words I shared from the highest judiciary in our federation.

Mr. Chair, I remind this Chamber of the language from the Privy Council and the opinion of a strong critic on the Supreme Court of Canada against these types of clauses that I spoke about moments ago. We have a responsibility in this House to ensure that legislation is passed and developed with the best interests of Albertans at heart. Preventing this House from being able to discuss in robust debate the contents of the regulatory framework that this government will put in place without transparency, if this bill moves forward, is egregious.

It is for these reasons, Mr. Chair, that I cannot support the Information and Privacy Statutes Amendment Act without the amendment passed by my friend from Edmonton-South West, and

I urge the members here to also support this amendment for these reasons.

Go, Oilers, go. We are leading the series 3-1.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Thank you very much.

Are there others that wish to speak to the amendment A5?

Okay. I will take a vote.

[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

The Acting Chair: We will continue on with Bill 46, the main bill. Go ahead, Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can I ask for a time check?

The Acting Chair: You have eight minutes.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a shame that we lost so much of this limited debate, limited by the UCP, to listen to the minister, who seemed to be quite upset about the fact that the opposition is doing its job and actually that we're doing the job that all the private members across the way should also be doing, which is questioning why they're deciding to centralize so much power and control into cabinet's hands, which, by the way, excludes many, many of the private backbenchers there.

I want to take a moment because the minister seemed to be very concerned about the wording of his own bill. The minister seemed to take issue with the fact that the opposition is concerned that the amendments in Bill 46 to both the Access to Information Act and the Protection of Privacy Act allow for cabinet to "for the purposes of making any" – any – "necessary changes as a result of this Act . . . amend any Act or any regulation filed under the Regulations Act." Now, the minister would say: necessary; it says only necessary ones. But, of course, it doesn't say who gets to determine what is a necessary change that cabinet can make, and in fact the only people who will be able to determine whether or not an amendment outside of this legislative Chamber takes place will be cabinet. That is what the concern is, Mr. Chair.

As well, it is incredibly broad. It says that it can make any necessary changes to any act or any regulation. There are thousands, well over 2,000, regulations that can be amended as a result of this clause. There are hundreds of pieces of enactments, of statutes that can be amended as a result of this clause. It's incredibly broad.

Now, the minister has said that they're only going to make those changes that are going to change the names and references to the old FOIP Act. I find that very hard to believe, Mr. Chair. It makes it sound as if it's about, you know, he didn't want to have to introduce a really big bill, like that's what they were concerned about, all the paper that would be created by making a bill that would amend all the FOIP acts, because that would be too much to ask.

Well, you know, Mr. Chair, I'm sitting – and I'm not going to use props, but I will reference two bills that are currently before this Chamber, Bill 54 and Bill 55, both almost 200 pages long, substantive pieces of legislation. It shouldn't take that many pages in order to change FOIP in every reference in the legislation.

Even if it would take that many pages, I don't know why this government is so afraid to do that. If they want us to trust them that that's all the purpose is behind these changes in Bill 46, they could either simply table legislation that says exactly what they're doing in these changes instead of seeing this broad "any necessary changes" they want or they could just introduce what was previously known as a miscellaneous statutes act. I'm surprised that this cabinet is not familiar with that. Through miscellaneous

statutes they can make all the changes they want to do, but instead, Mr. Chair, this government and this minister seem outraged that we won't just trust them.

Now, I think we can provide many, many, many reasons why Albertans and the opposition and even private backbenchers should not trust this cabinet and this government. Let's begin by saying that we listened to the Minister of Tech and Innovation, who was seemingly outraged that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View dared to speak. He seemed to take great issue with that, but sometimes when we're at our worst late at night, you just need to have a Snickers, Mr. Chair. I think maybe that's what might be necessary in this case.

But, you know, he's on the record saying: "Don't worry. We will repeal this in the fall. Just trust us. I'm on the record saying that we will repeal this section in the fall." On the record. You would think that that means something to the minister and perhaps this government, that saying things on the record would somehow mean that this government is going to follow through with them. The problem is, Mr. Chair, that they're asking Albertans to trust them, and if there's one thing that Albertans do not have for the UCP government, it is trust.

10:50

Let's give an example that was raised recently in question period. The Minister of Justice was on the record just a mere two months ago saying that all MLAs in this House would get a copy of the interim report from Judge Wyant, who's doing their sham investigation into corrupt care, and that we would all get to see that interim report before the final report was tabled at the end of June. He was on the record, Mr. Chair, saying that, and yet just last week we had confirmation of what we always suspected, that that is not happening. So it turns out that the things that are said by cabinet ministers cannot be trusted.

Let's talk about things that the Premier has said that cannot be trusted. For example, the Premier has been on the record, I think during a campaign, saying, "Don't worry, Albertans; I'm not going to mess with your CPP; I would never do that; it's fearmongering to suggest that; I will never do that," and then the first thing she did as soon as she became Premier, she messed with Albertans' CPP.

Another thing she brought forward. I remember the UCP standing in this House when they repealed the coal policy and then Albertans spoke out, and they're like: "Oh, no worries. We're going to put the coal policy in. You can trust us. We won't allow coal mining in the eastern slopes." Oops. I guess that wasn't true either, Mr. Chair, because all of a sudden now that's been repealed, and it looks like we are allowing coal mining on the eastern slopes.

How about the promised personal income tax cut that in 2023 the Premier campaigned on and was on the record saying, "Don't worry; you're going to get that right away." Two years later Albertans are getting a \$2-a-day tax cut. That's so great, Mr. Chair. Once again, that didn't happen right away.

How about this promise of having balanced budgets? Hmm. What did we just table?

Mr. Getson: Hear, hear.

Ms Pancholi: "Hear, hear," say the members across the way, the same members who just tabled and passed a huge deficit budget: \$5.6 billion. I'm going to bet you, Mr. Chair, that that deficit is going to be a lot bigger considering that oil prices are far below what they budgeted for in that budget.

So I'm sorry if the Minister of Tech and Innovation doesn't like to hear that we don't just trust them, but there are numerous examples of why we shouldn't.

Now, members across the way, backbenchers in particular, should pay close attention to the history lesson that was provided by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View when she talks about what happened with Bill 10. I can talk about the fact that the ability that that UCP government under Jason Kenney gave themselves to be able to change the Public Health Act during an emergency was perhaps a motivating factor, I'm going to guess, for a number of members across the way who rose up in outrage against that former Premier Kenney for all the things that were happening during COVID. I would be fairly certain . . .

Mr. Amery: Point of order.

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

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Amery: Mr. Chair, it appears that the Committee of the Whole is considering Bill 46, but the member is not speaking about anything to do with Bill 46. I would simply ask for you to direct the member to focus on the topic at hand. She's obviously very excited at this late hour but clearly not speaking about the bill before the Assembly.

Ms Pancholi: Mr. Chair, the reference to Bill 10 was about a Henry VIII clause, which is exactly the concern in Bill 46. It's unfortunate that the minister isn't familiar with the bill.

The Acting Chair: I do not find a point of order.
Go ahead.

Debate Continued

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

When we talked about that Henry VIII clause in Bill 10 that outraged so many backbenchers, who ended up overthrowing Premier Kenney, that was an important lesson because that's what happens when you bring in Henry VIII clauses as has happened in Bill 46.

Now, another bill that actually wasn't mentioned but that once again the UCP, under this current Premier, tried to bring in the Henry VIII clause was in Bill 1, the sovereign Alberta in a united Canada act. You'll notice that word salad keeps changing around; it's now the strong and supportive Alberta in a whatever, but whatever it is, it's just a way of trying to avoid saying separatist. They also tried to do the same thing in Bill 1, when they tried to give the power to cabinet to be able to change amendments . . .

The Acting Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, but pursuant to Government Motion 65, agreed to earlier this evening, which states that after one hour of debate all questions must be cited to conclude debate on Bill 46, Information and Privacy Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, I must put the following questions to conclude debate.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 46 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

[The voice vote indicated that the request to report Bill 46 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:55 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Rowsell in the chair]

For:

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

Against:

Arcand-Paul	Elmeligi	Kasawski
Brar	Ganley	Miyashiro
Ceci	Goehring	Pancholi
Chapman	Haji	Sabir
Dach	Ip	Tejada
Eggen		

Totals:	For – 43	Against – 16
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[Request to report Bill 46 carried]

Bill 50

Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2025

The Acting Chair: Pursuant to Government Motion 68, agreed to earlier this evening, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of Bill 50, Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, in Committee of the Whole. This'll take us to 11:59.

Who's going to talk to it?

Mr. Kasawski: Just confirming, Mr. Chair. We're talking about Bill 50 here, right?

The Acting Chair: Bill 50. Yep.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you very much.

The Acting Chair: You got 'er.

An Hon. Member: Speech.

Mr. Kasawski: You got it.

Mr. Chair, firstly, Bill 50 is going to affect municipal elections in this province, which are coming up this fall. To all people that are currently serving in municipal councils I want to say thank you, and to those that are intending to run I want to say congratulations, and I wish you all the best. For the future, better is possible. That is what we say. I think saying no to the UCP is how you start.

11:00

What we have received with Bill 50 is a cleanup job on Bill 20, which this government brought in in the fall. Bill 20 is notorious, Mr. Chair. It's notorious because nobody saw it coming. There was no consultation, no expectation of what changes were brought forward. I think that evidence of lack of consultation came with a strong opposition from municipal councils, from municipal leadership groups like Alberta Municipalities and the Rural Municipalities association of Alberta.

I think of a side conversation I had with the minister after he had been answering a lot of questions about Bill 20, where he said to me: you know, the more I answer your questions about this, the more I'm convinced it's the right thing to do. Just marinate on that a little bit, Mr. Chair. I think that before you bring something to the Legislature, you should be pretty sure that it is the right thing to do, but that is not the style of the UCP government. They bring legislation in, and then they like to see what happens. What's the reaction going to be?

Bill 50, like Bill 20, should have been right before it came before this Legislature. We have tried to be very propositional in trying to guide and shape debate so that we can improve it for municipal councils and municipal governments across Alberta and also in anticipation of the upcoming elections this fall, making sure that the elections will be fair and that those that are running for council will be going into a good environment when they are successfully elected.

What we have with Bill 20 are some of the highlights that are also brought back in Bill 50. Political parties. What we learned with Bill 20 is that the government didn't think through all of the ramifications of having political parties for the elections in Edmonton and Calgary, so there are going to be some changes here that are going to explain and clarify the ability for political parties to transfer funds to individual candidates, which is going to give a lopsided advantage to candidates running with political parties versus independent candidates.

We had in Bill 20 the ban on voting machines in Alberta, and now we are bringing voting machines back in Bill 50. Bill 50 is bringing forward voting machines, that will enable people with disabilities to have a chance to vote independently.

The last thing that's being brought in in this Bill 50 is corporate campaign financing, so the clarity that we can have campaign financing being brought in by businesses. We got rid of it in the past. We had no campaign finances by unions or by corporations, and it is being brought in.

Our plan when we form government is to repeal the elections provisions in Bill 20 and Bill 50 and make sure that we strengthen local democracies and elections. We want to stop corporate and union donations to local candidates, make sure that candidates that run on a slate or as a party have no advantage over independent candidates. We want to stop donations outside of the election period.

What we are creating with Bill 20 and Bill 50 is a continuous fundraising cycle and campaign cycle for municipal governments, where the councillors will be running and raising money continuously throughout their whole term.

We want to stop political parties in Calgary and Edmonton, and we want to make sure it does not extend to the rest of Alberta. It's only being piloted through this legislation.

Bill 50 clarifies the transfer of funds between party and candidate and permits candidates that are running with a political party to spend twice as much on their campaigns as an independent candidate. It's an unfair advantage for those people that are running in political parties. It's extremely unpopular. It's antidemocratic, and we want to restore fair elections and, in anticipation of the fall, make sure that we can stop this advantage from being provided for political parties and candidates running with political parties.

Bill 20, as I mentioned, prohibited the use of automated voting equipment. Now, Bill 50 brings automated voting equipment back because they found that it actually helps to enable voting for disabled voters. So elector assistance terminals are being brought in to elections. I noted today in question period that the Premier was talking about the ban on voting machines in provincial elections but

then talked about mobile voting machines being available for voters. I'm very confused by the government's position on voting machines. It seems like they're half in, half out.

I'd like to just be all in and let the local democracies, let the local municipalities that have invested so much already in their own elections be allowed to use voting machines if they want. We'll allow local choice. We believe in choice. The UCP are authoritarian. They pander to extremists, and they believe in micromanaging municipal councils.

Bill 20, if we remember back to that, really emphasized cabinet's ability to remove a councillor. It enables cabinet to repeal a bylaw also if it doesn't meet the public interest. There were a lot of questions after this. Again, Bill 20 was rushed in with no consultation, no awareness of what was being created. It's not robust legislation, so Bill 50 is trying to do a cleanup job. The cleanup job is almost funnier than the original problem.

Bill 50 defines public interest because that was a question that was brought. What is public interest? How can cabinet repeal a bylaw or get rid of a councillor in the public interest? What is in the public interest? It's clarified in Bill 50. Public interest is whatever cabinet decides. Wow. This makes me feel very assured of the definition. And on cue, Mr. Chair, Bill 50 repeals bylaws that have been made by councils, bylaws that I know councils across this province all have in place and have put hours of work into creating and many have spent much money on consultants to develop.

Bill 50 repeals bylaws for council codes of conduct for every municipality in Alberta and provides nothing to replace the codes of conduct. It is reckless. It is irresponsible, and that is the UCP style. They're going to get rid of council codes of conduct with nothing in place; an expectation that something will be put in place, but nothing is being prepared. Removing councillor codes of conduct with no replacement, facilitating party financing and corporate and union donations, affirming cabinet power to repeal bylaws and fire councillors. They're bringing elector assistance terminals back because they banned the voting equipment and realized it was a terrible idea, and there has been no consultation with municipalities.

But, Mr. Chair, I've talked with municipalities, and we have come up with some ideas that would make this bill better. I would like to present an amendment to Bill 50.

The Acting Chair: This will be known as amendment A4.

Go ahead.

Mr. Kasawski: I move that Bill 50, Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, be amended in section 2 by striking out subsections (2) to (4), (6), (7), (16), (31) and (32).

This is on page 16 of the original bill if anyone wants to follow along.

Okay. Mr. Chair, may I speak to it?

11:10

The Acting Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Kasawski: It strikes out all of the sections that make codes of conduct changes so the minister can come back later with an actual plan so that municipalities are not left without any codes of conduct for an indefinite period. Further, it lets people that are running for council know the codes of conduct that are in place, that they're expected to abide by, before they run for council.

We're opening up the Wild West to elections here without codes of conduct in place. Particularly heading into the local elections this October, it feels very irresponsible, Mr. Chair, so we would ask that the minister consider repealing all those sections in the Municipal Government Act that are getting rid of the codes of conduct.

The Acting Chair: Are there others that wish to speak to the amendment?

An Hon. Member: Question.

The Acting Chair: Question. Okay.

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

The Acting Chair: Are there others that wish to speak? Carry on. Go ahead.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, the UCP won't listen. They bully municipalities, they clamp down on local decision-making, they seem to only want to pick fights, and they really do pander to extremists.

We mentioned the voting machines that are being allowed. We're going to take one last chance on this. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment to propose for Bill 50.

The Acting Chair: Okay. This will be known as amendment A5.

Mr. Kasawski: I move that Bill 50, Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, be amended in section 1 as follows: (A) in subsection (2) by striking out clause (c); (B) by striking out subsection (16); (C) in subsection (17) by striking out the proposed sections 84 and 84.1 and substituting the following: "Alternative voting equipment permitted. 84 An elected authority may, by bylaw, provide for the taking or counting of the votes of electors by means of voting machines, vote recorders, automatic voting systems or tabulators."

Mr. Chair, this is on page 1 of the bill if anyone wants to follow along.

Okay. We have heard from numerous municipalities that have invested so much money in voting machines and now are being told they cannot use them, and some with very effective ways of providing mobile voting in, you know, modified buses. When you're talking about a ballot for some of these municipalities where there are mayor, school board, councillor, having a large ballot that is able to be counted by a machine is an effective way to count votes. Mr. Chair, we are taking a stab at Bill 50, proposing an amendment that will give that local decision-making back because the New Democrats support local decision-making.

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

We believe that allowing municipalities to decide if they can use a machine or not use a machine to count their votes, it's up to the local municipality, as long as they're following good election rules. That is our motivation for this amendment.

The Chair: Are there others to speak to amendment A5?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A5.

[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to join the debate on Bill 50? The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, there's a lot of talk in this Assembly and out in the public by the government that they can't do something because the federal government won't let them. They wish the federal government would just stay in their lane. And what we see with Bill 20 and Bill 50 is a provincial government that will not just stay in their lane. [interjection] Yeah. They steer right off their lane. They cannot take care of their responsibilities, and often they talk about how they can't do something without the federal government's permission to take care of their responsibilities.

They can't take care of their responsibilities in education. They cannot take care of their responsibilities in health care. They definitely do not take care of their responsibilities in social services. We have had enough debate in this House about support for individuals with disabilities and this minister repeatedly going on about the federal standard. What happens to Albertans setting our own standards for support for individuals with disabilities? We need a government that will take responsibility for its areas of focus, including transportation. You can expect that any pothole you drive over in this province is the result of the UCP government.

I do want to protect the Albertans, and I want to protect consumers that are buying homes, Madam Chair. The UPC have changed the sections of home warranty coverage in this province to make it easier for those people that perhaps build a home on their own to sell that without a warranty. But we are a little concerned about how the transaction of a sale happens. We are worried about the philosophy of buyer beware. You could be buying a home in this province and not be aware that it has no home warranty. There are homes that are exempted from it.

We are proposing an amendment, Madam Chair. This is on page 32 of the original bill if anyone wants to follow along.

The Chair: Hon. members, this'll be known as amendment A6.

Hon. member, you may proceed.

Mr. Kasawski: Madam Chair, amendment A6. I move that Bill 50, Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, be amended in section 3(5) in the proposed section 3.01(1)(b) by striking out all the words after "that states" and substituting the following:

- (i) whether the new home has the required home warranty coverage, and
- (ii) if the new home does not have the required home warranty coverage, whether the person has been granted an exemption under subsection (3)(a) in respect of the new home.

We understand from work on legislation that this will ensure that before you place an offer on the home, you know your home that you intend to buy does not have home warranty and it's not waiting till after getting back land titles that you discover you just bought a home with no home warranty. There's a lot of excitement around real estate deals. These are large transactions. We think that up front at notice of sale you need to know that you are purchasing a home that has no home warranty.

We hope the House will accept this amendment because it's going to protect consumers in Alberta.

The Chair: Are there others to join debate on amendment A6?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A6 lost]

The Chair: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Madam Chair. All members of the public will now know that when you drive over a pothole in this province, it's the UPC's fault. And if you buy a home with no home warranty, it is also the UPC's fault.

11:20

Madam Chair, the government in addition to education, health care, social services, transportation is also responsible for local governance. Provinces create and oversee municipal governments, which are responsible for local services like water, waste water, garbage disposal, recreation, and all of the other things that the UPC won't take care of. They have to pick up the pieces, and everything is being downloaded onto municipalities. But this government has

determined that through a pilot project with Edmonton and Calgary, they want to provide an advantage for political parties and bring partisanship into the council chambers.

Now, Madam Chair, one of the things that is so beautiful about municipal councils – maybe it's messy as well – is council decision-making. It's not bipartisan. It's not partisan at all. It is people that live in their community representing their neighbours, making decisions what they think are the best interests of their community. This government wants to bring parties into this system, and what it will mean for administration is that when you are bringing new information to council, you don't have to present it to all of council, you have to present it to the leader of the party and make sure that they support your recommendation. That's how councils will start changing their presentations to councils. We have brought something in that's very bad for democracy in Alberta, not wanted by Albertans.

So one last chance, Madam Chair. I have an amendment that will improve Bill 50. This is on page 14 of the original bill for all those that would want to follow along.

The Chair: This will be amendment A7.

Hon. member, you may proceed.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 50, Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, be amended in section 1 by striking out subsection (23).

Madam Chair, subsection (23) clarifies one of those messes that was left behind by Bill 20, which is political party financing. There was no rule set around it, just this idea that was probably brought up by a group of extremists or very partisan people, who are trying to push down on the municipalities of Edmonton and Calgary, perhaps because they're tired of the progressive councils that they keep on electing. So what we are suggesting with this amendment is that we strike out this section that allows political parties to transfer funds to their candidates, therefore eliminating the advantage that candidates running with parties will have over independent candidates. We think it's important on this side of the House that elections are fair, that there's no advantage provided to a candidate because they're part of a political party.

We now have a two-tier system in our municipal elections in Edmonton and Calgary where those candidates that are running with political parties will be able to receive financing and funding that independent candidates cannot receive. It's not fair. It's not democratic. We suggest all members of this House accept this amendment so that we can keep political parties out of elections in Alberta's municipalities.

The Chair: Any others to join on A7? Seeing none.

[Motion on amendment A7 lost]

The Chair: Any other members? The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: My, what a night, Madam Chair. It is a pleasure for me to rise this evening and speak to this bill. I thought it was interesting, the member opposite from Sherwood Park talking a little bit about thanking the UCP for things like potholes and home warranties. There is so much to thank this government for that I could certainly fill 20 minutes and then another 20 minutes on it.

But what I would say is what we could certainly thank the Alberta government today for would be stopping the mass exodus out of this province in 2019. It was the members opposite who told Albertans to leave their own province to go elsewhere to find

gainful employment, the kind of employment that will pay for their mortgages, that will pay for their groceries, et cetera.

Another thing that we can talk about thanking the UCP would be certainly the increase in jobs, Madam Chair, in this province. We are the beacon of hope and opportunity to the entire country, a place where there is always a job and a place that we are welcoming new Canadians and Canadians from around the country to come here and work because we have lots of opportunity.

Fiscal responsibility. [interjections] Now, I hear the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud and others jumping in and heckling, Madam Chair. There is ample opportunity to jump into this debate after I'm finished speaking, but at the moment I am just responding to members opposite.

Now, I will go into the speech at hand. I do think it is a pleasure to rise this evening to speak. [interjections] Again, I hear so much banter from the members opposite. It is funny. If there's something that they need to say, they're welcome to stand up, but I'm happy to stand here as long as they continue to go on and on and on and heckle.

With that said, this bill is significant, and it directly improves how Albertans engage with their local governments by enhancing fairness, transparency, and accountability. The former Minister of Municipal Affairs worked really hard on this bill to be perfect, and I would like to thank the Member for Calgary-Hays for his time and his service and his work on this piece of legislation and all of the things he had done as the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Now, to continue this work to make it perfect, I request leave to propose an amendment, Madam Chair.

The Chair: All right. This is amendment A8.

Hon. minister, you may proceed.

Mr. Schow: Yeah. I would like to take a moment to discuss some of the feedback we've received from many of you since introducing this legislation, specifically about the new provision requiring chief administrative officers, or CAOs, to report their use of natural person power to council. Before we dive into the details, I do want to make sure that we're all on the same page when I talk about natural person powers because, after listening to the debate, it is clear to me that the members on the opposite side need a little hand holding. Simply put, it gives municipalities the flexibility to do everyday things that any individual could do, like sign contracts, hire staff, buy or sell property, or even start legal proceedings. In other words, it's about giving municipalities the flexibility to operate smoothly and efficiently.

We sincerely appreciate the thoughtful feedback that our municipal partners have provided so far on our legislation with respect to this particular clause. They have made it clear that our original proposal could unintentionally result in significant administrative burdens for municipal staff. We would never want that. Specifically, we've heard concerns that, as written, the clause could be interpreted to require reporting on not just major decisions but also routine daily transactions made by the municipality. Clearly, this was never our intent. Our original goal was straightforward. We want councils to stay informed when CAOs make significant decisions without explicit council direction.

Given this feedback, today we are tabling an amendment to create regulation-making authority for the natural person powers reporting clause. This will allow us to consider a more defined approach to reporting natural person powers. Additionally, instead of this clause coming into force immediately, it will now take effect later, upon proclamation. This additional time will help us work closely with municipal partners in the coming months to develop a regulation

that strikes the right balance. To put it simply, Madam Chair, we want transparency, accountability without overwhelming municipal administration with unnecessary paperwork.

Madam Chair, thank you.

The Chair: Any other members to amendment A8? The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's like my basketball coach from high school used to say. Hal Souster; H-a-l, for *Hansard*. He used to say: you know, I can take a tall person and make them a good basketball player, but I can't take a short person and make them tall. So we take these bills that have been brought forward, Bill 20 and Bill 50, very problematic bills for municipalities in Alberta, and these improvements, these amendments that are being made are evidence of what work should have been done before these bills came into the Legislature.

11:30

The minister had to pick a number out of the air of how much time it should be that an administration should take to get back to council: 72 hours. I don't know where they got that number from. I don't even think they know where they got that number from. But we're glad that there will be something brought forward that is going to be better.

Madam Chair, if there's any concern I have with this, it is the constant reference to regulations; everything will be taken into regulations. As we've seen, so much debate is limited here. There is no opportunity to discuss better ways to make robust legislation in this Legislature. I hope this is a sign from this minister that this bill will not be time allocated like all the other bills that are before the House right now.

The Chair: Any others on amendment A8?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A8 as moved by the hon. Government House Leader.

[Motion on amendment A8 carried]

The Chair: Any other members on Bill 50? Seeing the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Haji: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 50. It's interesting to see the number of wonderful amendments that came from the Member for Sherwood Park that didn't go through. On this side of the House it seems like we're very, very intentionally collaborative when it comes to improving the existing bill that is being debated by supporting the last amendment here.

Madam Chair, this Assembly is a place where public trust is both granted and tested. In considering Bill 50, I believe we are being tested not on the policy alone but also on the principles of ethics. This bill asks us to consider what kind of leadership we model here in the House. The bill asks us to consider what kind of leadership we envision for Alberta's municipalities. It asks us a simple question. Do we still believe that those who hold public office must be held to the highest standard of conduct? If we do, we cannot support a bill that removes the very tools communities use to ensure accountability.

Municipal codes of conduct were never about political convenience. They were created to protect integrity, they were created to ensure transparency, and they were created to build public confidence in the elected councils. Bill 50 eliminates the codes of conduct that the municipalities put in place. Across Alberta from Calgary to Edmonton, from small towns to big cities, codes of conduct have offered common sense. Codes of

conduct have offered frameworks for how councillors treat one another, how they engage with the public, and how they uphold integrity. These codes are reasonable. These codes reflect that elected office is a privilege and that that privilege comes with expectations.

By eliminating municipal codes of conduct through Bill 50, it risks sending a dangerous message that the rules don't apply to us, that there will be no ramifications when lines are crossed, that there will be no ramifications when integrity becomes optional. I believe it is the very reason why the former Minister of Infrastructure resigned and called for a public inquiry into corrupt care. Madam Chair, in this time when trust in institutions is already strained, what kind of message are we sending when we are eliminating codes of conduct?

Let me bring us back to the communities we represent here in the House. Calgary's code of conduct requires councillors to disclose real estate and financial holdings. Bill 50 is attempting to eliminate that. Edmonton has a system that empowers the staff, the public, and the fellow councillors to report misconduct, and there have been numerous misconducts that have been reported. Moving forward, Bill 50 eliminates that. These are systems that reinforce good governance. I can't believe we are debating to compromise these very basic principles of ethics.

Let me ask a simple question here. If your councillor in Calgary has been found in violation of their code of conduct in recent years, what happens when there is no code of conduct at all? Who holds them accountable? We should not strip communities of their ability to uphold integrity among their leaders. These are basic principles of ethics. These are basic foundations that build and reinforce integrity within the leaders.

Madam Chair, we are elected to serve the public. Service begins with commitments to ethical governance at every level of governance, whether it is municipalities or the provincial. We should be upholding the integrity of elected office, not loosening the standards that bind us to our commitments. This bill will be remembered for what it says about how we value integrity in public life.

I ask every member of this Assembly to reflect on Bill 50 as stewards of democracy for the province of Alberta, and I ask every member of this Assembly to re-evaluate the implications of this bill on integrity and on public trust and on ethics. The future of municipal leaders depends on the decisions we make here today, and I ask all members of the Assembly to reconsider and vote against Bill 50.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Madam Chair. Can I ask how much time is left in time allocation?

The Chair: Twenty-one minutes, but you only get 20.

Mr. Eggen: Yeah. Okay. Cool. Thanks.

Well, thanks for the opportunity to just say a few words around Bill 50. These time allocation constraints make it difficult, and that difficulty is only exacerbated when the government puts in time allocations and then puts up speakers to eat up time, right? Just saying, you know, pro tip: don't do that. It's not very polite.

Anyway, Bill 50 is sort of an attempt to clean up the car crash which was Bill 20 here just a few months ago. The after-effects of Bill 20 still reverberate today here in Alberta. Municipalities were absolutely apoplectic about the different pieces of Bill 20 taking away their powers, arbitrary constraints on voting, different

election financing, and so forth. You know, Bill 50 is kind of like a half measure way to try to clean it up, and I could say, Madam Chair, that it's a very poor attempt to clean up what was a disastrous bill in the first place.

I don't have to look any further than to see the government amendment which was brought here at the eleventh hour to Bill 50 around natural person powers. You know, it just really underlines not just the effects of Bill 20 and then the cleanup here around Bill 50 but just this attitude the UCP government has towards municipal governments and governance, which is to try to take away as much as they can get away with and, if they get caught, then give a little bit back kind of thing.

11:40

You know, the natural person powers amendment is good, but what about all these other things? They also are a version of compromising the ability for municipalities and for municipal elected leaders to actually do their jobs and finance the projects for which they are responsible and to act in the public interest. I mean, if anything, this amendment underlines just how wrong and how poorly thought out this UCP government's approach to municipalities really is.

Of course, this affects everybody in Alberta. Sometimes people think: oh, well, municipalities are just Calgary and Edmonton or whatever. But everybody is implicated. Every single Albertan is touched by these municipal changes, municipal laws on a county level or a smaller town or a bigger town or village, you name it. This affects everybody.

I think we all need to take a cautionary lesson from this change to campaign financing. They call it a pilot in Edmonton and Calgary, but I mean, it's very obvious that this is what they want to bulldoze through the rest of the province. It really creates unfair financing between people who choose to run under a political party banner and other people who want to run just as individuals, literally allowing two times the spending for people who are running under a political banner in these upcoming October elections, which are not that far away, Madam Chair. You know, I just really am concerned about this, and everyone should be.

It sort of mirrors what they see on a provincial level, you know, proposing changes to allow for corporate donations and dramatic increases in personal donations and so forth, where, of course, we see not just in Alberta and Canada but all around the world money undermining democracy and money undermining the individual power of an individual's vote to help to create a healthy democratic society. I'm sad for this. As my colleague from Sherwood Park pointed out, certainly we would repeal this big money back into politics when we do form the government here in just a few months' time.

But in the interim this can really distort these upcoming municipal elections to the advantage of whoever brings in the most cash, quite frankly. I mean, that is in effect right now, but this only exacerbates that big time by allowing continuous campaign financing during the whole term of office so that every day someone is in a position of responsibility meant to look after the city or the town or the county that they're responsible for, but then every day they have to think about raising some more money, right? Of course, when you're doing that on a continuous basis and you're making choices on a continuous basis, those two things can interfere with each other and, again, undermine healthy democracy.

This whole idea of removing the codes of conduct for councils: I mean, again, this is just creating a huge vacuum for behaviour and the moderation of behaviour for how councillors should be

expected to conduct themselves. You know, the whole sort of brash thing that they had about removing people and the cabinet having the ability to remove a councillor as well: I mean, talk about speaking out of both sides of their mouths. I just heard this same evening talk about how this should be: we'll let the electorate vote them out in the next election. I heard the Minister of Education say that loudly and proudly when he was talking about school trustees, and then suddenly over here – right? – we're talking about council and allowing this cabinet to remove councillors, and this cabinet seems to be wanting to remove codes of conduct as well.

I mean, the whole lot of this just doesn't make any sense. I surely don't want to read into how these rules were written on the back of a napkin or they were just a hodgepodge of suggestions and then they just cut and paste them together or something like that. You know, it just adds up to bad governance by this UCP government sticking their fingers into municipal levels of government, where people do want to do a good job and not just write things on the back of a napkin and, in fact, make decisions that are best for their town or their county or their city. With laws like this the UCP is simply getting in the way of people to be able to do their job as an elected official on a municipal level.

I won't be supporting this bill. Sorry. Thanks.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Member Tejada: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, we're speaking to Bill 50, and I come back to some general themes that we've seen with this government in their latest slate of undemocratic bills. Like so many of the bills that this government has been passing of late, they choose overreach over consultation, control over collaboration, disrespect over dialogue, and authoritarianism over accountability. What we're seeing in this bill, too, in terms of the codes of conduct, is that we're seeing a selective enabling of bad behaviour. I'm going to ask a question again that I think is one of my favourites – it's such a simple question – from the Member for Lethbridge-West from one of these late-night sessions that we've shared time on and ask the key question: who is this for? Who does it serve?

I just want to remind everyone here that this is just a redo of an already undemocratic bill, Bill 20, from last sitting, and no one asked for that bill. You'd think that if this government was truly interested in improvements to governance for municipalities, they would have consulted carefully and meaningfully with those municipalities. With this bill, just like Bill 20, the UCP act like an authoritarian parent in the legislative equivalent of: because I said so. With Bill 20 nobody asked for political parties. They did it anyway. To be clear, the outcry on political parties in municipal politics was loud, and really they continue to face that same opposition when it comes to any bills where the province decides that it would like to intrude on the jurisdiction of other orders of government.

Now, this is something they complain about quite loudly when they're talking about the federal government and what they deem an intrusion on their jurisdiction, but they will happily do it to other orders of government. Now what we're seeing is that they've come back to Bill 20 and they're doing things like massaging elections finance rules to favour parties over independents. This is just truly a sad state of affairs. One of the things that I've always respected about city council and elections for municipalities is the power of each individual candidate to capture the imagination of their constituents, to make an offer to voters based on their stated goals and commitments. I really have always respected the hustle of these individuals not backed by a political party to fund raise and to do it on a level playing field for everyone that's involved.

For a party and members that like to talk about how libertarian they are, to echo the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, they certainly love to impose an agenda on municipalities, on public servants, and, ultimately, on the people that they serve in those communities that they are sworn to serve. Sadly, what I'm seeing is that this isn't done in the interest of better serving municipalities or those communities.

We've seen municipal leaders speak out on this, and they have got good reason to. One of the biggest concerns they have is the removal of codes of conduct. I have to say I am forever mystified by a government that would remove the ability of another order of government to hold its elected members to account. This should shock every one of us in this Chamber. We are constantly held to a high standard of ethics. We take an oath. We commit to being good stewards of public monies. We're accountable for our expenditures, for showing up, for our presence at committees. No matter what side of the aisle we're on, we commit to being ethical, and fortunately we have measures and standards in place that keep us accountable. Members' Services orders outline very well what our duties are. We put in our expenses. We have to give proof of our expenses. We know what the guidelines are for acceptable use of public monies.

11:50

I can think of a few examples in recent history where city council members weren't living up to their commitments. In some cases it's interpersonal conduct; it's a failure to represent constituents by not showing up; it's a failure to comply with expenditure guidelines; it's irresponsible use of public monies. The code of conduct was a tool that the council and council members could employ to hold bad actors to account, and now this provincial government wants to remove those measures of accountability. On top of removing the codes of conduct going forward, well, if you are caught in the net of currently not having met some of those minimum standards for ethical behaviour, not to worry; the UCP is waiving a magic wand, and all is forgiven. Those complaints against you are cancelled. Nothing to worry about.

So I ask this question again. Who is this for? What purpose is served by removing accountability? I don't know; maybe that's a silly question. We've already seen them remove accountability when it comes to Bill 8, removing the limits on gifts that we can receive. The only thing I can think about, when I'm thinking about who benefits, is the bad actors, and I guess if the bad actors are your friends, that makes sense.

It's a sad state of affairs, and for that reason I urge all members to reach real deep into what you swore to do when you took your oath in serving Albertans, in holding elected officials accountable, and I urge you to vote against this bill.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Member Miyashiro: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that. You know, looking through Bill 50, you ask yourself: why? As someone that served two terms on city council, I look at this going: why would this government want to do this? What is the purpose of this? The MGA was already one of the thickest pieces of legislation we had after the Insurance Act. I talked to my friend from Calgary-Buffalo, who also served on city council. We were looking at this legislation going: why? What is the reason for this government again introducing legislation trying to solve a problem that doesn't exist?

One thing they did, though, which is good is actually talk to AB Munis, Alberta Municipalities, which is really good, except it would be better if, after they talked to Alberta Municipalities, they

actually implemented the things that AB Munis told them to do, which is a whole other story.

We can talk about the reason why this government want to take out the code of conduct. There are very few things that you can do to sanction behaviour of a municipal councillor. One is if they miss too many meetings. One is if they break elections laws. That probably won't happen with this government anyway. But there are very few things. You get convicted of something that causes you to miss too many meetings. The codes of conduct are the one thing that a municipal council can do to enforce egregious behaviour of councillors. Now, I'm not sure what the reason is for this government wanting to do this unless they're protecting some of their own friends that are sitting in councils across the province. I guess we'll see if that happens, right? We'll see if they're trying to protect someone or trying to protect something that they know is happening. There's no other good reason for taking the code of conduct out of there.

It takes hours and hours and hours for a council to produce a code of conduct that actually fits their own municipality, and for that reason alone – I know how long it took the city of Lethbridge council to develop their code of conduct when I was there. It takes a long time. You have to hit a lot of different steps. [interjection] They just take it out, right? Let's just do that. Don't worry about how councillors behave.

There's nothing that you can do to stop a councillor's behaviour that you don't like if you don't have a code of conduct. That's it. There's nothing. You know what? It also makes me wonder, seeing all of these regulations they want to put in this bill about municipal councils: why don't they just run all of the municipalities? Like, seriously. You want to have a Minister of Municipal Affairs; just have a minister of new municipalities. Just have them run everything. You talked about blaming the government for potholes. Well, they want to do that. They want to run all the government. They want to run making sure the potholes are done. They want to make sure that parks are kept up, right? I mean, why just shade this?

Mr. Kasawski: You could have the hunger games.

Member Miyashiro: Oh, good one.

Why not just do that? Like, let's get rid of Bill 50. Let's get rid of Bill 20. Let's get rid of Bill 18. Let's do the new bill. Let's do the We Want to Be the Controllers of All Municipalities Bill. That's where we're going with this. That's where we're going. I think this government really needs to look at the important things that they want to work on. Do you want municipalities to actually control what's going on in their municipalities? The people that were actually voted to do the things that municipalities need to do as per the MGA: perhaps they're the ones that can do that work and not this provincial government, people that are from all different parts of the province trying to regulate and control what people do in Medicine Hat or what people do in Crowsnest Pass.

For that, I would say it's a great idea not to vote for this. There are so many flaws in this Bill 50. You know, Alberta municipalities have so many problems with this, and they are the ones that are actually running municipalities, Madam Chair; they are the ones that understand what municipalities need and how municipalities need to operate. The overreach by this government into this file is astounding. Again I'll say that in the few instances where this government actually believes in talking to experts, perhaps it's time that they actually listen to the experts for this one.

I really have nothing to say after that.

The Chair: There are two minutes remaining if anyone wants to join the debate. The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Kasawski: Madam Chair, so happy to continue to talk about Bill 50 because we have a provincial government that wants to take over all local governance, which the Member for Lethbridge-West was just bringing up. The provincial responsibilities that this UCP won't take care of: they won't take care of public safety, they won't take care of environmental protection, and they won't take care of cultural initiatives. Instead, they're a hundred per cent focused on micromanaging municipalities.

I think the worst part about the suite of bills is the fear that it's created in municipal councils so that there's a situation where they're not sure, that we have good-serving citizens that have been serving on their councils that aren't sure they're going to run because they think: what's the point? Why doesn't this UCP just put an administrator in place to run the municipality? I was joking when I said it's like *The Hunger Games* and you might want to call Medicine Hat District 11 and just put your administrator in place. We have a tradition of locally elected, duly elected individuals who are there to make decisions on behalf of their citizens and their neighbours, and we need to continue to support that.

That's why, on this side of the House, we plan to repeal the antidemocratic sections of Bill 50 and Bill 20.

The Chair: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Government Motion 68, agreed to earlier this evening, it states: after one hour of debate all questions must now be put on Bill 50, the Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2025.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 50 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

[The voice vote indicated that the request to report Bill 50 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:59 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Pitt in the chair]

For:

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

Against:

Arcand-Paul	Engen	Kasawski
Brar	Elmeligi	Miyashiro
Ceci	Goehring	Pancholi

Chapman	Haji	Sabir
Dach	Ip	Tejada
Totals:	For – 42	Against – 15

[Request to report Bill 50 carried]

The Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report bills 46 and 50 with amendments.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 46. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 50. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official record of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. So carried.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to request unanimous consent of the Assembly to revert back to Notices of Motions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Notices of Motions

The Deputy Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank all members of the Assembly for granting unanimous consent. I rise to give oral notice of Government Motion 73, sponsored by myself, which reads as follows.

Be it resolved that (a) the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, and the committee shall be deemed to be the special committee of the Assembly for the purpose of conducting a comprehensive review pursuant to section 37 of the act; (b) the committee may, without leave of the Assembly, sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued; and (c) in accordance with section 37 of the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act the committee must submit its report to the Assembly within one year after beginning its review, and that report is to include any amendments recommended by the committee.

I also wish to give oral notice of Government Motion 74, sponsored by myself, which reads as follows.

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) the 2025 spring sitting of the Assembly shall stand adjourned upon the Government House Leader advising the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded.

Finally, I wish to give oral notice of Government Motion 75, sponsored by myself, which reads as follows.

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 50, Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further

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

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

With that, also, I would move that the Assembly stand adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., Tuesday, May 13, 2025.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 12:07 a.m. on Tuesday]

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