



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, March 19, 2025

Day 88

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

First Session

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Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA,
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)
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Boitchenko, Andrew, Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Boparai, Parmeet Singh, Calgary-Falconridge (NDP)
Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)
Brar, Gurinder, Calgary-North East (NDP)
Calahoo Stonehouse, Jodi, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
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Chapman, Amanda, Calgary-Beddington (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy Assistant Whip
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de Jonge, Chantelle, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)
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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC),
Deputy Government Whip
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)
Vacant, Edmonton-Strathcona

Party standings:

United Conservative: 48

New Democrat: 37

Independent: 1

Vacant: 1

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 19, 2025

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Hon. members, please remain standing as we recognize a former member who recently passed away.

Mr. Broyce G. Jacobs

July 29, 1940, to March 14, 2025

The Speaker: Mr. Broyce G. Jacobs was first elected March 12, 2001, and served until November 21, 2004. He was re-elected in 2008 and served until April 22, 2012. During his years of service he represented the constituency of Cardston-Taber-Warner. Mr. Jacobs passed away on March 14, 2025, at the age of 84. Mr. Jacobs' family has been invited to attend a more fulsome tribute at a later sitting day.

In a moment of silent prayer I ask that you remember former member Broyce Jacobs each as you may have known him. Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services, the Deputy Premier has a school group to introduce.

Mr. Ellis: Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I'd like to rise and introduce to you and through you the grade 6 class of the Menno Simons Christian School. This group of young Albertans is here to learn about the province and the great Canadian democratic process that we have here. I invite them to please rise and accept the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose has a school group.

Ms Lovely: Oh, hello, Mr. Speaker, and welcome to the grade 6 class. It's such an honour to have you join here. May I also make recognition of Julie Chichak, their most amazing teacher. Would you all please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Chamber.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you 36 incredible guests, who I joined last night at their leaders' banquet. I'm pleased to welcome the Alberta canola leaders, considering the adversity they're facing in light of those Chinese tariffs. I would ask that they all please rise and this Assembly give them the warmest of welcomes.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, do you have an introduction today?

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pleased to introduce to you and through you my constituent Baylee Giroux. She's two-spirited and a survivor of sexual assault who was affected by the funding cuts from this government to the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton. She is joined today by her mother, Joanna Gladue, who is a former employee of SACE. I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

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

Member Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I'd like to introduce Charles Panabaker. He's a volunteer in my Calgary-Buffalo office. He's a social work student at U of C, and he's here today to watch my estimates as well as to come to QP and shadow me for the rest of the day.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you and to all the members of the Assembly the reeve of the county of Two Hills, Murray Phillips. Murray is in my riding, and I'm very proud that he's a part of the Alberta canola councils. I'm glad to see you here today, Murray. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge has an introduction.

Member Boparai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Satinder Mangat and wife, Manreet Mangat. Satinder is a founding member of the Common Connections Program focused on mental health and community connections. Manreet works with the government of Alberta. Both are Jasper evacuees making a positive impact in the community. I ask that they rise to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I would like to recognize and welcome a tireless volunteer supporter of mine and the reeve of Northern Sunrise county. Corinna Williams, please rise and receive the incredibly warm welcome of this Chamber.

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

Ms Hoffman: Thank you. I welcome Katarina Wollmann to rise. She's a recent graduate of the bachelor of music program at the University of Calgary and a wonderful violinist. She's also a political organizer, having worked on successful campaigns in Surrey, Thunder Bay, Lethbridge-West, and next up Edmonton. Please welcome her.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to rise and introduce to you and through you the current president of the Law Society of Alberta, Ryan Anderson. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Wiebe: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly my guests from the MD of Greenview in my constituency of Grande Prairie-Wapiti. Joining us are Reeve Tyler Olsen, CAO Stacey Wabick, and executive assistant Wendy Unger. Please rise and enjoy the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

Investment in Northern Alberta

Mr. Wiebe: Mr. Speaker, through Budget 2025 our government is committing nearly \$5 billion to ensure the north remains strong and competitive and continues to grow. This is more than just numbers on a page. It's a direct investment in the people who drive our industries, educate our children, and build our communities.

Budget 2025 delivers \$4.4 billion in operating expenses and \$470 million in capital investment to support economic growth, infrastructure, and essential services. We are fuelling the economy with \$9 million for the northern regional economic development program and \$1.5 million for the northern Alberta development bursary to attract skilled professionals.

Families will benefit from \$111 million in child care affordability and wage top-off grants, and we'll strengthen our competitive edge with \$45 million in investment and growth and \$225 million in film tax credits, with 30 per cent designated for northern productions.

We're investing in schools, health care that are much needed. Five new schools are in planning for Cold Lake, Fairview, Grande Prairie, and Fort McMurray, backed by \$225 million. Health care remains a priority: \$80 million for the La Crête maternity and community health centre and \$15 million for urgent care planning in Cold Lake and Fort McMurray. Also, \$189 million will be invested for a replacement health centre in Beaverlodge in my beautiful constituency of Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Our government is investing \$1.25 billion in northern transportation infrastructure. This includes \$101 million to twin highway 63 north of Fort McMurray and \$87 million for the La Crete bridge.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is a declaration of our commitment to northern Alberta. These investments secure jobs, strengthen industries, and ensure our northern communities thrive for generations to come. With Budget 2025 Alberta's north is leading the way.

Thank you.

Energy Industry Liability Management

Mr. Schmidt: Alberta's energy minister is confused again, this time about what reports he may have read or not read. I suppose betraying the trust of Albertans by trying to mine coal from the Rocky Mountains can certainly cause chaos and confusion, but to further muddle things, the report the minister is unsure whether he's read was prepared by David Yager.

David Yager serves as a director on the board of the Alberta Energy Regulator. The AER is supposed to be arm's length from the government, and for good reason, but David Yager is not arm's length from the Premier. He was the president of the Wildrose Party and currently receives a handsome \$156,000 a year from the Premier as her special adviser. Only a government that doesn't mind this conflict would allow someone who is supposed to regulate the government also be this Premier's special adviser, writing secret reports to benefit some of the richest companies in the province. It's the same thing we're seeing everywhere with this UCP government lately: corruption.

Now let's look at the report that the minister can't recall reading and seems confused about what it really says. Oh, well, what have we here? R-star 2.0. This report is riddled with ways to make Albertans pay for oil companies to do what they are required to do by law, and that is for them to clean up after themselves. That's it. That's the incredibly simple polluter-pay principle. But how effective has the AER been at regulating this principle? Alberta has

over 274,000 inactive wells that total billions of dollars in environmental liabilities. So what does David Yager want to do? He thinks the government can do the job the oil companies haven't been doing, and he thinks that the mess left by bankrupt oil and gas companies should be paid for by Alberta taxpayers.

1:40

The report calls for a rapid and transparent process. Are we talking about the UCP? The conflicts are staggering, the corruption is everywhere, and the result will be horribly expensive to the people of Alberta. But I suppose we'll have to wait until the minister reads the report or doesn't.

Support for Small Business

Mr. Bouchard: Mr. Speaker, I support local, not global. As an advocate for Calgary-Lougheed small businesses I often meet with local owners to hear their concerns. While I appreciate the current support local movement, I encourage continued commitment even after the tariff discussions subside.

Small businesses face challenges like inflation, high interest rates, and utility costs. Many are still recovering from pandemic-related debt. These same business owners saddled with this extra debt went through a very difficult time, including some having their bank accounts frozen for donating to a cause they believed in. That same cause, the freedom convoy, provided hope to many small-business owners, including myself. Many of these truckers were small-business owners who risked everything to defend our constitutional rights and freedoms.

Mr. Speaker, in Calgary-Lougheed we support all small-business owners. We meet regularly and are in the process of establishing a small-business hub that will include a business directory, a resource section that will provide links to government grants, funding opportunities, tax incentives, licensing requirements, and business support to organizations like Biz Connect, Business Link, and Futurpreneur. We will also have an events calendar which will showcase networking events, educational workshops, and business-related community gatherings as well as promote the success stories and spotlights of our local businesses through interviews, grand openings, and milestone celebrations.

I'll continue closely to work with my friend the parliamentary secretary for small business and northern development and the MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo as well as the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade. Together we'll find meaningful ways to support our small businesses for a stronger Alberta economy.

Mr. Speaker, many of our small businesses have suffered greatly over the last five years, and I'm constantly reminded of their resilience. I will always support the small businesses in Calgary-Lougheed.

Investigation of Health Services Procurement

Ms Ganley: We must be responsible stewards of the taxpayers' money: it's the Conservative cry every time they cut education funding, cuts that will ultimately cost far more in corrections and other services in the long run. But it's always the argument. We must be responsible stewards of the taxpayers' money, they say, as they cut health care, leaving tens of thousands without a family doctor as Albertans wait in pain to get the surgery that they need. Responsible stewards.

Well, if the allegations in the corrupt care scandal are anywhere close to true, they haven't been responsible at all. Corrupt and incompetent would be more like it. The questions it raises are huge. Did they agree to pay more for surgeries at a facility owned by

someone who they thought would scratch their backs in return? How many millions did they waste on masks and gowns and PPE that didn't work at all? We know they spent \$80 million on useless off-brand Tylenol we can't even use. But it raises even deeper questions. Did they only do it because the federal government was about to solve the problem and they wanted to own the libs, or was there a more sinister reason? Was it because they were expecting something in return? Albertans deserve answers to these questions.

The allegations aren't about AHS or anything like that. They are about the members of the UCP cabinet and whether they spent taxpayer money on inflated contracts because those cabinet ministers wanted fancy perks. The allegations are about UCP corruption and kickbacks. The UCP absolutely cannot be trusted to investigate them. That's why we need a real public inquiry. That's why we need a judge to determine what questions can be asked, what witnesses can be called, and what documents can be examined. We certainly cannot trust the UCP, the very people accused of the corruption, to turn over the evidence that might prove that corruption.

Thank you.

Ramadan

Ms Lovely: Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise today and acknowledge the month of Ramadan, a sacred month for Muslims around the world. Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, is a time of fasting, reflection, and spiritual renewal. Observing fast from dawn to sunset is one of the five pillars of Islam, a practice that strengthens one's faith and fosters a deep connection with both the Creator and community. It is a time of devotion, prayer, and self-discipline, where individuals seek spiritual growth and increase mindfulness in their daily lives.

Ramadan is also a time of togetherness as families, friends, and faith communities come together for prayer and the breaking of the fast known as iftar. These moments of unity bring people closer, fostering a sense of gratitude and compassion. It is a period that reminds to extend kindness to those in need, support the less fortunate, and care for their neighbours, the elderly, and those facing hardship. The act of fasting is not just a physical practice but also a spiritual exercise, patience and humility, gratitude for blessings in life.

Beyond its religious significance Ramadan represents an opportunity for all Albertans to learn more about the Muslim community, their faith, traditions, history, and contributions to our province. Muslim Albertans play an essential role in building our communities, contributing to our economy, and enriching the cultural fabric of Alberta. Their values of generosity, service, and community involvement are deeply aligned with the spirit of Ramadan.

I encourage everyone to take an opportunity to connect with their Muslim neighbours, attend an iftar gathering, and experience the rich traditions that make this month so special. Let us celebrate the diversity that strengthens our province.

To those observing, I extend my heartfelt wishes for blessings and a peaceful Ramadan. Ramadan Mubarak.

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

Government Priorities

Member Boparai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about the government's list of accomplishments. Oh, wait. The only thing they have accomplished is cuts, chaos, and corruption. This government has turned its back on the people of Alberta at every turn, focusing more on breaking down our public institutions and

enriching their friends than on the real needs of Albertans. At the heart of all of this is the ever-growing corrupt care scandal.

First, let's talk about cuts. This government's budget is starving crucial services that Albertans depend on – health care, education, social programs – leaving families struggling. We must instead invest in the future of this province and its people.

Next we move on to chaos. It's become clear that this government is incapable of managing its responsibilities. From the bungled rollout of health care contracts to the disastrous handling of public health issues, it's a never-ending series of blunders. Instead of providing leadership, the Premier's government has allowed chaos to rule.

Now the big one: corruption. Corruption is at the heart of this government's actions, from the scandals in health care to their disregard for ethical standards. The government's blatant disregard for transparency coupled with their cozy relationships with private corporations paints a troubling picture of how taxpayer money is being funnelled into the pockets of their friends. It's not just a mistake; it's a pattern.

To make matters worse, the Premier is running away to spend time with Ben Shapiro, whose views are racist, bigoted, and threaten Canada's sovereignty. Don't even get me started on her selfie with Trump, who now believes that Alberta will join the U.S. first. I wonder where he got that idea.

Mr. Speaker, this government's priorities are clear, and they're not for the people of Alberta. The Premier and her government have shown nothing but disrespect. Enough is enough.

Presenting Petitions

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

Ms Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills I request leave to present in accordance with Standing Order 98(2) two petitions that have been received for private bills:

- (1) the petition of hon. Rick Casson, chair, board of directors, on behalf of the Community Foundation of Lethbridge and Southwestern Alberta for the Community Foundation of Lethbridge and Southwestern Alberta Act, and
- (2) the petition of Loren Agrey, president, on behalf of Burman University for the Burman University Amendment Act, 2025.

Thank you.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of Bill 46, Information and Privacy Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, sponsored by the Minister of Technology and Innovation.

The Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to provide oral notice pursuant to Standing Order 15(2) that at the appropriate time I'll be raising a point of privilege regarding the conduct of the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, specifically her harassment and abusive language yesterday of the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre which occurred in the legislative precinct.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Health System Reform

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Airdrie-Cochrane quit cabinet a few weeks ago because of the corrupt care scandal. When reflecting on how this government has handled AHS CEOs and boards, he said, quote, that they're trying to gaslight us into thinking that somehow everybody who goes in there becomes corrupt. End quote. He also said that, quote, at some point we have to take a look at those making these decisions, doing the dismissals. End quote. Why does the Premier keep blaming others when her government hand-picked the AHS board, hand-picked the CEO, and made the decisions every single day?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The big decision that we made back in November of 2023 was that we were going to create four different agencies to manage different parts of the health care system. We're looking forward to working with heads of the agencies to be able to execute on that. Unfortunately, that wasn't the case with AHS. We faced a lot of barriers. We had to issue 18 different ministerial orders to move the changes along. Now that we have a new CEO there, we've got Acute Care Alberta that is about to start its operation in full swing April 1. We're looking forward to making some big changes.

Ms Gray: The Premier, the Minister of Health, the entire government are demonstrating incompetence in this file. They forget the principle of ministerial accountability. The buck stops with the minister in charge, period. Now, remember, they run AHS, they hired and fired five CEOs, they hired and fired three boards, and they've had six years of total control over the health care system. When will the Premier admit her government has no idea how to deliver public health care?

Ms Smith: Well, Mr. Speaker, when the minister is in charge, the minister will be making the decisions. That's what we're moving towards. With the minister in charge, with the decisions she's been making, we've made major progress. EMS response times are at or near target across the province. We are doing more surgeries than ever before, including 50 per cent more in chartered surgical centres. Drug deaths are down 40 per cent year over year. We continue to build recovery communities. A total of 11 of them are coming. We're adding assisted living beds to reduce the delays in discharging patients. We're moving in the right direction. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Gray: The direction they've moved in is political incompetence and kickbacks for friends and insiders. The fired AHS CEO was a fiscal hawk. She was Jason Kenney's Deputy Minister of Finance and had no problem with privatization of health care, just like the members of this Premier's hand-picked board at AHS, a board that included Lyle Oberg, the Premier's own former adviser when she led the Wildrose. He was famously opposed to AHS creation, probably one of the reasons the Premier trusted him on the board of AHS. There is no conspiracy here, just political interference and bad decision-making.

Ms Smith: I didn't hear a question there, Mr. Speaker, so let me continue going on with the successes that we've had as we've started being more hands-on with improving the health care system, including allowing nurse practitioners to set up their own shop. We now have over 50 nurse practitioners who are taking new patients.

One of the big changes that we needed to make was to establish that as a separate primary care organization so that we would be able to attach every single Albertan with a family practitioner in a joint practice. We're doing that. We've got a doctor's deal that was negotiated by this Health minister, a nurse practitioner deal negotiated by this Health minister. It's success.

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

Ms Gray: Distract, distract, distract, Mr. Speaker.

Health Services Procurement Process

Ms Gray: The DynaLife contract failed so badly that this Conservative Premier had to nationalize it, proving again that public services can work as well or better than private providers. For \$34 million in closure costs they cancelled the Alberta public labs, and then the DynaLife bailout cost us \$100 million more and shortchanged patients while they did it. This government can't get results, just bloated bad deals, especially when their friends are in charge. To the Premier: what role did Blayne Iskiw have in these contracts?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm reading about the Health minister cancelling a \$3 billion contract. Oh, wait a minute. That was the Health minister from the previous administration, when she cancelled the lab contract for Sonic, plunging us into the disaster that we then ultimately ended up inheriting, trying to create a province-wide system in order to make sure that people got appropriate lab services. I think it's a look-in-the-mirror moment, because they're the ones who started the problem.

Ms Gray: Revisionist history won't distract Albertans.

Now, Blayne Iskiw left AHS in November of 2022. Guess where he found a job. MHCare, of course. The same person at AHS involved in the contracts that got us the DynaLife deal next found work selling goods to Albertans from none other than MHCare. In a letter that MHCare wrote to this government on December 20, they said that, quote, one or more former AHS employees was or were affiliated in some fashion with MHCare. End quote. Why isn't the government concerned that this worker, like Mr. Prasad, may have been working for both?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, in government we have very strict rules of conflict of interest and cooling-off periods, and I would expect that all of our agencies would also have similar rules of cooling-off periods and conflict of interest. That is absolutely something that the Auditor General needs to look into and give us some advice. That is absolutely something that the judge needs to look into and give us some advice. If AHS had bad practices, that is something we want to make sure gets corrected when we bring the procurement function into Acute Care Alberta.

Ms Gray: Blayne Iskiw isn't just a trusted employee of MHCare and a former AHS employee who used to be in charge of contracts. He's now the part owner of two numbered companies that this government involved in new bloated contracts for private surgical facilities in Red Deer and Lethbridge. Those same numbered companies are also part owned by none other than Sam Mraiche. Why is this government not seeing alarm bells ringing, calling a public inquiry into all of these scandals at the heart of the corrupt

care issue? Instead, this government will continue to try and distract. Albertans are not buying it, Premier.

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These are issues that we are going to get the Auditor General and the judge to look into. Once again, the members opposite are talking about AHS employees overseen by AHS who left AHS and had, presumably, different rules they had to follow about cooling-off periods, who got hired by AHS, and presumably there had to be sign-off when they came back in. These are all AHS issues that we are looking into, and I certainly hope that we'll be able to solve them soon. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. I might just caution members of the opposition of their overall volume and perhaps content of their heckles.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

DynaLife Medical Labs Contract Termination

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, in October 2023 the Auditor General started reviewing the DynaLife bailout, the one that has cost Albertans \$100 million, but last March that office said the report would be delayed. They said, quote: we have experienced delays in our ability to interview people and to gather the necessary information needed to complete our examination work. End quote. It's still not out. It seems the Auditor General can't get the information he needs. Why did the government prevent the Auditor General from doing a timely review on the DynaLife bailout, and have they now handed over everything his office requires?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know what the member opposite is talking about. I mean, the Auditor General has all the documentation that is needed. We've also been very public about what occurred with the DynaLife acquisition. AHS acquired approximately \$97 million in assets, paid DynaLife \$31.5 million, resulting in assumed liabilities of \$66 million. What I'd like to know is: how much did it cost the government to cancel the \$3 billion agreement with Sonic when the former Minister of Health was in under the NDP government? These are issues that we're getting to the bottom of to give better service.

2:00

Ms Gray: The former Minister of Infrastructure quit cabinet over the corrupt care scandal, and when he heard the Premier talking about how the Auditor General is going to investigate, he said of this government, quote: they're in charge of the information forthcoming to the Auditor General; they are the filter; they'll determine what information gets turned over. This is exactly what we're seeing with DynaLife. We cannot trust that this government will do the right thing with the corrupt care scandal unfolding. How can any Albertan trust that this government will provide the Auditor General with timely access to information about corrupt care when they can't do it about DynaLife?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier has the call.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said before, if we are looking at contracts that are not working in the public interest, then we'll address them. We'll cancel them, which is what we did with DynaLife. In fact, since APL took over, they've reduced wait times for walk-in and scheduled appointments by 76 per cent since the peak of May 2023 in Calgary. They are now a \$10 million revenue

stream. What we were presented with is that if we had not made this decision, we would have had to pay an extra \$70 million per year. Now we get \$10 million in extra revenue. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Gray: How many times has the Premier said that the Auditor General will look into this scandal? Now we know that the government has made sure the Auditor General can't actually get to the bottom of any scandals of its making. They've delayed handing over all the documents about the DynaLife deal, and Albertans still don't have answers about it. FOIP documents just released show they fired the board of AHS two weeks after the Auditor General confirmed in writing to AHS that they were investigating. Why the culture of cover-up? Why not be transparent with the Auditor General? And when will they call a full public inquiry? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

The hon. the Premier has the call.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, the members opposite have not read the statement of defence. Otherwise, they'd see that the Auditor General has the power to question current and former – and former – employees. So if the Auditor General sees fit to do that, he will. They're talking out of both sides of their mouths. On the one hand, they keep on wanting to trash chartered surgical facilities, which are improving care in the system. Then, on the other hand, they're defending that we should have – what are they saying? We should have DynaLife even though by moving to Alberta Precision Labs, we've actually been able to improve performance?

Energy Industry Liability Management

Ms Al-Guneid: Mr. Speaker, the Premier got up yesterday and grossly mischaracterized the work of former MLA David Swann and Regan Boychuk to sell the public on the R-star 2.0 scam that the UCP are proposing. The former good MLA's work has focused on an independent public trust to make companies pay to clean up their own mess, not taxpayer money, not on Albertans' dime. Why doesn't the Premier come clean with Albertans about what the UCP is planning instead of hiding behind the former MLA's good work?

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, I know the NDP has no faith in what they did when they were in government, and I understand why they made a disaster of the AER. They actually shook the confidence of Albertans in relation to the AER. But we're back, and the truth is that the AER is coming forward with enhanced compliance opportunities as well as the opportunity for municipalities to work hand in glove with our government to make things better for them and to respond more clearly and more efficiently on some of the needs we have, including unpaid taxes, including some of the environmental performance. We're going to do what's in the best interest of Albertans and make sure we prioritize them.

Ms Al-Guneid: Mr. Speaker, on September 17, 2024, this minister said that the industry might need help from public finances to live up to its legal obligations as well as a lower municipal tax burden on a lighter regulator approach. He said that he doesn't like sticks; he likes carrots. He also said that we need to find new ways to do liability financing. Yesterday he flip-flopped and told us he believes in the polluter-pays principle. Which one is it? Make up your mind, Minister.

Mr. Jean: Well, Mr. Speaker, taxpayer dollars will not be given to private companies to clean up their own mess. It's simple. I've

repeated it time and time again. I'll continue to repeat it. If the member wants to meet me after this, I can give her the particular talking points so she can see it first-hand.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans have been clear. We have a mess in Alberta from the former NDP government and how they let wells get out of hand. We're cleaning up wells. We're working with industry. We're working with municipalities to protect the interests of Albertans. I don't know what more the member wants from us except to do the best job that's possible, and we're doing that.

Ms Al-Guneid: The minister claims he hasn't seen Yager's report on financing cleanups through public money. Well, wakey-wakey, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Yager is a special adviser to the Premier and Executive Council. He receives a \$156,000 salary from the government while being an AER board member. Does the minister not know that, too? The UCP cannot have the same person be responsible for regulating the industry while acting as the Premier's special adviser on government's industry policy. Does the minister see the inherent conflict of interest of Mr. Yager?

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the member to read the book that Mr. Yager authored called *From Miracle to Menace*. I'm not talking about the NDP. I'm talking about the miracle that oil and gas is in this province.

Mr. Speaker, one thing is clear. If the NDP were in charge again, they would make a mess of it. What we're doing is that we're listening to Albertans. We're listening to industry. We're listening even to the NDP because every once in a while a stopped clock is right.

Vaccination Policies

Member Batten: Mr. Speaker, even though it's 2025, not 1925, this province is currently under a devastating measles outbreak. Measles was once considered practically eradicated, a feat accomplished after the introduction of the measles vaccine in 1963. Vaccines save lives, yet this government wears antivax, antiscience credentials like a badge of honour. To the minister: when will the government stop peddling antiscience, antivax rhetoric and start actually putting resources into protecting Albertan kids and their health?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, when will the members opposite stop with the misinformation? We do not have an outbreak. We have cases across the province that are contained within families; in fact, three families, to be exact. We are going to continue to make sure Albertans have information. We have it available to all Albertans. If they need to access vaccinations, they know how to get it through the online portals that they can go into and also through their community health centres.

Member Batten: Given that this government spent \$2 million to publish a fictional, conspiracy-laden COVID-19 report that should have just been left on the shelf to start with and given that several members of the government's team publicly endorse antiscience positions, host antivax town halls, and tour antivax discredited doctors through this very Legislature and given the fact that vaccine hesitancy results in the reintroduction of once-controlled diseases like measles, does the minister really think that her hollow vaccine endorsement has any credibility whatsoever?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite can't seem to make up their minds. Yesterday they were accusing me of not endorsing vaccines. Now they're saying that I am endorsing vaccines. At the end of the day what we are doing is sharing

valuable information with Albertans so that they can make the best decisions possible. We recognize that vaccine hesitancy happens not just in Alberta, but it's happening right across Canada and globally. The only way to counteract that is by giving proper information to Albertans. We trust them to make the right decisions.

Member Batten: Given that children are giving each other measles and given that the Member for Calgary-Lougheed just two weeks ago held another one of his antivaccine town halls, which was widely promoted by 11 different UCP constituency associations, and given that the UCP's main party logo was used at this event and given that this government will expel a member at any moment's notice if they dare question the budget but makes lots of space for members to exalt propaganda against vaccines and medical science, will the minister condemn the event called injections of truth?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I encourage all Albertans who are concerned about their health and the health of their children to contact their primary care provider or 811. We're continuing to monitor the cases of measles. I know the members . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. the Minister of Health.

2:10

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we're going to continue to monitor those cases. We're going to make sure that they have the supports in particular in the north in the Indigenous community. We're working with Indigenous Services Canada, making sure that there are clinics available for immunization. We're hearing that we've had no new cases as of yesterday. We will continue to monitor the situation.

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

School Construction and Modernization

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More people are calling Alberta home, and that means there are more students attending school. This government is making the critical investments needed to ensure that every student has a space to engage in Alberta's world-class education system by building an unprecedented number of schools across Alberta, especially in fast-growing communities like Calgary. To the Minister of Education: please tell the Chamber how many new schools have been approved through Budget 2025 for Calgary and area. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. the Minister of Education.

Mr. Nicolaidis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really pleased to announce that as part of Budget 2025 our government will be building 18 new school projects in the Calgary area. This includes surrounding communities such as the fast-growing cities of Airdrie and Chestermere and, of course, Calgary itself. These 18 projects that we've just announced will add 14,000 new spaces to the area, and that's on top of projects that are already under way.

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

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we are seeing new school projects being approved for funding through Budget 2025,

if passed, and given that Edmonton is also a fast-growing city that needs new schools and further given that the Minister of Education just announced a new schools project for Edmonton today, to the minister: please tell Edmontonians how many new school projects are funded through Budget 2025 if passed.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning, in fact, I had the privilege of joining representatives from the Edmonton public school division and the Edmonton Catholic school division to announce that our government as part of Budget 2025 will be building 14 new schools in the Edmonton metro area. This includes new schools in Beaumont, St. Albert, and Morinville as well. More specifically, I'm proud of the fact that we will be building a number of new high schools in and around Edmonton as high school space is urgently needed.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that response. Given that this government is making the critical investments needed to keep up with growing enrolment in and around the Calgary and Edmonton regions and given that this government has already dedicated billions of dollars to build an unprecedented number of schools, to the same minister: please provide an update on all of the ongoing school projects in Alberta.

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, our government has listened very carefully to the needs of Alberta families, to our partners, teachers, school trustees, and others. We've heard loud and clear that we need to take aggressive action when it comes to building schools. I'm happy to report that our government is doing exactly that. In the fall the Premier announced an aggressive \$8.6 billion initiative to build over 100 new schools in our fast-growing communities and at the same time modernize aging infrastructure in our smaller communities. We will get the job done.

Funding for Sexual Assault Services

Ms Hayter: Mr. Speaker, every 10 minutes somewhere in the world a woman is murdered by her partner or a family member. In Alberta gender-based violence is increasing. Our rates of domestic violence are rising, and the frequency and the severity of violence have increased. Nearly half of Albertans have experienced some type of sexual assault in their lifetime, and more than one-third of Albertans experience sexual abuse before they turn 18. To the minister: why does the budget fail to address supports for survivors of gender-based violence and supports for sexual assault?

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is proud of the gender-based violence strategy that we are preparing, the 10-year draft strategy to end gender-based violence. This is in addition to the over \$188 million our government spends across ministries annually to support women and address this issue. The strategy that we will be releasing soon will take a comprehensive, overarching approach. It will be the most comprehensive of its kind in Canada to address gaps, address duplications, and have a co-ordinated approach to address this serious matter.

Ms Hayter: Given that the need for women's shelter services has risen by 50 per cent since 2021, with one shelter alone turning away most people who come through their doors seeking a safe space

because they're short on spaces, and given that more shelters will be shutting down beds and laying off workers when their one-time funding ends on March 31, given that I'm not talking about one-time funding, if it's a sustainable business model or reliable – it's just causing chaos – and given that agencies have told the government that one-time funding won't work for them and that they're looking for other three-year contracts, to the minister: why is the government ignoring the calls for sustainable funding so agencies can properly serve Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Children and Family Services.

Mr. Turton: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have met the call from sexual assault centres throughout the entire province. It was actually upon their advice. The centres across the province: that's what they requested, long-term, sustainable funding. That's why we increased operational funding for sexual assault centres throughout the entire province from Medicine Hat to Lethbridge to Calgary to Red Deer. Right across the province sexual assault centres have seen their operational funding go up. We know it's going to make a huge difference for women that are fleeing sexual violence. On this side of the House we are standing up for women and children here.

Ms Hayter: Given that they've asked for sustainable funding and given that many nonprofits are afraid of speaking out against the UCP's cuts, chaos, and corrupt budget in fear of losing funding and given that the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton said that they won't receive their promised sustainable funding and had to lay off staff and turn people away and given that we are on the brink of a crisis while beds are already full, wait-lists are maxed out, and agencies are turning away Albertans in desperate need, to the minister: when survivors are being turned away, how many women must go without support before the government provides the stable funding these agencies have long said that they need?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Children and Family Services.

Mr. Turton: Well, thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. In Budget 2025, if passed, we will invest more than \$88 million for women's shelters, for sexual assault centres, as well as for family violence prevention strategies.

Ms Hoffman: By shutting down SACE?

Mr. Turton: Mr. Speaker, this is the highest amount of funds that has ever been invested to help support women and kids . . .

Ms Hoffman: Then actually fund SACE.

Mr. Turton: . . . that actually need help. These programs actually help families heal.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. Then fund them.

Mr. Turton: There are significant programs and services that are helping out families here in this province.

Ms Hoffman: Give them somewhere to go.

Mr. Turton: Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we are actually making a difference in the lives . . .

Ms Hoffman: You're shutting down SACE.

Mr. Turton: . . . of women and children here in this province.

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:18.

Health Care Concerns

Dr. Metz: This government continues to deflect blame onto those that they control. In 2019 they removed the voice of the chief medical officer of health, then fired her after ensuring she would get the blame for their COVID decisions. Now Alberta cannot hire a specialist in public health to be our CMOH. Nobody will take the job. We have ongoing outbreaks in measles and syphilis. Indigenous babies die at twice the rate of non-Indigenous babies. Will the minister return transparency and allow the chief medical officer of health to speak freely to the public?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do have a chief medical officer of health, and the individual is always available to speak when there is an outbreak or something of significance. We're interacting on a regular basis with the chief medical officer of health, and we continue to have a strong public health system across the problem. The member is right in terms of syphilis, and we have added additional dollars to this year's budget and to budget '25-26 to make sure that we are in fact addressing those serious issues. We're going to continue to work with the chief medical officer of health to deal with these things.

Dr. Metz: Given that this government continues to insist on nondisclosure agreements from current and previous employees of Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services, it's hard for Albertans to have any hope of hearing the truth. Given that it's easy to lay all the blame on AHS when this government does not allow leaders to speak, how will Albertans be able to learn that this government is completely responsible for the lack of improvements and the bad contracts? How will Albertans know what advice AHS leaders gave that was ignored?

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nobody – but nobody – thinks that AHS was doing a good job. In fact, when I went across the province last year and again this year, the one thing that I heard over and over again – of my \$26 billion budget approximately \$19 billion goes to Alberta Health Services with limited to no accountability – is that the people of Alberta actually want to know: what is going on in Alberta Health Services? How are we going to improve it? We do have a plan. It is working, and we are going to continue with it. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Dr. Metz: Given that a report completed by the AHS team in the Alberta surgical initiative showed that the preferential support of chartered surgical centres was causing increasing wait times for critical surgery – this included delays in cancer surgery that leads to lost lives and further intensive therapy – and this was shared with the minister, given that this ideology is hurting Albertans and is bad business, why was this adverse impact ignored in expanding the chartered surgical facilities? How many lives are worth the bloated contracts to UCP...

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly disagree with what the member opposite said. In fact, we are making sure that we can do more surgeries in clinically approved times. When they took over, there was roughly about 40 per cent of the surgeries done in clinically approved times; now we're over 60 per cent. I'm not going to rest till it's a 100 per cent – 100 per cent – of surgeries done in clinically approved times. And that includes all hands on deck. Surgeries done in hospitals, surgeries done in chartered surgical facilities: we have to increase all of them.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Economic Corridors

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the parliamentary secretary for economic corridor development I have the privilege of speaking with industry leaders here and abroad. They understand the value in the strong economic ties, and quite frankly they want to do business in and with Alberta. Our current economic corridors are the lifeline of many industries, ensuring the efficient movement of goods, services, and people across the country. Further, new and expanded corridors will serve a successful future not only for our province but for our country as a whole. To the minister: can the minister outline the establishment of economic corridor authority in Alberta and how it will enhance economically and solidify Alberta's position as an industry leader? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

Mr. Dreeschen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate all the work the member has done on economic corridors. He actually worked on a report, that has led the way across the entire country, of wanting to prioritize economic corridors. We're seeing that conversation right now across the country actually gaining traction. But we have the last 10 years of the Liberal-NDP alliance in Ottawa that's actually scared away \$176 billion of energy projects. It's something that Alberta has, and we'll continue to fight for these projects to get Alberta energy to markets all around the world.

The Speaker: The Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that Alberta has proven itself time and time again that it has the resources, the workforce, and the drive to lead Canada's economy and given that farmers, energy producers, and manufacturers all rely on corridors to get their goods to market as well as receive the products and the services that they need from abroad and further given that the biggest setback to any industry is lack of efficiency, red tape, and logistical challenges, can the minister outline how an economic corridor authority will help ensure that these vital corridors have the proper supports needed so they can continue to be viable?

The Speaker: The hon. the minister of transportation.

Mr. Dreeschen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If we were to have an economic corridor authority or agency and have that type of leadership from the federal government, we would have the possibility of Energy East or Northern Gateway, which were great projects that got cancelled by the Liberals and the NDP over the last 10 years.

Ms Pancholi: We built a pipeline.

Mr. Dreeshen: No; you nationalized a pipeline.

There's the federal Impact Assessment Act, Bill C-69, that needs to go away, Mr. Speaker. There's a west coast tanker ban that needs to go away. If the Liberals and NDP – they have hurt this country so much, but we're on the precipice of actually being able to build these big megaprojects across this . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister. Given that the uncertainty can arise at any time with political cycles and electoral meanderings here and there and given that under the leadership of our Premier we've made it clear that Alberta is ready to strengthen our ties with our neighbours to the south and to expand our relationships abroad while always putting Alberta first and further given that Alberta is home to some of the most important trade and transportation routes in the country, let alone the gateway to the north, can the minister tell this Assembly the progress he made working with his provincial and federal counterparts to ensure Canada's economic corridors will remain competitive on the world stage?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has actually signed a memorandum of understanding on economic corridors with Saskatchewan and Manitoba. We did that two years ago. Last year we signed a similar agreement with the Northwest Territories. Through the leadership of the Premier we're working with British Columbia, the three prairie provinces, and all three territories to build an economic corridor for the western bloc of this country. That's just to prioritize these energy projects and other types of projects. Whether it be a roadway, a railway, utility lines, pipelines, we should be a place where big projects can be built again. Through the leadership of this Premier we'll finally get there.

Funding for Mental Health and Addiction Services

Member Eremenko: Mr. Speaker, another Conservative budget, another round of cuts by the UCP. First, they went after organizations serving Albertans with disabilities, and now they're gutting nonprofits that serve Albertans with mental illness and addiction. First, Ponoka Rising Sun Clubhouse: it supports 150 people who've been discharged from the local Centennial Centre for Mental Health and Brain Injury. The government is ending their funding agreement April 30, 18 months ahead of the original scheduled expiry date. How will the minister fill the gap left behind by the closure of the Ponoka Rising Sun Clubhouse?

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

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're proud as a government to continue funding Mental Health and Addiction to a tune a \$1.79 billion in this province. This is the greatest budget we've ever seen for Mental Health and Addiction. We continue to support those who are in crisis situations, including at the centennial centre the member opposite mentioned: 300 beds that we not only continue to fund but increased funding for. The decisions were made by Recovery Alberta of their own mandate, and we support Recovery Alberta to a greater dollar amount every year. We have lots of needs, and we continue to try and meet them across the province, focusing on early intervention, prevention, and, of course, the Alberta recovery model. I hope the members opposite support this budget.

Member Eremenko: Given that I heard that April 30 will be the last day of operations for the Ponoka Rising Sun Clubhouse, given that apparently no organization's budget is too little to be on the chopping block for this ministry such as, second on the list, the Problem Gambling Resources Network and given that a 2022 report estimates over 100,000 Albertans may have a severe gambling addiction and given that problem gambling is growing increasingly harmful and insidious as a result of online gaming and sports betting, since the minister doesn't want to continue the \$130,000 to annually fund the successful Problem Gambling Resources Network because they don't provide direct service, what supports for . . .

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

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, not only do we fund 211 to record numbers to make sure that folks can get access to on-the-spot counselling through Counselling Alberta, the members opposite did nothing to fund addiction beds while they were in power. They built absolutely zero beds or treatment capacity, and the treatment for gambling addiction is the same treatment after detox as it is for an opioid, a methamphetamine. Addiction is addiction. It's a deadly disease, and this government takes it seriously. The members opposite hadn't for their four years in power. We instead do take seriously the tragedy of addiction and know that the path out of it is recovery, not facilitating addiction.

Member Eremenko: Given that that was once again a nonanswer and given that the annual funding for – this is the third one here – Barrhead ripple support centre is just \$79,000 per year and given that this Barrhead nonprofit provides important services for people who have mental illness and brain injuries in the community and given that just this week the organization got word that their funding agreement would end May 31 because it's now up to Recovery Alberta to pick up the tab, will the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction reinstate funding and support these grassroots organizations achieving great impact on shoestring budgets?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, it's very rich for members opposite to talk about nonanswers when I said: \$1.79 billion going into Mental Health and Addiction. We are putting \$180 million into compassionate intervention centres; we are continuing to expand up to 11 recovery communities, many of them with Indigenous partnership, not an imposition but a proposition of partnership; virtual opioid dependency program. None of this was done by members opposite.

They want to know what answers we have for addiction. It's health care that heals and doesn't continue harming those who suffer from addiction. We will not take numbers from the members opposite. I ask them to support the Alberta recovery model and support this budget because that is the compassionate path forward.

2:30

Energy Industry Innovation

Mr. Rowswell: Alberta's deposits of metallurgical coal are among the best quality in the world and should be mined and exported. How can we use our vast deposits of thermal coal since we don't use it to generate electricity? Companies like Systemic Environmental Solutions, located here in Alberta, have technology that converts all types of coal to pure carbon. This new product can be used as an organic fertilizer, an alternative to chemical fertilizer. To the Minister of Energy and Minerals, what steps is the government taking to support cutting-edge technologies?

Mr. Jean: To be clear, Mr. Speaker, we're prioritizing the health of our watersheds and our environment with our modernization of the coal industry. But you're not going to believe this: there are many uses for coal that are critical in everyday life, including efforts to use different types of coal in agriculture and industry to create carbon fibre and graphene products. The opportunities in the future are bright indeed because these homegrown opportunities will ensure Alberta remains a competitive place, the best place to live, work, and play in the world.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this innovative technology could create new economic opportunities in Alberta's coal and agricultural sectors and further given that the economic and environmental benefits of using pure carbon as an organic fertilizer can reduce reliance on chemical inputs, improve soil health, and support the overall output of our agricultural industry, once again to the Minister of Energy and Minerals: can you please tell the House how the ministry plans to encourage investments in such technologies and support Alberta's transition to a sustainable economy?

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, it's true. Alberta is the ideal place for energy investments and innovation. We're leading the country in energy diversification, and it's because of entrepreneurial efforts like this. We are also seeing a rapid-evolving petrochemical industry, companies extracting lithium from brine, and more than 6,000 uses for bitumen beyond combustion. The agricultural sector has led with similar innovative efforts, and the use of humalite and coal derivatives as a fertilizer could potentially boost crop yields by 30 per cent and cut chemical fertilizer used by up to 70 per cent. Great news, indeed. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.
The hon. member.

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister for his response. Given the importance of advancing sustainable resource development while maintaining Alberta's role as a leader in energy and agriculture and further given that this innovation can create jobs and strengthen our agriculture and energy sector, to the Minister of Energy and Minerals: how is this government working with industry partners and researchers to accelerate the development and adoption of these technologies, ensuring Alberta stays ahead in resource innovation? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Jean: Well, it's true, Mr. Speaker. We are innovation leaders in energy and in agriculture because we have created the best environment in Canada to invest. It's also one of the best places in the world to research, to study, and develop talent. The NDP may want to see us in caves burning sticks, but the truth is that it's what we've always done except for a four-year blip when they were in power. They chased away investment, they chased away headquarters, and they encouraged Albertans to move to other provinces. In fact, 200,000 of them fled under their leadership. Our government has cut red tape. We have the lowest tax environment in the country, and we stand up for our energy sector and Albertans.

Investigation of Health Services Procurement

Member Kayande: Mr. Speaker, the government is very proud of its stated co-operation in the various investigations that its alleged

bad behaviour is spawning, but of course the co-operation is not real, any more than these various investigations are welcome. For the people of Alberta the only solution is a full, transparent, and public inquiry, but for this government the question is: will the government fire anybody or remove as minister anyone who asserts their constitutional right to avoid self-incrimination and refuses to answer RCMP questions?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, once and for all, this government has said from the very onset that we take this investigation very seriously. The Premier has said herself that all government ministries will co-operate with the investigations taking place. We intend to fully co-operate with those investigations. We will work with the RCMP. We will work with the Auditor General's office. We will work with any body that is investigating this, and the members on this side of the House will co-operate so that we can get the answers we're looking for.

Member Kayande: Given that just last week the government admitted it hadn't ordered corrupt care documents be pre-emptively protected and given that just now the government has clearly chosen a strategy of remaining silent to avoid self-incrimination under RCMP questioning and given that the only solution is a transparent, complete, full public inquiry, where the public can witness who testifies and who, as they say in Mar-a-Lago, takes the fifth, why not call a public inquiry so that Albertans can see who speaks and who remains silent?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, I don't know how many times I've got up in this Assembly and said that we're going to fully co-operate with the investigations that are taking place. We've said it time and again. This is public for all Albertans to see. This government will co-operate to its fullest extent. There are a number of investigations happening. There are many eyes on this issue. We're happy to co-operate. We're happy to work with those bodies to get to the bottom of what we're looking for.

Member Kayande: Given the minister seems to be portraying an RCMP investigation as some sort of trip to Disneyland, where one stands in a few lines and walks out with Snow White's autograph, and given that, instead, being questioned by the police involves a small room and one-way glass, given the RCMP might say something like that 10 years for obstructing justice is a long time or that the government minister is hugging their grandkids a little extra tight lately, why does the minister believe that remaining silent gets the government out of this corrupt care mess when anyone will fold like a cheap suit and sing like a canary under that kind of pressure?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, I have no clue what that hon. member was asking. I don't know if there was a question there, if that was a statement, if it was a performance. Once again, one of the best actors on the NDP opposition side. There's really nothing to see here. We are co-operating with all of the investigations. We're diligently working with all the investigative bodies, all of them being independent agencies, investigating this. We're happy to work to get to the bottom of this.

Premier's Travel to the United States

Member Boparai: Mr. Speaker, once again the Premier shows a complete disregard for Albertans and fellow Canadians. While patriotic Canadians are cancelling travel to the U.S. due to threats to our sovereignty, the Premier is set to meet with Ben Shapiro, an individual who has repeated those very threats and bigoted remarks. How can she justify the continued reckless spending of taxpayer

dollars, especially in such an incredibly disrespectful way? Is she trying to run away from the corrupt care scandal, another example of her government's incompetence?

Mr. Schow: Well, Mr. Speaker, another day, another time they're asking the same ridiculous question. It's pretty easy to justify the hon. Premier's travel down to the United States: to make the case for Alberta. We know full well that the federal government has no interest in defending Alberta's best interests, but this Premier is acting, unlike Rachel Notley. When Bill C-69 came, it took her nine months to make it to Ottawa to just go hang out with Justin Trudeau and have a . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Schow: It took Rachel Notley nine months to make her way to Ottawa to have a cup of coffee with Justin Trudeau and say: hey, keep it up. Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we're defending Alberta.

Member Boparai: Given that the Premier seems more interested in supporting her friends who seek to profit from breaking down our public institutions than she is on the real needs of Albertans, given the recent corrupt care scandal and the lack of support for Albertans in her budget and no clear plan to light up Trump's tariffs or the government's incompetence and given that Albertans are now seeing how bad the UCP is at business when it comes to the awful deal for the DynaLife contract – once is a mistake, but these many mistakes are a pattern – how much longer are Albertans expected to tolerate this pattern of reckless leadership?

Mr. Schow: Well, Mr. Speaker, if you want to talk about incompetence, it sounds like the IQ level of questioning over there has not even reached room temperature.

Ms Gray: Point of order.

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the members opposite may be offended by the answer, but the reality is that on this side of the . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, the list of accomplishments of the Premier is longer than my arm. I can tell you that we're very proud of the work we've done here for Albertans, defending Alberta's best interests. While the NDP would love to see this province fail, on this side of the House we want to see it succeed.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.
2:40

Member Boparai: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Premier Smith continues to befriend those who threaten our sovereignty while wasting taxpayer money repeatedly – we know we cannot trust our government, who claims to put Alberta first – given that it's no wonder Trump thinks Alberta will be the first to join them – after all, the Premier seemed more than happy to line up to take a selfie with Trump the last time she was there – how can we trust a Premier of a government who puts their personal interests ahead of the needs of the people of Alberta and is abandoning Canadians?

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, I would love to agree with the member opposite, but then we'd both be wrong. I can tell you that the accomplishments of the Premier and this government are all done to defend Alberta's best interests. That's why she has personally gone down to the U.S. to meet with lawmakers and secretaries, to

influence them, to help them better understand the relationship, the important, vital trade relationship that we have with our neighbours to the south. They are our friends and allies. The members opposite would sit on their hands and do absolutely nothing in the face of an uncertain future of tariffs. On this side of the House we're standing with Alberta.

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

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Bill 45

Critical Infrastructure Defence Amendment Act, 2025

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Critical Infrastructure Defence Amendment Act, 2025.

[Motion carried; Bill 45 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Ms Hayter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the five requisite copies of an e-mail from Baylee Giroux, who has joined us here today, sharing her concerns and objections to SACE defunding. She is one of the many people that have lost their therapist after this defunding, and she's open to talk with any of the members of the UCP about her experiences with SACE. You could also read her letter.

The Speaker: The Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 1978 Leslie Park moved to Sherwood Park. She has written me an e-mail about her experience getting IV treatment for her cancer.

The Speaker: Are there others?

Member Batten: I rise to table five e-mails that I had referenced in my member's statement last week, sharing their distrust, anger towards this government, the terrible budget, and the alleged malfeasance.

Mrs. Petrovic: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table five requisite copies of an article that highlights the Member for Edmonton-Glenora cancelling a \$3 billion contract that would have expanded services for Albertans while she was Health minister.

The Speaker: Are there other tablings? The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to table five requisite copies of another two e-mails from Calgarians who are really, really upset with the government's decision to move ahead with the revised plan to the green line, that they think will not serve them well and cost them a whole lot more money.

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

Member Irwin: Thank you. I'd like to table another of the hundreds of e-mails that we've received from Albertans who are

calling on the UCP to reverse their egregious cuts to SACE funding, the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton. This one's from Mike Kunicki, one of my constituents.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others?

Mr. Wright: Mr. Speaker, I rise with two articles highlighting the tweets of the Member for Calgary-Klein.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that brings us to points of order. At 2:18 the hon. Government House Leader rose on a point of order.

Point of Order Decorum

Mr. Schow: Yes, Mr. Speaker. At the time noted, I rose on a point of order. I will be brief. At 2:18, while the hon. minister of community and – no. Sorry. I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Children and Family Services.

Mr. Schow: Children and Family Services.

Mr. Speaker, while that minister was answering a question, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora was continually heckling the member directly, making clear, direct comments at that member. We know that in this Chamber comments should be directed through the chair. I think that this is clearly creating disruption but also would be something that would be unconventional. If the member wants to speak, the member has opportunities during questions and in this particular instance certainly was creating disorder in the Chamber and was not abiding by parliamentary procedure of directing comments through the chair but rather specifically at the member personally.

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is absolutely not a point of order but a matter of debate. Certainly, the comments were about something that's received a lot of media attention. I see an *Edmonton Journal* article, Alberta Claims Cut to Edmonton Sexual Assault Centre Was a 'One-time' Grant Amid SACE Pausing Services, including the minister admitting that this cut was not a renewed grant. I do think that this is a matter of debate. I did not hear any personal attacks. I did not hear anything that imputes false or unavowed motives. Certainly, the practice from all members of this House has been in the past that items like this would be a matter of debate. I look forward to your ruling. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

I do have the benefit of the Blues although in this case I'm not entirely sure that they're going to be prudent to the arguments laid before us. I would say that at that time of 2:18 the hon. Minister of Children and Family Services did have the call and was answering a question. All of the statements made off the record by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora can certainly be heard on the record: "By shutting down SACE? . . . then actually fund SACE . . . then fund them . . . give them somewhere to go . . . you're shutting down SACE."

While I'm not sure the substance of the point of order is quite that, I did provide a caution on another occasion and, in fact, I believe an earlier occasion that the volume and subject of some of the content coming from members of the opposition perhaps wasn't quite in order.

In this case I'm not going to find a point of order, but I will provide the member a caution with respect to the volume and frequency of her desire to interject when other members have the call. This is not a point of order. I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

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

Point of Order Insulting Language

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise under 23(h) and (j), "allegations against another member" and "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." At 2:39 the Government House Leader in responding to a question from the Member for Calgary-Falconridge – I do not have the benefit of the Blues, but I heard him make an insult about the IQ level of the question that the Member for Calgary-Falconridge was asking.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we know that MLAs write and deliver their own questions. To question the IQ level of the question is to insult the member. It is a direct personal attack. Under *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, chapter 13, page 623, we know that "personal attacks, insults and obscenities are not in order" in this Chamber. We heard the level of discourse in this Chamber immediately rise because personal attacks cause great offence in this Chamber and lead to disorder. I hope that the Government House Leader will recognize his error in the heat of the moment – perhaps he did not intend to offer a personal insult – and will apologize and withdraw.

2:50

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do think this is a matter of debate, and I will tell you why. I would never make a personal attack on another member of the Chamber. If I can clarify remarks – I don't think you need the benefit of the Blues for that – I said: I believe the IQ level of the questions of the members opposite have not reached room temperature. While that could be perceived by some as a personal attack on someone's personal IQ, that would never be my intention. I would never intend to call someone an idiot or stupid or anything in this Chamber because that would be unparliamentary, and frankly I think it would be below the level of decorum that this Chamber requires to do the people's business. With that said, I do understand that the members opposite have been offended by this line of answering, and I will do better in the future.

The Speaker: Are there others?

I do have the benefit of the Blues, and I am prepared to rule. The hon. the Government House Leader said the following, "Well, Mr. Speaker, if you want to talk about incompetence, it sounds like the IQ level of questioning . . ." That's how the Blues have transcribed the remarks of the Government House Leader: "the IQ level of questioning over there has not even reached room temperature." While a caution probably would have been in order if the hon. minister said "questions," a much broader scope of the use of the word, "questioning," certainly implies that it was the deliverer of the question at the time. In the fullness of trying to promote good decorum, I think an apology is probably reasonable in this case.

Mr. Schow: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am a strong advocate of decorum in the Chamber, as I have talked about before. So I am more than happy to withdraw and apologize for those remarks and commend the member opposite. I know he is a member in good standing of this Chamber, and I apologize to him directly.

The Speaker: I consider the matter dealt with and concluded and also think that the tone, tenor, and nature of the apology could be re-created here in the Chamber amongst other members. Perhaps it would be useful.

Hon. members, that brings us to points of privilege. At the appropriate time the Deputy Government House Leader rose on Standing Order 15, points of privilege.

Privilege

Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that I have to rise on this point of privilege. It brings the Government House Leader's office no happiness to have to do so on this incredibly important and grave matter. I rise on this point of privilege, having provided, as you mentioned, the requisite notice to both yourself and to the whole Assembly pursuant to Standing Order 15(2), regarding events which occurred at the conclusion of yesterday's sitting both here in the Chamber, as you know, and as well in the Legislature rotunda. As this occurred yesterday, this is the first opportunity I've had to bring this, which has presented itself as a matter, to the attention of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, immediately following the adjournment of the Assembly, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud yelled across the Assembly floor at the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, calling him, quote, disgusting no less than three times, with the words in particular, quote, you are a disgusting human being, absolutely disgusting, unquote, which can be heard audibly on the Assembly Online broadcast. In addition, it can be heard that the member refers to the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre as, quote, being a racist.

Then, as the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, accompanied by one of his staff, departed the Chamber on his way to attend the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future, he was followed down the stairs to the rotunda by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, who yelled after him, quote: hey, Jason, or – pardon me, Mr. Speaker – hey, Member.

The Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Deputy Government House Leader, but I'm just going to have a brief conversation with the Clerk prior to proceeding with the remainder of your remarks.

Hon. members, Standing Order 15(4) provides the Speaker some direction with respect to handling a point of privilege. Now, of course, the Speaker is in a complicated position because he would never refer to the presence or the absence of a member. However, Standing Order 15(4) says:

If the Member whose conduct is called into question is not present, the matter shall be deferred to the next day that the Member is present unless the Speaker rules that, in the circumstances, the matter may be dealt with in the Member's absence.

I'm reluctant to unilaterally make such a decision about whether or not the matter ought to be dealt with without the presence of the member whose conduct is called into question, but I'm happy to do so with some level of consent from the Leader of the Official Opposition. If there is a certain level of comfort amongst members of the opposition, I will be happy to allow the Deputy Government House Leader to proceed.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much. I appreciate Standing Order 15(4). Given we're currently in the week of budget estimates and there are a number of things happening where MLAs need to be, I give consent for the Deputy Government House Leader to proceed at this time.

The Speaker: Providing that the Deputy Government House Leader is agreeable, the Speaker is also agreeable to continue with your presentation with respect to this point of order.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, it's not for government to decide whether the opposition feels comfortable with it. Of course, I would also say that I'm in an awkward position. It's always preferable to have members present if there is a *prima facie* case. It's always better for those members themselves to be there to apologize if that is the case, but I also feel awkward in that I don't want to be breaking that.

The Speaker: I'm pleased to decide for you. Please proceed with your remarks.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll continue where I left off. The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud had already, on record, provided comments here in the Legislature referring to the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre as a disgusting human being, absolutely disgusting, a racist, and now we're at the point in this unfortunate tale where we are in the rotunda of the Legislature, where the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud shouted out, "Hey, Member," addressing the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre with his personal first name.

Once the minister had turned around, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud pointed directly at him and said, quote: you are – and it brings me no pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to finish this quote – a colossal piece of shit. Unquote. In response the minister calmly replied: that is a point of privilege. Unquote. He had to alter his path in order to not continue walking to the Queen Elizabeth II Building with the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud towards his estimates. In fact, he had to return to his office in order to avoid being further harassed by the member in question.

Mr. Speaker, the Speaker and other members may be aware of some of this conduct as it occurred in the Chamber, was witnessed and recorded by Assembly Online, and required the Speaker to take the unusual, in my time unprecedented, step of remaining at the dais and directing members to exit the Chamber prior to the Mace exiting the Chamber with the Speaker and exiting to our respective lounges. This is something I'm not aware of ever having happened in the Legislature before.

3:00

Before elaborating on this incident and its categorization as a breach of parliamentary privilege, I would like to make several brief remarks on the nature of privilege itself. Points of privilege are and should continue to be rare. However, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has been involved in numerous incidents around our precinct of the Legislature, all of which have been dealt with in an attempt, rightfully so, by the Government House Leader's office to limit the use of points of privilege. These incidents include attempts to impede, restrict, and intimidate members not only within the movements of the Chamber but also in the south members' lounge, known as the peace lounge.

I'm also aware of an incident involving the member in an attempt to intimidate members of the government staff in committee rooms either before or after committee meetings. Given these incidents, Mr. Speaker, members are beginning to wonder if anyone anywhere is safe within the member opposite's intimidation.

The various privileges afforded to and enjoyed by both the Assembly as a collective whole and its members individually are, as described in Maingot's, page 12, "absolutely necessary for the due execution of its power." When these privileges are breached, Mr. Speaker, there is found to be a contempt of the Assembly. It should be noted, however, in the words of *House of Commons*

Procedure and Practice that “all breaches of privilege are contempts of the House, but not all contempts are necessarily breaches of privilege.” Third edition, page 81. Contempts of the Assembly can be found even when there may be no specific breach of privilege attributable to an incident.

To quote *Erskine May*, quote: each House also claims the right to punish actions which, while not breaches of any specific privilege, are offences against the authority or dignity. Unquote. Nineteenth edition, page 68. This principle was illustrated in the Assembly just eight days ago by yourself, Mr. Speaker, when you made the following remarks. “You can choose to be rude, but you will not be rude to the seat or the office of the Speaker. You can even be rude to me, but you will not be rude to the office of the Speaker.” March 11, 2025, page 2500. The privileges and dignities granted to members of the Assembly, the Assembly itself, and its officers are granted to them as members, et cetera, each of their offices as such so as to preserve the dignity and even the sanctity of the roles and offices they hold.

While I will in a moment make the case that this incident is a breach of specific privilege, I make these remarks now to argue that this incident may in and of itself constitute contempt of the Assembly as well. Making an insult against the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre while he was on the precinct in his role as a member of the Assembly, an insult clearly made in retaliation to his activities whilst in the Chamber: in doing so the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has shown contempt for the role and the office of the member and thereby the Assembly itself as a whole.

To reinforce the claim I just made, I would like to cite Maingot’s *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, page 141, which reads:

An act committed within the precincts on the day the House is sitting . . . is treated as if the act is done in the face of the House and accordingly the act need not be one which, if done beyond the precincts, would have to constitute a contempt of the House.

As the interaction occurred in the rotunda immediately following the adjournment of yesterday’s sitting, it is certainly within the jurisdiction of the Speaker to rule on this potential breach of privilege in contempt of the Assembly.

I would like to further cite Maingot’s, now from page 196.

Members are entitled to go about their parliamentary business undisturbed. The assaulting, menacing, or insulting of any member on the floor of the House or while he is coming or going to or from the House, or on account of his behaviour during a proceeding in Parliament, is a violation of the rights of Parliament.

It is clear that we can infer that the insulting of any member while he is coming from the House “on account of his behaviour during a proceeding in Parliament is a violation of the rights of Parliament.” I want to emphasize, Mr. Speaker: not only was the member coming from the Assembly; he was en route to the minister’s main estimates, his attendance to which is mandatory under the standing orders. The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud’s insults are in this case an obstruction, an impediment to the execution of responsibilities as a Member of the Assembly, which, certainly, in this precise, narrow case, is a breach of privilege.

To supplement the above arguments and citations, I would also like to cite *Erskine May* again, paragraph 15(14).

It is a contempt to molest a Member of either House while attending the House, or coming to or going from it, and in the eighteenth century both Houses roundly condemned ‘assaulting, insulting or menacing Lords or Members’ going to or coming from the House . . . Members and others have been punished for such molestation occurring within the precincts of the House, whether by assault or insulting or abusing language, or outside the precincts.

It later iterates, “To molest Members on account of their conduct in Parliament is also a contempt.”

I would also like to quote from paragraph 21(52).

Misbehaviour in the lobbies, such as the use of offensive expressions or insulting words or threats, is accordingly left to the House to be dealt with under the ancient practice as a contempt.

This principle is that the interactions do not have to occur just in the Chamber but within the precincts of the Assembly writ large. It appears evident to me, Mr. Speaker, that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud harassed and impeded the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre due to her frustrations with his comments directed at the opposition in the Assembly yesterday.

As the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre made clear yesterday, he was directing his remarks to the entire opposition based on comments made by the members of the opposition. This can be found on page 2586 of *Hansard*, when he stated, “First of all, I was not heckling that member; I was heckling other members, who I will talk about in a moment.” His statement was asking for members opposite to condemn the actions of a terrorist organization, which is listed as a terrorist entity according to the government of Canada. For the members opposite to attempt to imply that condemning a terrorist organization or that the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre is in any way racist for making that comment is beyond the pale and wouldn’t be worth the paper it was written on or does not deserve to be spoken in the Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, no remarks made in the course of debate, not to mention items dealt with by a point of order, should excuse a member from hurling verbal abuse and permit the harassment of another member. Let me reiterate that point again. No amount of fallacious, baseless, or inappropriate accusations of racism from the members opposite can justify the harassment exhibited and undebated by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud that we witnessed yesterday in the Chamber and in the rotunda. I would also reiterate that no point of order was found, and the matter was concluded and dealt with by yourself.

It might be useful at this juncture to remind the Assembly of its most fundamental right, the right that we’re here gathered for in the provincial House of our debate, freedom of speech. To quote from *Beauchesne’s*, paragraph 75, “The privilege of freedom of speech is both the least questioned and the most fundamental right of the Member of Parliament on the floor of the House and in committee.” Page 22 of the sixth edition. Additionally, Maingot says on page 23 of his aforementioned work that “‘freedom of speech is a privilege essential to every free council or legislature.’ No one in the free world will argue to the contrary.”

While there are certain cases of statements made in the Assembly that are not covered by the privilege of freedom of speech, such as casual conversation between members, which clearly cannot be said to be the proceedings of the Assembly, it nonetheless remains that

as far as formal proceedings are concerned, subject to the rules of order in debate . . . a Member may state whatever they think fit in debate, however offensive it may be to the feelings, or injurious to the character, of individuals; and the Member is protected by parliamentary privilege from any action for defamation, as well as from any question or molestation.

Erskine May.

Strictly speaking, Mr. Speaker, heckles are not part of the debate, but they are part of the proceedings of the Assembly, and all the more assuredly are those which make their way into *Hansard*, as they did with the remarks which prompted the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud to make these most ill-advised and obviously

insulting comments. In light of the evidence I believe a prima facie breach of privilege can be found, Mr. Speaker. By insulting the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre due to his behaviour in proceedings in our Assembly at a time when he was coming from the Chamber, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has circumvented the member's privileges and right of freedom of speech, cast aspersions upon the office of the Member of the Legislative Assembly, and can be found in contempt of the Assembly.

Moreover, the member opposite has thus obstructed and impeded the member in the execution of his duties, as she threatened, intimidated, and impeded the member in his functions and parliamentary duties as his access around the precinct on his way to estimates.

I should perhaps elaborate that in order for abusive and insulting language to reach the level of threatening intimidation, it does not have to rely on if the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre felt threatened himself. It is also about how the actions of the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud can be construed, and it is not a stretch for a reasonable person to infer that by verbally harassing the member in the Chamber to such a point that the Speaker took the unprecedented action following the adjournment of the Assembly, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud was making a deliberate attempt to insult, abuse, threaten, intimidate, and impede.

Further, her use of threatening gestures while doing so only supports this notion. Before I leave judgment in your hands, Mr. Speaker, it may be relevant to draw the attention of the Assembly to other instances of questionable conduct involving the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. In particular, I refer to the point of privilege raised on July 2, 2019, regarding her statement, "I don't need the House leader, by the way; we're coming for you." Clearly, this is another example of threatening, intimidating language used by the member opposite, which would appear to be a pattern of behaviour, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, and the thrust of our point today.

3:10

To name a few instances which indicate the member's habit of using abusive language and insulting language and being otherwise out of order, I cite March 11, 2025, page 2507 of *Hansard*; March 10, page 2479 of *Hansard*; March 28; March 14; October 26; June 1; December 8; November 25; all on the recording pages of *Hansard*.

The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has in this instance and repeatedly demonstrated by past behaviour and points of order and privileges breached the privilege of the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. This assault on his privilege, Mr. Speaker, is an assault on the privileges of every member in this Assembly. We share equally in this parliamentary privilege as members of this body, and for any of us to enjoy it, it must be enjoyed by every individual in every individual case, regardless of their party membership, of that individual's size, or any personal attributes of a member.

The very privilege of the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud can only exist if every member of this House can expect to be able to conduct their parliamentary business within this precinct free of threats, intimidation, and abusive harassment. This, Mr. Speaker, is

fundamentally not for the benefit of our members but for the benefit of every Albertan whom we represent.

In conclusion, if this is found to be a prima facie breach of privilege, then I would suggest that the only proper recourse to deal with a repeat offender like the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is to refer this matter to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing in order for an effective remedy to be applied so that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud might properly conduct her actions within this precinct in her responsibility as a member with due respect for those other members and our privileges that were accorded.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, a point of privilege is a significant and serious matter, and on occasion, as in the overwhelming majority of occasions, the member of which the point of privilege is about has the opportunity to respond. Equally as regularly they have taken some time to prepare their response.

I'll call upon the Leader of the Official Opposition to see if you would like to respond now on behalf of the member or respond in short order.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, a point of privilege is a very serious matter. As I referred to earlier, this week with estimates and a number of things going on, we would like to defer response to potentially Monday if the Speaker would so allow.

The Speaker: Hon. members, traditionally we would hear the response in the subsequent sitting day. Having said that, in light of the parliamentary calendar, including a vote on the main estimates tomorrow immediately following question period and a number of other complicated parliamentary proceedings and Standing Order 15(3), that reads, "If the Speaker is of the opinion that the matter may not be fairly dealt with at that time, the Speaker may defer debate on the matter to a time when he or she determines it may be fairly dealt with," in light of our time constraints tomorrow with respect to obligations of budget estimates and the vote on the main estimates, I do recommend that immediately following question period, this point of privilege, Standing Order 15, will be dealt with immediately following points of order on Monday. I consider this matter dealt with until that time.

Hon. members, the legislative policy committees will convene this afternoon, this evening, and tomorrow morning for consideration of the main estimates. This afternoon Resource Stewardship will continue the consideration of the estimates for the Ministry of Finance, and the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the main estimates for the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation in the Grassland Room. This evening the Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates of the Ministry of Affordability and Utilities in the Rocky Mountain Room. Tomorrow morning the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Justice in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Infrastructure in the Grassland Room.

Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) and the 2025-2026 main estimates schedule the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 3:16 p.m.]

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