



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, March 24, 2025

Day 90

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

First Session

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

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Party standings:

United Conservative: 48

New Democrat: 37

Independent: 1

Vacant: 1

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Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Northern Development

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Dyck
Eggen
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Yao

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, March 24, 2025

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Hon. members, it being the first sitting day of the week, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by the Minister of Environment and Protected Areas. I invite you to participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all of us command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Hon. members, please remain standing for the land acknowledgement.

Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

The Speaker: The Legislative Assembly is grateful to be situated on Treaty 6 territory. This land has been the traditional region of the Métis people of Alberta, the Inuit, and the ancestral territory of the Cree, Dene, Blackfoot, Saulteaux, Iroquois, and Nakota Sioux people. The recognition of our history on this land is an act of reconciliation, and we honour those who walk with us. We further acknowledge that the province of Alberta exists within treaties 4, 7, 8, and 10 territory as well as the Métis Nation of Alberta.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have an important guest seated in the Speaker's gallery, who I had the pleasure of meeting with earlier today. This morning I met with His Excellency Alessandro Cattaneo, the ambassador of the Italian Republic to Canada. His Excellency was appointed ambassador of Italy to Canada on December 5, 2024.

After graduating, he joined the foreign service in 1998. His career includes roles as director general for migration, the embassy of Italy in Tel Aviv, NATO's permanent delegation in Brussels. He served as the counsellor in Washington, DC, the deputy permanent representative to NATO, and later became head of NATO and Strategic Affairs at the MFA. In 2022 he served as the diplomatic adviser to the president of the Council of Ministers, and he was awarded the title of commander of the order of merit to the Italian Republic. He is joined in the gallery today by the consul general of Italy in Vancouver and members of the consular service of Italy in Edmonton. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly. It was an absolute pleasure meeting you. I'm not even

the commander of my home, let alone the commander of the order of merit. Thank you so much for being here.

Hon. members, I'm also pleased to introduce a friend of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. He is known far and wide across this great province as the honorary consul general of the kingdom of Netherlands, who I've personally worked with and who has made significant contributions to the community both in the Netherlands as well as here at home in Alberta. I understand that he was awarded the King Charles III coronation medal earlier today. I know that I can't think of someone who's more deserving for such a prestigious award. I invite him to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

Member Ceci: Mr. Speaker, to you and through you I'd like to introduce my constituency manager, Kelly. Kelly works hard every day to help serve the constituents of Calgary-Buffalo, and I'd like to welcome her to the Legislature for her first of hopefully many visits here. Please rise, Kelly, and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Sigurdson: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you Lindsye Murfin, an incredible ag producer and advocate for my constituency, as well as Kyle Forbes, a producer in southern Alberta. I am very thankful to have them here today. Would you please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, I introduce to you and through you to the Assembly a visionary and pioneer in Canada's oil sands, Fort McMurray resident for many years, James Carter. Later today he will be given the King Charles III medal. He is joined today by wife Lorraine Bray, his family members Andrea Simon, Michael Simon, Maclean Simon, Jonathan Hokanson, and Hanna Hokanson. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has an introduction.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you it's an honour to introduce nitanis, my daughter, Bella, my nephew Robbie, and my niece Madeline. Thank you for being an inspiration to me and reminding me why it's so important to be in this place. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

Mr. Jones: Mr. Speaker, Jerry Bouma has served on many boards and commissions in Alberta, including the former Northlands ag society, Horse Racing Alberta, and the AFSC. He's also honorary consul to the kingdom of the Netherlands, and a few minutes ago I had the privilege of presenting him with the King Charles III coronation medal. I would invite him and my chief of staff, Jerry Belikka, who also received the King Charles III coronation medal, to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Members' Statements

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

Cancer Treatment Innovation

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Cancer care is incredibly important to our government, and we continue to invest in innovative technology and equipment to assist Albertans in their cancer care journey. We aim to ensure that all Albertans can get the

care they need when they need it within a system that is seamless, organized, and patient focused.

In fact, last October the Arthur J.E. Child comprehensive cancer centre opened in Calgary. As one of the largest government infrastructure projects in Alberta's history and one of the most advanced cancer centres in the world, the Arthur Child will continue to be a world-class care and treatment to patients while driving innovation and research.

We also announced last week that a new partnership will be established to support cancer care initiatives. Our government is investing \$800 million over eight years in a cancer innovation partnership with Siemens and the Alberta Cancer Foundation. Through this partnership Siemens will replace Alberta's existing equipment that has reached the end of its life and introduce brand new technologies that are more effective at reducing wait times for patients. We'll also establish a \$48 million medical research innovation fund and investments provided by the partnership.

This remarkable partnership will reduce oncology-related ER visits by up to 30 per cent and slash cancer care wait times by up to 50 per cent. Yes, you heard that right, Mr. Speaker. Investments will even be directed to support a research fund to attract and retain oncologists. Furthermore, two centres of excellence will be created. One will be focused on oncology training; the other will be focused on artificial intelligence and machine learning.

I am so proud that our government is ensuring that Albertans are provided with the latest technology and resources to support their full treatment and recovery plan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:40

Premier's Leadership

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Today I rise to give a member's statement on behalf of our leader Naheed Nenshi. By the way, reading the power of his words makes me understand exactly why this government is too afraid to call the by-election so he could deliver these words himself.

A quote directly from Nenshi: I'm a proud Canadian. I was born in this country to parents who had immigrated. There is nowhere else on earth that I would have been able to achieve what I have achieved, growing up in poverty in northeast Calgary.

The Premier takes Canada for granted, plays fast and loose with the notion of this country, not realizing just how fragile this current situation actually is. In the last week alone she has threatened a national unity crisis like a toddler throwing a tantrum over the last cupcake if she doesn't get exactly what she wants. Not only is this highly ineffective; it's very dangerous. It might even be forgivable if her list of so-called demands were actually demands that made a difference to average Albertans.

While there are some thoughtful things in there related directly to the energy sector, none of her demands talk about health care or education or the future of the economy or the cost of living because she has no plan for any of these things. In fact, she has no plan for anything. She is made up simply of histrionic statements, angry tweets, and fawning selfies with extremists. She can't be bothered to meet with the other first ministers, but she can use taxpayers' money to fly to Florida to fund raise for an extremist organization.

Premier, from Nenshi: it is time to stop trying to be the centre of attention, set aside your ego, and get on Team Canada.

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

UCP Candidate Selection in Edmonton-Strathcona

Mr. Lundy: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to stand today and talk about the strength of our United Conservative Party

in Edmonton. As a proud capital region MLA I've heard from so many Edmontonians who just don't feel represented by the Official Opposition. I'm hearing from strong, principled, hard-working citizens who believe in common sense and promoting economic prosperity. What they don't believe in is the toxic divisiveness and anger, blatant slander, and childish ranting they see every day from the NDP. But don't take my word for it. I would ask any Albertan to go online and watch a question period from our spring sitting and ask themselves: would the manner that the NDP are behaving be acceptable in their workplaces, community events, or family gatherings? The answer is, of course, no.

It's no surprise that many Edmontonians feel left behind simply for living in a city where the NDP has pushed failed ideological policies and empty promises. Right now our party is running a competitive nomination race to select a candidate to run in the future Edmonton-Strathcona by-election. The NDP: they parachuted in Calgary's failed mayor Naheed Nenshi to run for their party. Nenshi's roots in Edmonton, of course, date back a slim two months, when he was sheepishly appointed after proving so popular amongst his Calgary caucus that exactly zero of them offered to give up their seat in the Legislature so their leader could sit. Unlike No-show Nenshi, our Premier is popular in every region of the province, including Edmonton, where her grace, steel will, and diplomacy shine through every day.

Mr. Speaker, we are putting our money where our mouth is by making big investments in Edmonton: 14 new schools, a historic agreement to continue building downtown, and much more. We have the capital region surrounded, and we will not stop until we give Edmonton the UCP MLAs they deserve. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Premier's Leadership

Mr. Dach: Mr. Speaker, last week Canadians had a moment of pride as Team Canada beat Team USA in the CONCACAF Nations League, showing all Canadians what happens when our best players pull together. Every pass, every goal, every defensive stand: it was Canada united, taking on the giants on Team USA and winning. We need that same spirit off the field, especially now as we face growing threats from Donald Trump attempting to annex Canada, his harmful tariffs, and a looming trade war. Canada can only succeed if our leaders stand on Team Canada united, focused, and for each other, for all Canadians.

Unfortunately, not everyone is on the team. This week the Premier is meeting with extreme far-right American Ben Shapiro, a man who's publicly called for Canada to become America's 51st state. She's doing this at a fundraiser for PragerU, a group pushing U.S.-style extremism right into Canada. Mr. Speaker, this is not new. On March 8 the Premier appeared on a Breitbart podcast, bragging – bragging – about how she tried to get Donald Trump to interfere in the Canadian federal election, quote: the longer this tariff dispute goes on, politicians posture, and it seems to be benefiting the Liberals right now, so I would hope that we could put things on pause, is what I told administration officials. Unquote.

Instead of standing strong with Canadians, she's picking fights at home, undermining our trade strategy, and cozying up to those who want to weaken our country or even take it over. At a time when Canada needs every province playing for the same team, the Premier is offside, working for Trump, not Team Canada. Mr. Speaker, it's clear. It's clear that when the game is on the line, Canadians deserve leaders who will wear our jersey proudly, not sell us out.

Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health (South)

Mr. Wright: Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to stand before you today as the newly appointed parliamentary secretary for rural health (south), with my colleague from Grande Prairie-Wapiti to the north. This is an incredible responsibility, and I'm thankful to the Premier for placing her trust in me to support the Minister of Health in this role.

The role of parliamentary secretary serves as an extension of our hard-working Minister of Health, ensuring that her mandates are achieved successfully and efficiently throughout the province. But it's also about bringing grassroots concerns to the ministry. This position comes with the immense opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of Albertans. I've been fortunate enough to hear from constituents, friends, neighbours, and family and be able to advocate on their local concerns, local concerns like expanding ICU bed capacity in Medicine Hat and an urgent care centre in our region, just to name a few. While Budget 2025 reflects the fruits of my advocacy with the urgent care centre and expansion of ICU beds in our region, there's more work to be done, and I'm thankful to expand my advocacy to all of southern Alberta.

Our government is committed to addressing rural and remote health challenges to ensure Albertans have access to high-quality health care services no matter where they live in this province. Albertans living in rural and remote areas of the province face unique challenges that require tailored supports and approaches to deliver safe, high-quality, and sustainable health care services. Health care can sometimes feel out of reach for those in rural communities, which is why I'm committed to bringing their care closer to their home. While rural Alberta is vast, know that your parliamentary secretaries will help address your concerns to deliver the health care services you deserve.

It's an absolute honour to serve as our government's parliamentary secretary for rural health in addition to my role as the military liaison. Albertans deserve a better, stronger health care system, and I look forward to making it happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Alberta Energy Regulator Board Membership

Ms Al-Guneid: Mr. Speaker, the Code of Hammurabi is one of the earliest recorded legal codes, in 1750 BC. Hammurabi, the ruler of Babylon in ancient Mesopotamia, today's Middle East between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, laid the foundation for legal systems that would develop checks and balances more formally in ancient Greece and Rome. While ancient Greek political thought did not use this modern term of "checks and balances," they discussed the importance of separating powers, ensuring that no single group or individual held unchecked authority. Government agencies operate within the framework of separation of powers. They are not as powerful as the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, that prevent tyranny and protect our freedoms, but they ensure accountability and oversight.

1:50

Fast-forward to modern day Alberta, where we live under the perpetual darkness of the UCP that blurs the lines of checks and balances. Fast-forward beyond Hammurabi and the Greeks; we have a Premier who appoints her friends and insiders like David Yager on the Alberta Energy Regulator board. This board member responsible for industry regulation is also paid by the Premier to be the executive branch special adviser to create industry policy. Mr. Speaker, does the Premier see the inherent conflict of interest here?

The AER is a regulator, a quasi-judicial agency. It runs hearings. It is an administrator. It is a rule maker. It is a rule enforcer. It protects public interest and the rule of law. The UCP needs to respect that our checks and balances cannot be political agencies under their whims and wishes.

This is not a new concept, Mr. Speaker. It started in 1750 BC.

Oral Question Period

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

Premier's Remarks on U.S. Tariffs

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has invited foreign influence in our Canadian elections. On March 8 she went on the extreme far-right Breitbart program and said, quote: I would hope that we can put things on pause, is what I've told administration officials. End quote. Why was the Premier bragging to Breitbart about her specific conversations to U.S. officials inviting foreign interference into Canada's election?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I got my economics degree, I got an English degree, and in my English degree I learned the term "antonym." An antonym is the exact opposite of what the people across the aisle are claiming. Interference is one thing; asking the U.S. to refrain from is actually the opposite. I do not want to see anyone interfere in our elections. I want to see the election take place on Canadian issues so that we can put on the table what our issues are in Alberta and hear how each of the parties responds to them. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has been cosplaying as the worst diplomat ever and has made things so much worse for both the federal Conservatives and for the nation. The Premier's spokesperson called the revelations of what the Premier said, quote, offensive and false, but they are her words caught on tape calling for foreign interference into our elections. Noted columnist Don Braid says, "Her advocacy has shaded into political meddling." Why would the Premier and her staff call the remarks offensive and false when they are exactly what she said to an American audience?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, for the last many, many months I and my fellow Premiers have been working relentlessly to convince U.S. officials at all levels how damaging the tariffs will be to both Canadians and to Americans. I was actually asked the question: do you know if any of the members opposite have made any calls to anyone down south to try to do the same thing? And I had to say: "No, I don't," Mr. Speaker, because I don't think they have. That is the difference. I will do whatever it takes to make sure that Canadian businesses do not have tariffs on their products, and I'm going to continue that advocacy.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to share that no member of the Official Opposition has called for foreign interference into the Canadian election. What the Premier has done is against everything Canadians stand for. We do not want undue influence from foreign entities. We cannot have Donald Trump interfering in Canada's elections. [interjection]

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

Ms Gray: Exactly which U.S. administration officials did the Premier counsel to interfere in Canada's federal election?

The Speaker: A point of order is noted by the Government House Leader at 1:54.

The Premier has the call.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been giving interviews, I've been giving speeches, and I have been saying the same thing all along, that we need to have a renegotiated Canada-U.S. free trade agreement. That requires someone with a four-year mandate. The members opposite might want to go back and look at what I said in December: let's have an immediate election so we have someone with a four-year mandate who can negotiate with the U.S. President. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. One thing is certain, that I had no problem hearing the question. I would expect to be able to hear the answer.

Ms Smith: And now that we are in the middle of an election, I would hope that our American counterparts would refrain from taking any actions on tariffs until that election is over. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition for question 2.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, forget December; we care a lot about what she said on March 8, two weeks ago. The Premier's Breitbart interview has gone viral because the Premier says on tape that she is calling for foreign interference. Let me read her full quote for the Assembly. Quote: So I would hope that we can put things on pause, is what I've told administration officials; let's just put things on pause so we can get through an election; let's have the best person at the table make the argument for how they would deal with them, and I think that's Pierre Poilievre. End quote. Why did the Premier invite foreign interference from the Americans to support Pierre Poilievre?

Ms Smith: I want to know why the members opposite are trying to goad the administration into imposing tariffs on April 2. Shouldn't they actually be aligned with us in saying the exact same thing? Now that we're in the middle of an election, we have two different leaders who are putting their ideas on the table, and we will see which one emerges as the leader at the end. I can tell you, there's a reason why I have suggested that one leader would be better than the other. I know that the folks across the aisle are on Team Carney, but I'm on Team Alberta, and I know that Team Alberta means doing everything we possibly can to support our energy industry, which they don't, Mr. Speaker.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, rather than get tariffs cancelled altogether, the Premier said she asked U.S. officials to put a pause on them to help Pierre Poilievre's election efforts. That is calling for U.S. election interference. She has no problems currying favours with the extreme right wing in the U.S., but last week she couldn't even be bothered to fly to Ottawa to meet with fellow Premiers and the Prime Minister. Now, why does this Premier attack Canada, Canadian values like public health care and Canadian institutions like free and fair independent elections, at every opportunity?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was on the call for the first ministers', as were three other Premiers, because I think it's unreasonable to expect that we would cancel our entire agenda for

the day, especially when we had such a great announcement on Friday. We have an \$800 million partnership with Siemens to use artificial intelligence to improve the diagnosis of cancer. One of the things that they're hoping for is to be able to reduce the amount of time it takes to go from diagnosis to treatment from two weeks to two hours. This is one of those private-sector partnerships that works. I'm very excited about it, and I was glad to be there.

Ms Gray: No end of excuses not to stand up for Canada.

The Premier went on right-wing Breitbart radio to say, quote: the perspective that Pierre would bring would be very much in sync with, I think, the new direction in America. End quote. Not only is the Premier willing to use Alberta taxpayer resources to campaign for her chosen candidate; she's willing to admit she thinks Pierre Poilievre is just like Trump, Trump, who, unprovoked, dropped devastating tariffs on us that will end good jobs, kill industries, and hurt our country. Why would the Premier welcome... [interjection]

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

Ms Gray: ... U.S. election interference to mould Canada in Trump's image? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

A point of order is noted at 1:58 by the Government House Leader.

The Premier has the call.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are nine things I put on the table last week: guaranteeing Alberta full access to oil and gas corridors north, east, and west; repealing the no-new-pipelines act; lifting the tanker ban off the B.C. coast; eliminating the oil and gas emissions cap; scrapping the clean electricity regs; ending the prohibition on single-use plastics; abandoning the net-zero car mandate; returning oversight of industrial carbon pricing to the provinces; halting federal censorship of energy companies.

The Leader of the Official Opposition said: sounds pretty reasonable. Team Carney, which they're on, said one thing in Alberta, that he didn't support hard caps, and then he said that he was going to impose them nonetheless. Mr. Speaker, that's the difference I'm talking...

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition for question 3.

Ms Gray: It is so clear the Premier is on Team Trump, not Team Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has been using all her communication channels to campaign for the Conservative Party of Canada. From the Breitbart interview to her Twitter account, not a day goes by when she isn't attacking some political leaders to the benefit of Pierre Poilievre, and she's called for U.S. election interference into our elections to get it. How many taxpayer resources has she spent on these partisan attacks, and has she reported these partisan hits as Elections Canada in-kind donations?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm on Team Alberta. Always have been. The folks across the aisle: they were on Team Trudeau, and now they're on Team Carney. As he threatens another emissions cap, why aren't they standing up? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. The Premier has the call.

Ms Smith: Why aren't they standing up? Another Conference Board of Canada report today talked about the devastation that would be caused by an emissions cap, the downturn in investment, the downturn in the economy, the loss of jobs, the loss of income. If they want to demonstrate that they're on Alberta, they're welcome to it. Stand up and support us in calling for an end to these damaging Liberal policies. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Gray: It's clear the Premier is on Team Trump, not Team Alberta.

Unlike her Conservative counterpart Doug Ford, who is staying out of the federal election, this Premier cannot help herself. Every time this Premier weighs in, it's because she wants Trump's guy, her guy, Pierre Poilievre to win. The Premier should admit that these kinds of remarks, especially to international audiences, look to Albertans and Canadians as the equivalent of improper contributions to federal politics. Does the Premier understand that telling other foreign entities to meddle in Canada's federal election is wrong? Will she take accountability, apologize, and cease this reckless behaviour?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, I would like our election to play out, and I think we're seeing already, early on, exactly who is going to be best for Alberta. I'm not sure why the members opposite don't see this, but let me just give the details. An emissions cap, which Carney has already promised that he's going to implement, would cause an 11 per cent decline in GDP. We would lose 4.1 per cent employment. We would reduce government revenues 9.3 per cent, lower disposable income for each family by \$3,300. This is not a hard choice. Either you're standing with Alberta or you're not standing with Alberta, which is it?

Ms Gray: Team Trump talking right here.

This is now the second major scandal this Premier is embroiled in this spring. No Albertan wants to see this kind of unethical, untrustworthy behaviour; no one besides Sam Mraiche, who wanted corrupt care. When the tape is rolling, the Premier shares exactly what she believes and wants. Why won't the Premier denounce foreign interference in Canada's elections, stop using taxpayer dollars in the federal campaign, and call a public inquiry into corrupt care?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know how I can be more clear in saying that now that an election has been called, I would reiterate my hope that the United States would refrain from, meaning do not interfere, imposing tariffs on their closest ally and largest trading partner during the middle of an election. We have 35 days. We're going to see the ideas of each of the leaders on the table. I think we on this side have made very clear the things that we expect from federal leaders to make sure that our economy can thrive. All I've heard from the members opposite is that they're supporting the approach that has been taken by the Liberal-NDP coalition and that they're going to continue to do that.

Member Arcand-Paul: Mr. Speaker, here's a news flash. The tariffs are still coming, and that means the Premier's so-called diplomacy isn't working. For the other side: the antonym of that is that it works, which it is not. Instead, she has doubled down, going on the extreme radio station of Breitbart, which is not a mainstream news source, and said that she asked the U.S. administration to pause the tariffs just so maybe her buddy Pierre Poilievre could win

the election. Why did the Premier sell out Alberta and Canada in order to score political points with the extreme far right in the U.S.?

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, the only people selling out Alberta and Canada are the members opposite. While we're potentially facing looming tariffs, members opposite are talking about Breitbart. While we're talking about the vacuum of leadership in Ottawa, members opposite: they're talking about Ben Shapiro. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. The hon. the Government House Leader has the call.

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, while Prime Minister Mark Carney is talking out of both sides of his mouth, the members opposite are doing the exact same thing. On this side of the House we're going to defend Alberta. We're here for Canada. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Member Arcand-Paul: The Premier's attempts to swoon the extremist far right in the United States have failed. You have to wonder if the Premier really wants Trump's approval that much, because everything she's done has netted Alberta and Canada nothing. All weekend news headlines exposed the Premier for who she really is, someone willing to sell out Canada for political points. Why would the Premier suggest she's encouraged U.S. officials to interfere in Canada's election by pausing the tariffs solely for political benefit for Pierre Poilievre?

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Well, Mr. Speaker, I will begin my remarks by saying: point of order. That's a point of order on the member opposite for his remarks.

Second, Canada's Chief Electoral Officer, Stéphane Perrault already said that nothing of the sort is taking place, Mr. Speaker. On this side of the House the Premier has asked the administration to pause tariffs. That is what our Premier's job is, to defend Alberta in the face of potential tariffs from the United States, our largest trading partner. We make no apologies for defending a Premier who wants to go down to the United States and make a case for Alberta when Ottawa won't do it for us.

Member Arcand-Paul: Well, interestingly the Premier told Breitbart, quote, I think we'd have a really good relationship. But she didn't tell Breitbart why the tariffs are devastating for workers, for jobs, for industries, or for our country. Instead, she admitted that she's encouraged foreign interference in Canada's election. She could have used her time to tell Alberta's story about the people here who do incredible things. If this were any other country like China or India that she had encouraged to intervene, Conservatives would scream bloody murder. So why is it okay for this Premier to do it when it's Pierre Poilievre who might . . .

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: So let me get this straight, Mr. Speaker. The Premier goes and speaks to Breitbart to have a conversation about the importance of Alberta in the trade relationship with the United States. The members opposite now say that the conversation is about something else but about the Alberta-U.S. relationship. What do they want? You cannot inhale and exhale at the exact same time. What I can tell you is that the Premier will continue to defend Alberta and tell Alberta's story, because Ottawa is failing to do so.

Our Premier is showing true leadership while their leader is shooting TikTok videos somewhere in the building. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

A point of order is noted at 2:07.

Health Services Procurement Process

Member Brar: We now know that the Alberta Health Services Board was fired the exact same day they were to receive a report on improper activity. The Premier and the Health minister have been running scared from questions and dismissing this as, quote, an AHS HR issue, some seriously creative framing for a controversy around wasting Albertans' money on inflated surgical contracts. Why did the UCP fire the AHS board, and why did it happen on a day when their corruption was coming to light?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to continue to answer this question over and over again. The government of Alberta's statement of defence has been filed, and as it's before the courts I won't be speaking on this matter further. But I would like to highlight the fact that last Friday we did have an excellent announcement where we are partnering with Siemens and the Alberta Cancer Foundation; \$800 million, where we're going to be providing services for cancer care patients. This is going to dramatically have a huge impact and reduce wait times. I'm so happy on this. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Member Brar: Given that the AHS board was hand selected by the UCP and that three of the seven members were serving as deputy ministers within the government, given that the fourth member on the board was Lyle Oberg, a former Conservative cabinet minister with close ties to the Premier, and given that the UCP is now blaming AHS leadership for the failures in Alberta's health care system, my question: does the UCP think Albertans are fools? The government picked the team and now wants to hide behind the team and dodge questions. Why did the UCP fire their hand-selected board?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, this announcement that we had on Friday is the largest investment of its kind in Alberta's history. It will position our province as a global leader in cancer care, innovation, and research. Through this partnership we'll replace aging oncology treatment equipment with cutting-edge technology. We anticipate cutting cancer treatment wait times by half. This is going to mean significant change, positive change for cancer care patients in Alberta. I'm looking forward to sharing even more. [interjections]

2:10

The Chair: Order. Order. Order.

Calgary-North East is the only one with the call.

Member Brar: Given that the now former Infrastructure minister stated, and I quote, something doesn't sit right with me, it doesn't pass the smell test, plain and simple, end quote, and given that the UCP refuses to answer my questions about firing their hand-picked AHS board of directors and given that Albertans have the right to know when the government is doing the corruption and the right to know when contracts are being signed over to the Premier's friends

with luxurious gifts, when will the UCP do what must be done and call for a public inquiry?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, once again, I don't know where the member has been for the past three weeks, but there are a number of investigations happening right now.

Mr. Sabir: There is no public inquiry. Stop being disrespectful.

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General is able to interview both current and past employees. There is no concern about that. The statement of defence has been filed and describes the government's position on that. There are a number of different third-party investigations taking place, Mr. Speaker. We encourage the findings, we're happy to hear from the investigators and the bodies that are looking into this, and we look forward to receiving those reports.

Ms Hoffman: I'm pretty sure the Justice minister . . .

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

If the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora would like to ask a question, I encourage her to get on the list. Since she's not, please remain . . .

An Hon. Member: Spoiler.

The Chair: Maybe she is later, but not at present. Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

Aboriginal Business Investment Fund

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since launched in 2014, the Aboriginal business investment fund, or ABIF program, has supported more than 105 community-owned businesses with more than \$58 million in capital grants, helping create almost 1,000 jobs for Indigenous people in Alberta. If passed, Budget 2025 will allocate another \$10 million in sustainable funding for the ABIF. Can the Minister of Indigenous Relations explain the need for this funding and how Indigenous communities will benefit from it?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Wilson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Indigenous participation in the economy is crucial to the success of this province, and the Aboriginal business investment fund, or the ABIF, has been a game changer for communities across Alberta, helping Indigenous businesses buy or upgrade equipment and contribute to sustainable, thriving communities. When I go out amongst the communities, I can see the difference. This government is moving the dial, and when I go into these communities, it's so nice to see the pride in the people, just to know that they're contributing to help their youth grow and thrive.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the hard work that he's done on this file. Given that Indigenous businesses can benefit from this grant program to access funding to upgrade infrastructure or buy new equipment, which in turn creates jobs, economic stability, and revenue generated for the communities, can the same minister tell this House about a community that has benefited from this program, and what they have gained from it?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again for that great question. ABIF has been a catalyst for Indigenous business development, empowering Indigenous communities across Alberta to take charge of their economic futures. I can think of Montana First Nation. It's home to Akamihk Fresh, a company in my riding that used ABIF to start a hydroponic greenhouse, growing fresh lettuce and herbs. They've already expanded this year from 16 employees to 30 full-time employees. They now have an immense amount of produce in markets and stores and schools all over Alberta. One store in Calgary, actually, has asked them to not only expand by twice but by four times. They want all of their produce. When you go into the community, you can just feel the pride in there now.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the minister. Given that economic reconciliation is a focus for this government and further given that the Minister of Indigenous Relations works cross government to ensure that reconciliation is a key focus for everyone, can the same minister please tell this House how the ABIF program is advancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and how businesses can apply for these grants?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Wilson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and, again, thank you to the member for the question. The member is absolutely right. Economic reconciliation is a key part of my ministry's work. ABIF is a prime example of that, promoting economic stability, job growth, and business development for communities in Alberta. The application period is opening soon this spring once again, and I look forward to reviewing the incredible applications we receive this year for these exciting business ventures owned and operated by First Nations and Métis people throughout Alberta. I'm excited to create another thousand jobs for Indigenous people.

Premier's Travel to Florida

Mr. Ip: This Thursday the Premier will use taxpayer dollars to help fund raise for PragerU, an extreme right-wing organization that is well documented in promoting alt-right conspiracy theories and spreads disinformation, including climate change denialism, anti-Muslim hate, and more. The Premier confirmed to the media that her travel and accommodation costs will be covered by Alberta taxpayers. How much public money is the Premier wasting, how many staff are travelling to Florida on this trip, and where in the Premier's job description does it say that she should be pandering to extreme conspiracy theorists?

Mr. Schow: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the members opposite know, having been in government for four very, very long years, that it is the Premier's job to go and make a case for Alberta to help build up our most important industries and defend our best interests. Given the lack of leadership in Ottawa and the fact that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and now Prime Minister Carney refuse to defend Alberta, refuse to tell Alberta's story, and refuse to work in favour of the province of Alberta – we're on Team Canada. We're asking Team Canada to be on Team Alberta. When will the NDP be on Team Alberta?

Mr. Ip: Given that Ben Shapiro has made extreme and homophobic statements, like that being gay or transgender is a mental illness and

that doctors who perform abortions should be imprisoned, given that the Premier says that helping him fund raise is part of her diplomatic strategy to curry favour with Trump but Ben Shapiro doesn't advise or speak for the U.S. administration in any capacity, again, what is the Premier exactly hoping to accomplish by pandering to the American alt right?

Mr. Schow: Well, Mr. Speaker, this upcoming trip and previous trips are all meant to go and prove that Alberta is an incredible trading partner of the United States of America. I'm not quite sure why the members opposite continue to be angry that we have a Premier showing true leadership while it is lacking in Ottawa when the reality is that if Ottawa won't defend us, we have to defend ourselves. It's why we continue to go out, ministers across the front bench, to tell Alberta's story. The Premier is doing the same thing. I ask the members opposite: what is the problem with the Premier doing her job? Maybe they should do theirs. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ip: Given that PragerU spreads racist rhetoric, conspiracy theories, and hate, including Islamophobic videos like one titled There Is No Such Thing as Islamophobia and another that dismisses Islamophobia as a buzzword, does the Premier not understand that she is using public money to actively fund raise for an organization that spreads hate? What kind of message does this send to Muslim Albertans? Will she do the right thing and cancel the trip? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Schow: No, Mr. Speaker, the Premier will not cancel the trip. She will do nothing of the sort. What she will continue to do is defend Alberta against intrusion from Ottawa and protect us in the face of uncertain tariffs. We've already made it clear with Prime Minister Carney what our expectations are. Just to name a few: guaranteeing Alberta full access to unfettered oil and gas corridors to the north, east, and west; repealing Bill C-69, the no-new-pipelines act, a bill, I might add, that Rachel Notley when Premier fully endorsed. On this side of the House we're on Team Alberta. Why won't the NDP be there as well?

Provincial Response to U.S. Tariffs

Member Hoyle: Canada is facing real threats of tariffs and a trade war with President Trump, putting Alberta jobs and key industries at risk, yet this Premier seems more interested in cozying up to far-right U.S. commentators and politicians who have directly attacked Canada's interests and our sovereignty. Will the Premier admit that her strategy of playing nice with extremists like Ben Shapiro and Breitbart and taking lavish trips of cocktail parties to Mar-a-Lago isn't working and that it's time she focused on standing up for Alberta and Team Canada instead of Team Trump?

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would say that thus far our strategy of diplomacy is working. I don't think there's a single member on the opposition benches . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: I don't think there's a single member on the opposition benches who could pick up the phone and call anybody down across the line. Meanwhile I can tell you that the people down in the States

– secretaries, lawmakers, even the President – know our Premier’s name. I’ll tell you what, Mr. Speaker. That means something when we’re trying to make sure that here in Alberta our most important industries are defended. [interjections] Last time I checked, outside of aluminum and steel, there are no tariffs.

The Speaker: Order.

Member Hoyle: Given that if the Premier truly cared about protecting Alberta jobs, she’d know that strengthening our internal markets is one of the best ways to defend ourselves against tariffs, including reducing interprovincial barriers, but given that instead she’s picking fights with the federal government while cozying up to far-right U.S. commentators like Ben Shapiro and Breitbart, does the Premier understand that attacking Team Canada while cozying up to the Trump crowd is actively undermining our ability to build strong internal trade?

Mr. Jones: Mr. Speaker, Alberta is already the leader in Canada in removing barriers to internal trade. We’re also the leader in labour mobility. Premier Smith – the Premier has the ambition to grow this leadership even further. We’ve removed 80 per cent of our exceptions under the Canadian free trade agreement. We have joined Canadian provinces and territories on a mutual recognition pilot for trucking, and we are actively going through every ministry to see what we can do further to mutually recognize other provinces’ regulatory processes to reduce unnecessary duplicative fees, and we’re going to do everything we can.

The Speaker: The Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade will know that the use of any proper name is wildly inappropriate.

Member Hoyle: Given that as a threat of a trade war grows, it’s clear that this Premier has no plan to help Alberta workers, farmers, and businesses that could be hit hardest by the new U.S. tariffs and given that this trade war could jeopardize 33,000 jobs yet the Premier seems content to wait until Albertans are struggling before announcing potential supports, Albertans need a plan. Why is this Premier choosing not to act now to protect Alberta jobs and industries, before the serious economic impacts of this trade war hit?

Mr. Jones: Mr. Speaker, since the onset of this situation we’ve been meeting with industry and associations from across Alberta on how best to respond and also how to collaborate in the best way with our provincial and territorial counterparts. The feedback universally is that the Premier is taking the correct approach, that diplomacy is the way to address the situation, so that’s what we’re going to continue to do. We’re not going to listen to the NDP, who told people to go to other provinces, to create jobs and economic investment in the United States. We’re going to continue listening to Albertans and working with Canadians on a Team Canada approach.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore has a question to ask.

Strathmore & District Agricultural Society Funding

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rodeo, agriculture, and the Strathmore Stampede are at the heart of this town’s identity. As Canada’s third-largest rodeo the Strathmore Stampede set a new attendance record last year, marking its fifth consecutive year of growth, and we’ve had the honour of hosting the Premier for the past two years. With Budget 2025 a transformative investment of \$5

million is being made towards the Strathmore & District Ag Society to help build a much-needed western events and cultural centre. To the Minister of Tourism and Sport: why is supporting ag societies like Strathmore’s so important, and how will this investment benefit our community both economically and culturally?

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

Mr. Schow: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank that hon. member for the incredible question. People of Chestermere-Strathmore are very well represented with her as their MLA. I can tell you that ag societies are the heart of rural Alberta, having places to gather, hold events for games like local hockey teams, rodeos, and they also drive tourism in a region that connects Alberta with their western roots. This investment will provide Strathmore and the surrounding region with the much-needed indoor event space to support equestrian, cultural performances, and community gatherings. We have a lofty goal of reaching \$25 billion by 2035 in spending. It is going to help us get there.

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

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the mission of agricultural societies as outlined in the Agricultural Societies Act is to encourage improvement in agriculture and in the quality of life of persons living in agricultural communities and considering that the western events and cultural centre will be the Strathmore ag society’s year-round hub for community events, educational programs, agricultural showcases, and cultural performances, can the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation explain why supporting Alberta’s ag societies is critical and how this \$5 million investment will help preserve and grow the agricultural heritage and economy of Strathmore?

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

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is home to 291 societies operating over 900 facilities, a record in Canada. These societies play a crucial role in supporting rural communities and strengthening the ag culture in Alberta. Through initiatives like the agricultural societies grant program and the ag societies infrastructure revitalization program Alberta’s government is committed to supporting these organizations. With additional investments in Budget 2025 we’re ensuring that agricultural societies will continue to thrive for generations to come.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our government is committed to expanding hands-on career education opportunities for Alberta students and that, in addition to its year-round rodeo academy, one of the key features of the western events and cultural centre will be its practical ranching school, which will offer students a chance to earn dual credits while learning real-world agricultural skills in a hands-on environment, to the Minister of Education: how will this program bridge the gap between traditional classroom learning and practical career-oriented skills as well as promote rural stewardship and help prepare students for future careers in the agricultural sector?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is committed to working with our school boards to ensure that more students have the opportunity to gain practical real-world skills that

will set them on a path of success. One of the ways in which we can do that is by investing in dual credit opportunities, and we are doing precisely that. Budget '25 provides over \$10 million in funding to support dual credit programming. These programs, of course, expose students to job opportunities and also to postsecondary options to help them advance their interests and be ready for the future.

Premier's Remarks on U.S. Tariffs
(continued)

Member Miyashiro: Mr. Speaker, Albertans are furious. Complaints have been pouring in to the Commissioner of Canada Elections. Why? Because this Premier thought it wise to press anyone who would listen to her in the Trump administration to put tariffs, quote: on pause so we can get through an election. Unquote. How do we know the Premier did this? Well, she told us herself right on American far-right extreme radio. Why was the Premier bragging to Breitbart about inviting foreign interference into Canada's election?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's funny that the hon. member should mention that. Canada's Chief Electoral Officer said that election interference is something that is not a term that's used in the election act, but there are a number of provisions in the act that may be relevant to foreign interference. For example, there's a provision on undue influence by foreign entities. There are rules on spending and third-party activities. The fact that you refer to these does not trigger any of these. The Chief Electoral Officer has already weighed in on this. There's nothing to see here.

Member Miyashiro: Given that foreign interference in our elections is a pressing concern but I guess any kind of interference doesn't bother you guys and given that Conservatives are the first to cry foul when there's any issue with Russia or China or any other kind of interference like – I don't know – paper ballots, will the Premier please tell this House why, when it comes to Donald Trump and putting her own thumb on the scales, interference of any kind in elections is okay?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, once again, the assertion that the Premier interfered with the election is absolutely absurd. It makes no sense whatsoever. While our federal counterparts, our Prime Minister, and our former Prime Minister were hiding, the Premier of Alberta was defending Alberta and, in fact, was defending all of Canada. If it wasn't for the Premier of Alberta, we would have had much more significant tariffs. We're proud of the work she's done, and we'll continue to stand by her and all Canadians will as well.

2:30

Member Miyashiro: Given that we're in the midst of a trade war with the U.S., given the impact it's already had on our economy and that Canadian and Albertan livelihoods are at stake, given the heated rhetoric that has come from President Trump and his threats about making Canada a 51st state and given the need for unity and a collective approach to this threat, will the Premier commit today to stop playing partisan politics and start playing for Team Canada?

Mr. Amery: The hon. member can shout all he wants, but I didn't hear a single member of the opposition NDP say a single word about what was happening down in the U.S. in relation to tariffs to Canada. This Premier has, Mr. Speaker. Since this happened, this Premier has been travelling all across the United States to defend

Alberta and, in fact, to defend all of Canada, and we're incredibly proud to see that happen. The fact of the matter is that the NDP opposition have been absolutely silent while this Premier has been defending this province's interests all across Canada and in the U.S.

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

Chinese Tariffs on Canadian Products

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alongside the energy sector Alberta's economy rests on the health and prosperity of our agricultural sector. It supports thousands of jobs and contributes billions to our province's economy. Canadian farmers and food producers now face serious economic uncertainty thanks to China and their retaliative tariffs on Canadian agricultural products which took effect last week. These tariffs are the result of our federal government's decision to tariff Chinese electric vehicles, a move which has now ignited a tariff war. To the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation: what are the immediate and long-term impacts of these tariffs to Alberta's agriculture sector?

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

Mr. Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for a very important question. The recent tariffs imposed by China pose a significant threat to Alberta's ag industry. A 100 per cent duty on canola oil, cake and pea imports and 25 per cent tariff on pork will disrupt exports and negatively impact the market price of these commodities. Alberta exports \$408 million in canola cake and meal, 138 and a half million dollars in dried peas, and \$26.1 million in pork. While the situation is very complex and the total impact is yet unknown, we are going to continue to expand exports and protect market access.

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

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that China is one of Canada's largest agricultural export markets and given that these tariffs will reduce demand for Alberta canola, pork, and peas and further given that this trade dispute threatens to reduce commodity prices, disrupt supply chains, and place financial strain on Alberta farmers and food producers, can the same minister please explain what actions the government will take to address the impact of these tariffs?

The Speaker: The hon. the minister of agriculture.

Mr. Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. These tariffs are devastating for Alberta's farmers and food processors. Unfortunately, the federal government's move to impose tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles has ignited this trade war. Our government is actively engaging with the federal government to protect Alberta's market access and mitigate the impact. However, our farmers here in Alberta need immediate targeted support from the federal government to them right now. Once again, our farmers here in our province are facing the consequences of poor federal decisions. We demand immediate support for them right now.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta farmers and exporters need certainty and stability to remain competitive in the global market and given that Alberta has a history of standing up for its economic interests and fair trade policies and further given that the Liberal government understood the potential consequences of its tariff policies, putting Alberta's

economy at risk, can the same minister outline how Alberta is engaging with the federal government to demand urgent action on this issue and ensure that our producers are not left bearing the cost of Ottawa's poor trade decisions?

Mr. Sigurdson: Mr. Speaker, Alberta farmers and exporters deserve that certainty. Our province, of course, has a long history of standing up for its economic interests, and that's exactly what we're doing. We are pressing Ottawa for urgent support, including compensation, market diversification efforts, and a stronger focus on trade negotiations. But it's very clear that due to the scope and scale of the impacts of this trade war, the only institution that can compensate our farmers enough is the federal government. We need them to come to the table, and we need them to deal with this and support our farmers right now.

Physician Recruitment and Retention

Dr. Metz: The UCP is failing at building the Alberta advantage and bringing Albertans value for money. If they invested in primary care, they could achieve both. Every dollar invested in primary care saves \$5 later, but this government delayed and delayed, wasting money on bloated contracts, failed restructuring, and political corruption. Retention of staff is dismal, and delays in implementing the primary care physician compensation model have left us behind. In B.C. over 1,000 new physicians have already been connected with over 250,000 patients. What is the cost of health care restructuring, and when will this minister get on to building teams?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm afraid the member opposite is way behind the times. In fact, Primary Care Alberta was stood up in the fall of last year. They've already had operational day one. They are going strong. In fact, today we announced with the Alberta Medical Association that we've been able to find that 500 physicians, minimum of 500, have enrolled in the new primary care physician compensation model. I've got a quote here from Shelley Duggan, who's the president of the Alberta Medical Association. "This new model will strengthen comprehensive..."

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

Dr. Metz: Given that the primary care physician compensation model requires physicians to have at least 500 panelled patients and given that rural docs do a lot more than run an outpatient practice – they also cover hospitals, continuing care, emergency rooms, and perform anaesthesia, surgery, and obstetrics – and given that all of that work leaves them fewer hours to build that panel of 500 and that seeing patients in the emergency room doesn't even count, why is this government so ineffective in retaining and recruiting rural Alberta doctors?

Member LaGrange: Again, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is wrong.

This new model will strengthen comprehensive, cradle-to-grave primary care. These practices are the foundation of our health care system. The model will help us to retain the family [medical] specialists and rural generalists we already have and will go a long way toward attracting more to Alberta.

Dr. Shelley Duggan, president, Alberta Medical Association.

A direct quote from Dr. Shelley Duggan. We are actually attracting doctors, and we want to keep the great ones we already have.

Dr. Metz: Given that medical students often choose their residency where they eventually want to practice and given that it's a bad sign

that 31 family medicine residency training positions went unfilled during the first iteration of the resident match and given that this indicated Alberta was not a preferred location – had Alberta actually had an Alberta advantage in practising medicine, we would have been more competitive – what will the minister do to attract residents next year? Medical students are already in their final year of training.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the member opposite needs to get her facts straight. We are expanding our medical schools, and we filled more residency spots this year in round 1 than ever before. The concern about unfilled seats in the CARMS process is exaggerated and distorted. This year 413 of the possible 449 seats were filled in the first round of the matching process, an improvement from 2022 and 2023. We also saw improvement last year going from 368 filled seats in 2023 to 386 filled seats.

Recovery Community Development

Member Eremenko: Mr. Speaker, for six years this government has been promising bed-based treatment for addiction. They've committed 11 recovery communities, but as of today there are three operating. Five of these facilities should be on-reserve, but looking at the status on the GOA website, I see Blood reserve in development since 2022; Métis Crossing, in development; Enoch, Siksika, Tsuut'ina – you guessed it – in development. Are these projects taking so long because, just like with corrupt care, the government jumped to sign inflated contracts without completing their due diligence or requirement to consult?

2:40

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, unlike the members opposite, this government takes seriously the partnership with Indigenous people across the province of Alberta. They believe in recovery along with us, which is why not as an imposition but a proposition we've decided to build five Indigenous recovery communities. Gratefully, we partner with them. They are going to operate land-based healing that's culturally sensitive, that's based on Indigenous culture because outcomes are better when you do not divorce someone's spirituality, faith, and culture from the recovery. We're proud of the fact that these are in development, and we work with them to make sure that they come forward in a timely manner, on budget, providing beds for those who suffer from addiction. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Member Eremenko: Given that there have been years of unfulfilled commitments and recycled announcements for voluntary treatment but this government is speeding ahead to introduce involuntary treatment and given that the compassionate intervention centres, Mr. Speaker, will cost \$90 million each just to build let alone tens of millions of dollars to operate and given that someone is benefiting from these massive contracts while government drags its feet on projects that were supposed to break ground two years ago, to the minister: what are the ties to Marshall Smith, Sam Mraiche, or their associates to expeditiously build and deliver involuntary treatment? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, these contracts when it comes to development are done by the independent civil service when it

comes to the best practices that they have when it comes to procurement.

Mr. Speaker, I want the members opposite to let this House know whether they support compassionate intervention or whether they support unsafe supply and seeing our loved ones continue to die on the street because of intermittent homelessness in minus 40 weather. [interjections]

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

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, there is nothing compassionate about leaving our loved ones to die intermittently homeless in the middle of Canada's freezing cold weather. We instead will give them a compassionate opportunity at recovery because when recovery is offered, it's not only possible but probable. The members opposite did nothing to build recovery pathways for their entire time in power. It's not the same on this side of the House.

Member Eremenko: Given that there is some truth to it being question period and not answer period and given that the Alberta recovery model selected the winners in this sector a long time ago, winners who continue to get lucrative contracts with no public reporting, and given that the minister couldn't provide a single wait time for a single recovery community during estimates, does the minister think it's okay for a person to wait months for a bed to open up? Is that compassion? When will they collect and publicly report by facility on the wait times for voluntary treatment?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, I'll give members opposite a stat: 10,000 beds added every year by this government. How many from the members opposite? Zero. A big fat zero. They cannot deliver lip service of caring for those who are suffering from addiction while at the same time pumping money into harm production with policies like a drug consumption site on every corner and unsafe supply that they have not denounced that we've seen in British Columbia and Ontario. On this side of the House we believe in a compassionate approach to addiction. The members opposite will attack our policies and try and throw it in the middle of a political scandal because they know that it's working and they don't want to see Albertans' lives saved. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

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 Finance.

Bill 47 Automobile Insurance Act

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You have my full attention. Yeah.

I request leave to introduce Bill 47, the Automobile Insurance Act.

Mr. Speaker, If an Albertan is injured in a collision, the last thing they need is the added stress of worrying about their recovery from an injury. This act, which I'm pleased to introduce today, reflects our commitment to make auto insurance more affordable and beneficial for Albertans. This legislation would allow us to move forward with some of the most important components of introducing a new and better auto insurance system. This includes updates to focusing on care to bring meaningful medical and

financial supports for Albertans when and how they need it, reducing the need for costly litigation, and stabilizing the insurance markets so rates slow over time. This legislation is the start of a big change for auto insurance in Alberta. Our primary focus is for Albertans to have the best auto insurance benefits in Canada while lowering rate costs, and the care-first system will accomplish those goals.

I'm pleased to move first reading of Bill 47, the Automobile Insurance Act, 2025.

[Motion carried; Bill 47 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Are there tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Member Arcand-Paul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite copies of *Zine & Heard's* March issue, which includes voices for former youth in care about Bill 38, where they urge this government not to treat vulnerable youth as red tape. I urge all members to read this and take home some of what the youth have said, including "They Don't Care About Us."

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

Member Irwin: Thank you. I've got a pile of e-mails, this time all from constituents who are urging the UCP government to reverse their heinous cuts to the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton. Thank you Rosalie, Maddy, Jenny, Willy, Annette, Matthew, Katie, and Kristina, and the hundreds of others who are writing from all across Alberta demanding the UCP do the right thing.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by Edmonton-McClung.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have an article from the *Gazette*, March 20, entitled Municipalities Want End to Oil and Gas Property Tax Loopholes, by Brett McKay.

And I've got a report from Inclusion Canada, June 2024, Assessing the Inequity of the Market Basket Measure in Measuring Poverty for People with Disabilities in Canada.

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

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table five copies of the March 24 *Calgary Herald* article quoting the Premier asking U.S. administration officials to interfere in our Canadian federal election.

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

Ms Hoffman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a story from the St. Albert *Gazette* – it was published elsewhere as well – by Brett McKay: Alberta ERs Closed for 34,400 Hours in 2024. This is Alberta alone.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the five copies of an e-mail from my constituent Kimberley, who is very concerned about the cut to the Sexual Assault Centre funding which is causing them to pause intakes and critical life-saving services.

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

Mr. Bouchard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to submit the five requisite copies of the slide decks presented by virologists, vaccinologists, immunologists, microbiologists, radiologists, molecular and computational biologists, and pediatric neurologists as well as emergency doctors, PhD scientists, physicists, mathematicians, and data analysts. All are passionate about improving life through data and research. They've all presented data at our injection of...

The Speaker: The purpose of a tabling is so that we can read it, not that you read it to us. Are there others?

Seeing none.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of hon. Mr. Long, Minister of Infrastructure, response to Motion for a Return 16, asked for by Mr. Deol on November 18, 2024, a list of the current infrastructure priorities that have been identified by the Minister of Infrastructure and the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors further to the objectives set out in the Premier's mandate letters to those ministers dated July 26, 2023, and July 11, 2023, respectively; response to Motion for a Return 18, asked for by Mr. Deol on November 18, 2024, a list of all amounts paid by the Ministry of Infrastructure to unsuccessful proponents of a procurement process involving a public-private partnership for an infrastructure project, organized by year and by project during the period from May 1, 2019, to March 31, 2024.

On behalf of hon. Mr. Wilson, Minister of Indigenous Relations, pursuant to the Métis Settlements Act, Métis Settlements Appeal Tribunal Annual Report 2024.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that brings us to points of order. At 1:54 the hon. the Government House Leader rose on a point of order.

Point of Order

Allegations against a Member

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe if you check your records, you might have two points of order around the same time, 1:54 and then one around 1:57. If you're okay with it, I'd like to just combine these given that they're both against the same member.

The Speaker: Please do.

2:50

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on those points of order, 23(h), (i), and (j). At the time the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar was heckling the Premier during her answers. The first heckle that I called the point of order on said: traitor. And in the second point of order it said: holding you accountable for the betrayal of your country. These are very egregious accusations coming from the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. I think language like this is wildly unparliamentary, and I would ask that the member apologize and withdraw and refrain from calling the Premier of Alberta a traitor.

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

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, I listened carefully to the Government House Leader in his point of order. I will have to begin by saying that I believe I was speaking at the time of this back-and-forth between the member, and so I did not hear it myself. But I would like to enter into the argument that should the

language that the Government House Leader shared be accurate – and I do not have the benefit of the Blues – I do think an argument could be made that this should be a matter of debate. It is absolutely harsh language, but it is a word, talking about serious betrayal of trust or loyalty, often used in a situation of conflict or disagreement. In searching the Speaker's ruling database, I can find no case where this language has been ruled out of order in the past. I can only imagine that that is because we have never before seen behaviour like this from any member of this Chamber let alone from the Premier.

I did find in *Erskine May*, paragraph 15.14, the use of the word but only in the context of "calling for their arrest as an arch traitor," which the member did not call for anyone's arrest, which would be a potential contempt. Instead, I believe that the Premier's behaviour and actions have been inciting a huge volume of commentary outside of this Chamber. The implications of her actions and what it means for national unity, the implication of her actions and how they can be interpreted: I think these are all a matter of debate. Now, whether that word can be brought into this Chamber and it be parliamentary and add to the debate, I believe you will be setting precedent with your ruling here, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I simply make the argument that I think this is a matter of debate. I just think the debate has never reached this level before, and I look forward to your ruling.

The Speaker: I do have the benefit of the Blues, and I am prepared to rule. However, if there are other members who wish to make a submission, I would hear that now. Seeing none.

While it is the rare occasion on which I can't hear the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, today is one of those rare occasions when if he did say that, I did not hear that as there were many, many interjections at the time of those remarks, and I don't have any accurate record with the benefit of the Blues. Members will know that the Speaker is unwilling or unlikely to rule on comments which he did not hear, that were made on or off the record, so this isn't a point of order. I consider the matter dealt with and concluded. I appreciate the combination into one point of order.

Having said that, at 2:07 the Government House Leader rose on a point of order.

Point of Order

Parliamentary Language

Mr. Schow: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I did rise on a point of order. In the first supplemental of the question from the Member for Edmonton-West Henday to the government the member said, "The Premier's attempts to swoon the extremist far right in the United States have failed." And it goes on to say, "News headlines exposed the Premier for who she really is, someone [who is] willing to sell out Canada for political points." This is ridiculous. I mean, this language is totally unparliamentary. This certainly falls, I believe, under 23(h), (i), and (j). This is of course coming from my unofficial records, but to suggest the Premier is a sellout – also there is precedence for ruling this out of order. On March 27, 2024, "pandering to extremists" was ruled unparliamentary, and on May 28, 2024, the term "sellout" was ruled unparliamentary. Mr. Speaker, it seems like this list is growing, unparliamentary words in this Chamber. The opposition finds new ways to insult individual members, and calling her a sellout, I think, would certainly be one.

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

Member Arcand-Paul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I let Albertans make that decision, so I retract and apologize that statement.

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

At 2:11, the hon. Government House Leader rose on an additional point of order.

Point of Order

Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Schow: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Good thing I don't skip leg day; up and down here quite a bit. What I can say is that I rose on 23(h), (i), and (j). At the time noted, the Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall was saying off the record but to the Minister of Justice, "Stop being disrespectful." I think this was pretty loud. The Chamber at the time was pretty quiet. I heard it pretty well. I suspect the chair probably heard it as well. To make that kind of a remark to the hon. Justice minister while he's answering a question, saying that he is being disrespectful, I think would rise to a point of order on 23(h), (i), and (j). I leave it in your hands, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Official Opposition House leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, I do not have the benefit of the Blues, but I believe at 2:11 the Justice minister was referring to the presence or absence of a member of our caucus, an action which is certainly not within the bounds of parliamentary debate here in this Chamber. Unfortunately, I did not hear whether the member said, "Stop being disrespectful" or not, but when I went back to that time to determine what may have happened, that certainly jumped out to me. I leave it to you, Mr. Speaker, to review the *Hansard* at that moment.

The Speaker: I do have the benefit of the Blues, and I am prepared to rule. Only the Speaker has the benefit of the Blues; however, if there are any other submissions, I am willing to hear those now.

I can confirm that the hon. Minister of Justice said the following. "I don't know where the member has been for the past three weeks." I'm not entirely sure that that refers to their presence or absence. It could have been referring to debate that has been taking place, so I'm not sure that it is a point of order, but the hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall said the following. "There is no public inquiry. Stop being disrespectful."

I'm not sure that this raises to the level of point of order. Asking someone if they're being respectful or disrespectful seems like the sort of thing that we do in and around the Chamber on a regular basis. This isn't a point of order. I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

Hon. members, on Wednesday of last week a point of privilege was raised, and I provided the members of the Official Opposition sufficient time to prepare a response. I believe that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is prepared to respond to that point of order now. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Privilege

Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to acknowledge, take accountability, and apologize for my inappropriate and unparliamentary conduct on March 18, 2025. On that date I was extremely upset by statements made in this House.

One of the most common forms of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim rhetoric is suggesting that members of the Muslim faith are terrorists or terrorist sympathizers. In my lifetime my Muslim family, like many across the world, have felt the undeserved pain of being associated with terrorism due to horrific acts like 9/11 and on October 7. Canadian Muslims also face undeserved demands to constantly apologize for and distance themselves from acts by

terrorists that are clearly heinous and not related in any way to their Muslim faith. It is deeply hurtful.

I share this only to explain my emotional state on March 18. It is not, however, an excuse for my behaviour which followed. In my family we talk about how each of us have jobs. The job of my kids is to learn and to make mistakes. The job of my husband and I is to teach them and to make mistakes. I teach my kids about speaking out against injustice, to not be silent when they see inequity or unfairness, but I also want them to learn that when you do speak out, you should not do it in a way that causes more unfairness or hurts others and when you make a mistake, like I have done, you take responsibility for it.

3:00

Mr. Speaker, my husband and children are here today in the gallery to see me take responsibility. I am accountable for how I responded on March 18, and my response was inappropriate and unparliamentary. I acknowledge that I made the comments in the Chamber and in the rotunda towards the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre as quoted by the Deputy Government House Leader on March 19.

It was wrong for me to continue the debate with the member after the adjournment of the House by the Speaker and outside the Chamber. It was wrong for me to use the insulting language that I used towards the member. My conduct negatively affected the decorum of this House and our work, and I apologize sincerely for doing so. I accept the member at his word that he felt threatened and impeded by me. Therefore, I accept responsibility for that and apologize for it as well.

In closing, I take full responsibility for my conduct and submit this apology to both the member and to you, Mr. Speaker, for your consideration.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has apologized and, as is typically our custom here in Alberta on purported matters of privilege, an apology ends the matter. That's not to say that the Speaker provides no comment on such actions that take place in the Assembly, and I have a number of comments for the Assembly this afternoon.

It is not impossible, notwithstanding the apology, that a contempt for the Assembly may have been likely, but a breach of privilege seemed unlikely. I would however like to add that if a prima facie case breach is found on a matter of privilege, the Speaker is well within their right and would retain the latitude to entertain a motion to refer the matter to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing despite it not being the traditional precedent of the Assembly. For clarity's sake, should the Speaker find a matter of privilege in the future, the Speaker ought to take into consideration that apology, should it be made, and may still consider a matter of privilege and send such privilege to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing.

With that said, in the case of the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud I do accept the apology and consider this matter having been dealt with and concluded.

Statement by the Speaker

Members' Conduct within Legislative Precinct

The Speaker: Before we proceed, I have further commentary to add that I would like the Assembly to consider in this matter. It should be known that I'm aware of what was said in the Chamber following the adjournment of the Assembly on March 19, 2025, as acknowledged by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud and heard

by members of the Assembly. Those comments are more than a little concerning. This type of language is entirely inappropriate in any workplace and, certainly, is unbecoming of the member. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud and I are both parents, as was on display here in the Assembly, and I hope that today can be a lesson that all members will learn from.

While I have no direct knowledge of what was said following the adjournment, if these statements were true, the conduct would be an egregious breach of parliamentary decorum and the language should be considered the most unparliamentary. This sort of behaviour ought to be condemned in the strongest possible way and has no place in our workplace in the Assembly or anywhere in the precinct. I am disappointed in the member's conduct, but I appreciate the fulsome apology that she has made today. Other members might be well served to take note of the sincere apology that was made today by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, and I hope that it impacts her conduct in the future.

With that said, over the past 24 months there have been multiple occasions where members' conduct has been called into question and members on both sides of the Assembly have, at times, felt unsafe in their workplace. Furthermore, there have been additionally deeply concerning workplace interactions involving other members that have happened around the precinct, and in some cases these incidents may be described as workplace harassment. I believe members should be held to a higher standard. I am convinced that we must take strides to address such poor conduct as we saw here and that followed last week. I am not certain that the comments and behaviours such as the ones that are under scrutiny today are best dealt with through the mechanism of a question of privilege.

It should be known that most parliaments across Canada have conduct codes dealing with member-to-member issues of workplace interactions; Alberta, however, does not. So in treating this as an ongoing and serious matter, I am calling a meeting of the Standing Committee on Members' Services on April 15 to discuss the matter of a member code of conduct. In the meantime orders and decorum ought to be at the very top of mind for all members of the Assembly.

I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.

Ordres de jour.

Orders of the Day

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 206

Child and Youth Advocate (Parent and Guardian Liaison) Amendment Act, 2024

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

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud to rise today in this Chamber to provide opening remarks for the third reading of my private member's bill, Bill 206, Child and Youth Advocate (Parent and Guardian Liaison) Amendment Act, 2024.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

We rarely see a private member's bill reach this stage, and I am deeply honoured to see it through up to this point. This is the second time one of my private member bills has reached this stage. In 2017 my Bill 202, the Protecting Victims of Non-consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Act, another important bill for Alberta children

and parents, ensured that Alberta has sufficient laws to support the place of victims of cyberbullying and their families.

I worked closely with many stakeholders, members of my caucus, and the members of the NDP government, and we passed that important legislation. It resulted in me becoming the only Wildrose MLA to have my name on a piece of legislation that actually ended up becoming law. I actually made history that day, and to this date I will be the only MLA to ever pass legislation through the Wildrose Party as that party no longer exists in its prior form. I'm extremely proud of that achievement, and I am hopeful that we can reach the same result again with this important piece of legislation.

Madam Speaker, I have always felt especially motivated to protect families, and I believe that I am honouring this commitment with my private member's bill, Bill 206, the Child and Youth Advocate (Parent and Guardian Liaison) Amendment Act, 2024. After thorough consultation and engagement with stakeholders and members on both sides of this Chamber identifying what they would like to see from the parent and guardian liaison, I believe that this bill strikes the right balance. Right now we have a strong piece of legislation to bring forward into this third reading.

When pursuing this bill I drew upon my family's experience of raising two autistic nephews. I've seen their parents struggle to find useful resources and government programs that could meet the unique needs of my nephews, programs designed to support children and parents rather than creating more burdens on already challenging lives with endless bureaucracy and red tape.

3:10

Passing Bill 206 would create a centralized advocacy resource within Alberta's office of the Child and Youth Advocate, which parents and guardians could use to navigate these types of challenging situations. This parent and guardian liaison would ensure that parents and guardians have the knowledgeable support of an independent adviser to help them understand their rights and connect them with important resources. Parents could receive support and guidance with the education of their children, custody disputes, adoption, and other important issues. This process could involve meeting with families, providing general information, or providing referrals to organizations that support mental and physical health, spiritual support, academic services, human and social services, or language and cultural support.

This liaison could help families to nurture, to guide their children while fostering an environment conducive to the ability of being able to grow. The liaison would support the stability of families, prioritizing the best interests and safety of our children. Additionally, the liaison would identify reoccurring issues in public services which impact parents in our province.

Alberta does not currently have this type of resource, Madam Speaker, and I strongly believe that we should. Many of the Albertans I have consulted with developing this legislation would also believe that Alberta should have this type of resource. Creating a parent and guardian liaison would bridge that gap between families and government services at their disposal. Despite the importance of these services, they cannot function if parents do not know of them.

Since our government has already brought forward these services and allocated the necessary funds, having parents miss out on them due to a lack of awareness would undermine the entire function of this legislation. I don't think anyone in this Chamber wants that, Madam Speaker. I believe that many Albertans would significantly benefit from the resource if they could access it. Based off the results obtained by meticulous analysis and monitoring, we may opt to expand upon it in the future.

To support the government's commitment to transparency, the liaison would prepare a comprehensive annual report to the Child and Youth Advocate on their activities and highlight systemic barriers identified affecting their families and our families and our children. This would additionally ensure the consistent improvement of our government services over time.

If this Chamber passes Bill 206, parents and guardians will gain a voice on a most important issue to them and will receive the resources they need to achieve the best outcomes for their children. I believe that parents and guardians would remain the primary caregivers of our children under normal circumstances, and our UCP government is dedicated to supporting them and their autonomy, Madam Speaker.

Our parents have the best interests of their children in mind, and Bill 206 allows them to have proper tools to do their job effectively. I strongly believe that private member's Bill 206, Child and Youth Advocate (Parents and Guardian Liaison) Amendment Act, 2024, fulfills this objective, Madam Speaker. I am a proud parent of two amazing daughters, and I love them with all of my heart. I strongly support more advocacy for the rights of our parents, and my United Conservative colleagues do, too.

I hope that we will continue to have a fulsome debate on this bill, and I also hope that we have shown all members in this Chamber the importance of this role, the need of it, and I hope that I have earned all of your support.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Member Batten: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm grateful to rise today and, of course, add to this debate, and I really appreciate the productive debate we've had thus far.

Madam Speaker, I'm going to start by painting a bit of a picture. Now, imagine a giant gymnasium. Now fill it with kids of all ages perfecting their hockey skills. We're talking those plastic pucks, plastic hockey sticks. You know, you can almost hear it – right? – those pucks hitting the wall and those sticks hitting the pucks and just the kids' laughter, that roar of fantastic energy. Let's say that there are about 50 kids. You know what? Let's double it. Let's say that there are a hundred kids in that gym, a hundred kids running around doing all their stuff.

Now, Madam Speaker, if I asked you to point out the two kids inside that room who needed the most help, could you? Me neither. This debate isn't about whether Albertan parents should be supported. We all agree that parenting can be a rewarding, tiring, frustrating, amazing thing and that children don't come with instructions. There is no debate that the government should provide the appropriate resourcing to more than half of the population who at some point will be, are, or were parents.

But that is not what we are debating. We are debating the placement inside this bill. This bill was purposely designed to provide the very necessary additional resourcing and protection to the most vulnerable children and youth in Alberta. The independent office of the Child and Youth Advocate, or the OCYA, stays laser focused. It provides representation of the rights, interests, and viewpoints of young persons involved with child intervention services or the justice system.

This dedicated independent office is focused on a very small sliver of the population, Madam Speaker. In fact, the vulnerable Albertans that are served by the OCYA represent less than 2 per cent of the total population of children and youth in Alberta and, to put it a little bit differently, less than .5 per cent of all Albertans. I hope that this clarifies it a little bit because there seemed to be some confusion in earlier debate that the OCYA wasn't clearly defined.

That office is very clearly defined. The purpose and responsibility of the OCYA is for the children and youth in Alberta who need very specific interventions. It is designed for them and only for them.

Madam Speaker, there isn't some secret stash of, like, parental resources that the OCYA is hoarding. The advocate needs every dollar and every resource in order to fulfill the mandate of the office, which I'll remind you is for the children and youth of Alberta.

If not inside this bill, where would the appropriate place be? Well, there are a few options; the office of the Ombudsman, for instance. Another independent office of the Legislature, this office works with adults and their families and acts as, and I quote, your voice of fairness. This office is set up to accept inquiries from adults. It's accustomed to working with adults.

Actually, I have a better idea, and this builds on programming we already have going. The family resource networks, or FRNs, follow a hub-and-spoke model, and programming is spread across the province with a mission to address the root causes and factors leading to children and families becoming involved with child intervention services. There are 70 FRNs made up of 131 agencies that provide what Albertan families need when they need it, and they help actually achieve that equitable access across the province because we know that the needs and resources found in different areas are highly variable. We know that action is needed to truly ensure equity for all Albertans and specifically, in this case, parents.

I was fortunate enough, actually, to tour one of our new FRNs in the riding of Calgary-Acadia just last week, and I lucked out because it was baby drop-in day. There were little waddlers, toothy grins, and really a diverse parenting group there. There were first-time mothers, first-time fathers, single parents with a baby on one hip and a toddler in tow. I couldn't help but smile.

Madam Speaker, I'm not the only one who sees values in these FRNs. They have been incredibly well accessed for Albertans across the province. In fact, in the last year, in 2023-2024, the participant numbers increased over 60 per cent: that's six-zero.

The beauty of the FRNs is that they serve everyone and they adapt their offerings to fit what the community needs. If you're curious about what it is that Albertans access with the FRNs, let me share. The largest populations served by them are children under five and parents or guardians over 21. The most common area of concern is parenting. The most popular programs are parenting programs, young parents, new parents, single parents, immigrant parents: you name it. It's really quite obvious that the FRNs are supporting thousands of Albertans. The numbers from last year show over 128,000 Albertans access them, and even from what we've just discussed, it's obvious that these FRNs are very capable and are actively providing the necessary resources to Albertan parents.

3:20

Now I want to pull you back to that gymnasium, that roar of noises with those hundred kids running around, freely playing. Can you hear the two distinct voices now? Yeah, still, me neither.

Madam Speaker, this bill will cause harm. The whole idea relies on one independent office increasing its workload 98 per cent without a single dollar increase, and somehow it's supposed to then still provide the same support. This proposed bill takes away specialized, life-saving resources from fewer than .5 per cent of Albertans, and they just take those resources and sprinkle them over millions of other Albertans while we hold our breath asking an independent office to juggle the needs of their priority, which is children and youth in Alberta, while dealing with the onslaught of parents looking for resources that do not exist in that office.

This bill will not provide resources to empower parents. This bill will not. This bill is not “better than nothing,” which was shared by the member who brought this forward, which is a fantastic idea but does not live here. This bill will cause harm. This bill will not help parents get informed. This bill will not provide resources to all parents. This bill will not provide access to specialists. If that was the goal, that is in health care and the budget that we just spoke about.

This bill is going to cause harm, so we ask everyone to just consider stopping this bill now. I ask that we work together to find a solution that will actually serve Albertan families, but more importantly, a solution that will not cause harm to Albertans who have seen far too much already.

I hope everyone votes against this. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members to join the debate? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, I’m extremely happy to rise in support of this bill proposed by my esteemed colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, the Child and Youth Advocate (Parent and Guardian Liaison) Amendment Act, 2024, on third reading. I think parents and families across Alberta will appreciate the contents of this bill.

I believe that the bill before us reflects the member’s ability to find issues of common agreement and work with those differing opinions to make improvements to Albertans’ quality of life. Nearly a decade ago this same member sponsored Bill 202, Protecting Victims of Non-consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Act. That legislation empowers Albertans who have fallen victim to nonconsensual intimate imaging and distribution and claim monetary damages. That bill passed unilaterally with the support from both sides of the aisle. I hope that, once again, we will get to the same result today.

The amendment we approved in Committee of the Whole brought the language of Bill 206 in line with its intent. If passed, Bill 206 will introduce a parent and guardian liaison with the office of the Child and Youth Advocate. If passed, this new role will function to provide personalized assistance to parents and guardians, helping them bridge any gaps that may exist between the family and any educational, health, social services, or cultural supports they may require.

The person in this role would also report annually on the systematic barriers they identify through their work. This report would be tabled in this Assembly, ensuring heightened transparency within the system and clear accountability for the liaison.

The amendment we accepted made an important change, replacing the name “advocate” with “liaison.” This more accurately reflects the intended function of the role: to be a bridge for families and government services rather than a direct adviser or someone positioned to provide any kind of legal advice. This change in language also makes the new role more accessible. The word “liaison” is more easily understood by parents and families, making the role more approachable and removing potential confusion. With “liaison” replacing “advocate” in all relevant sections of the bill, it should be clear that this role would be a neutral connector rather than providing professional or legal advice.

The amendment also removed section 15.63(b) from the proposed act. As originally drafted this section could cause some confusion about the liaison’s degree of involvement in educational programs. With this section removed, the act is clear that the liaison will connect families to educational supports via referrals. This is an important change because the direct involvement implied in the unamended act would duplicate the role of educational professionals, which was not

the original intent of the bill. Bill 206’s original goal was to create a role with a streamlined and clearly delineated set of responsibilities. I am glad to say that this bill accomplishes this, and I encourage all my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote in favour of this bill.

The final changes made in Committee of the Whole added flexibility to the implementation of Bill 206. The change of the coming into force date to on proclamation instead of the original fixed timeline of three months after royal assent gives the office of the Child and Youth Advocate greater flexibility to ensure the necessary infrastructure, hiring, and procedures are in place before the liaison role is launched. This change reflects a commitment to doing things right instead of rushing the implementation. Taken together, these changes streamline, clarify, and strengthen Bill 206. Let me restate again that the liaison created by this bill would have a tremendous amount of value.

Madam Speaker, parents are the greatest champions of their children. They face an enormous amount of pressure in our modern environment. The role of parents is one that the United Nations recognizes. The UN convention on the rights of the child reads, “Parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians, have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child.” Our government wants to support parents in that critical role because families are the cornerstone of our society and children are its future. I am proud to say that this is exactly what Bill 206 aims to do.

The value of having the liaison between parents and the confusing supports and services of our government should be clear to all parents. Raising a child is a responsibility that’s a steep enough learning curve as it is without any additional wading through government systems and bureaucracy. I’m happy to support Bill 206 at third reading because it further empowers parents through the difficult process.

If we vote in favour of third reading, all of the strengths of Bill 206 which I have referred to will assist parents. I’m confident that, if this Chamber passes the bill at third reading, it will go a long way to ensuring families will have the access to support.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Member Arcand-Paul: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The office of the Child and Youth Advocate provides invaluable support in our province when it comes to our most vulnerable members: children and youth.

This government has demonstrated time and time again that it is not interested in assisting vulnerable Albertans in our communities. We see the rise of deaths of children in the care of the government. We saw attacks on a minority of children and youth in this province when this government issued its misguided antitrans, gender diverse, and two-spirit children and youth legislation. The collective global community has seen this type of law and policy developed in other democratic jurisdictions in the west, and we are shocked but not surprised that this government of antifa, anti-inclusion, and, quite frankly, lacking any basis in reality would start occupying the field and taking away the rights and freedoms of Albertans in Alberta in such magnitude.

But I digress, Madam Speaker. This bill does nothing but create a conflation of the role of the office of the Child and Youth Advocate. It provides a referral service to parents and guardians, thereby changing the very nature of this office. The OCYA was not created to provide support to parents or guardians; it is to provide a voice to all children in this province and, most importantly, to kids in care that are wards of this government’s care.

3:30

I challenge the member sponsoring this bill to explain in this House and to Albertans what rights parents and guardians do not already have enshrined under law. We just heard the member opposite speak exactly of this. I think it is quite disingenuous to reframe the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, which is already doing good work, including making numerous recommendations to the government to implement.

And what is this government doing with respect to these recommendations from the OCYA? Let me tell you that this government is failing at implementing any of the recommendations from the OCYA. This is unconscionable. There have been mandatory reviews into child deaths as old as 2019, from my research, that remain in limbo because the ministry has indicated they will no longer provide further updates, and there are well over 20 recommendations coming from the OCYA that remain delayed with an excuse of being “delayed due to the provincial election.” Madam Speaker, the election was almost two years ago.

This government has not moved fast enough to address these recommendations, which also include the ongoing opioid epidemic which is taking many lives of children and youth, especially those in care and especially Indigenous youth. Instead, it has backbenchers throwing together bills to change the very nature of the OCYA away from its original intent, away from protecting children and youth and of bringing a voice to children and youth in this province. I’m tired of standing in this House and reminding this government that my people are dying; our kids are dying. Instead of addressing the very excellent recommendations being made by the OCYA to address this crisis, they are playing politics with this bill.

They are not addressing any of the issues that presently exist. Who is going to suffer because of this? Children and youth in this province, Madam Speaker. Indigenous children and youth, as they always have, because of every successive Conservative government and their intentional ignorance of the needs of children and youth but particularly of Indigenous children and youth in this province. This bill is no different. The OCYA is not the office of the parent and guardian advocate, and it should never devolve into such a purpose. Doing so departs from the United Nations convention on the rights of the child, in particular giving children and youth agency, in this province.

I’ve witnessed the benefits of the OCYA first-hand, as I’ve done some agency work with legal representation for the children and youth branch of the OCYA. I’ve had the honour of bringing the voices of Indigenous children and youth forward in court proceedings. This honour also came with a very heavy heart. I’ve read files for children and youth in care who have not had a consistent parent in their lives since they were brought into this world.

I’ve been especially touched by a case of a transgender girl whose mother passed and whose father did not want to be involved in their lives at all. This heartbreaking case reminded me of the importance of children being empowered to share their own perspective. This young person also wanted to put on the record that she wanted to go back to her family and not in a permanent guardianship order under Children and Family Services. I was honoured to do this important work. Sadly, the judge did not side with this young person, and even more unfortunately this is all too common with children in care.

The system is broken, and the members opposite want to further exacerbate these problems instead of actually fixing or solving some of these crises. I advocated for this young girl and shared her perspective and not the perspective of her father, who had no concern for her at the time, because he had the agency enough to

say no to the court and the court respected it. He did not need the OCYA to advocate on his behalf and, I’d argue, to this day does not require the OCYA to argue on his behalf.

I also think about the children and youth that I worked with when I worked for the Mabel Arcand Childrens Home on my First Nation when I was a youth myself. I think about the very special voice that they had, the unique experience that they have gone through, and the legal representation that they had every step of the way. Every single time one of them got a home visit, they were elated. They got to see their kin, their blood, their grandparents, or their mom and dad.

What this government doesn’t recognize is that many of our children and youth don’t often get this opportunity to go back to their parents, like the transgender girl who did not have her own parents that would take her in or those children and youth who have tragically lost their lives to this government’s ineptitude with dealing with the opioid crisis, which is disproportionately affecting Indigenous children and youth. What will this adviser do to help these children and youth? Certainly, the current guardians aren’t resourced well enough, but we all know this government does not care about their well-being either. To vary the responsibility of the advocate is reprehensible and demonstrates to children and youth in this province that their voices do not matter.

This side of the House will continue to stand up for the rights of children and youth in this province, because this bill demonstrates that that side of the House is only interested in ignoring the real issues of Albertans while pushing an ideological agenda and sending dog whistles that reflect nothing but disdain for the most vulnerable members of our society. It is also an overreach of this government into the lives of Albertans, which this government is very good at doing as of late.

But let’s also talk about the brass tacks here. We know that this government acts but does not think things through before opening Pandora’s box. What money has been allocated with respect to this work? We already know that the advocate is sorely underfunded. Again, this government says they can walk and chew gum at the same time, but I say they can do neither effectively because, clearly, they’ve put zero thought into what this overreach, this private member’s bill will cost Albertans.

I’d ask the sponsoring member to speak to how this change will not create a spend from treasury with respect to the costs associated with this new parental advocate through the OCYA. This bill is creating new offices, new responsibilities, and new needs that the OCYA is already struggling with. I need to ask again: why? Why is this government so intent to create havoc when there are next to no Albertans asking for these changes? It is shameful for this government to first go after trans, gender diverse, and two-spirit children and youth and to now fetter and effectively take away the voices of children and youth by inserting UCP ideology into the office of the Child and Youth Advocate by creating a parent and guardian adviser.

This is an unnecessary bill, and there are numerous gaps that still need to be filled in before this bill should be passed. It is for these reasons, Madam Speaker, and the work I’ve done as a lawyer and understanding the law, especially around the rights of children and youth, that I cannot in good conscience support this bill, that will fetter the rights of children and youth in this province. This bill is a dangerous step in the direction of removing the agency of children and youth in this province. I would urge the members opposite to rethink why this government is so concerned with removing the rights of some of our most vulnerable members of society.

Children and youth deserve good representation. This bill does nothing more than water those rights down if not effectively removing them altogether.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there other members wishing to join the debate? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and join the debate on Bill 206, Child and Youth Advocate (Parent and Guardian Liaison) Amendment Act, 2024, sponsored by the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul. Now, in the comments when the member stood up and sort of reminded the House of the purpose of this particular private member's bill, he mentioned the inspiration for this work. The inspiration was, I believe, if I'm not mistaken, family members that were raising two children on the autism spectrum. You know, I always listen very intently when people want to share family experiences or personal experiences. They know. I think we can all appreciate the additional challenges and barriers that families face when they are raising children with disabilities, because, sadly, there are a lot of barriers in this province to doing that.

3:40

What I found particularly alarming – and I made these comments on a different day, an earlier day when we started debating this bill. Part of my concern, Madam Speaker, is that not once did I hear from this member any reference whatsoever, before he went on to talk about how he would like to see the OCYA office changed, to a report that came out in January. The report is from the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, and the report is titled *Beyond Barriers: A Special Report on Young People with Disabilities in the Child Intervention and Youth Justice Systems*.

Now, Madam Speaker, if the member is interested in actually reading it, he can see that the office was very clear to say that this is the first time they had undertaken a report like this, and there were very specific reasons that they did it. The reason that they chose to specifically focus on children with disabilities and the barriers that they face is because they make up a huge number of the kids that are in care, the kids that die in care, and the reason that we have these investigations. Sadly, we know that children with disabilities, sometimes very complex disabilities, and other issues going on are the kids that we're talking about. I thought it was actually very forward thinking that the OCYA would take on this report, review the body of information that we have, and then come up with some recommendations. That is their job.

Now, this private member's bill seeks to insert another person into this office to do the work that the member talked about, specifically around advocating for kids with disabilities or families with disabilities. Now, I would suggest that this member didn't actually have a grasp on the office, what it does, and what they see as the gap in service before even putting this bill forward.

Now, if you look at the recommendations made – and this is just in January. If we as a Legislature undertook to meet the very clear recommendations made by a body of experts, the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, I think that we could together advance services for kids with disabilities. These are well thought out, these are nonpartisan, and actually I think they would make a big difference.

Now, the problem or the main barrier with these recommendations is that the government is required to adopt them and then say that they're going to actually do the work to meet the recommendations. I've not heard from this government that they endorse these recommendations, that they believe they need to happen, and that they're doing the work. Now, if I'm to be corrected, I would love to be corrected about that. I think that would be outstanding, if this government was actually working towards these recommendations.

Now, two of the recommendations: I'm going to focus on a couple of them because there are actually about eight that I think

would really address some of the things that this member who brought forward this private member's bill talked about in the motivation for this bill. I think these recommendations actually meet them. One of the recommendations – and, as you might suspect, when we talk about the office of children and youth, it's not just children; it's youth. A lot of the time the reports that we're getting, so children dying in care or being harmed in care, are not infants. They're not young children. They're a little bit older.

One of the recommendations is to relook at and adopt the PDD Steering Committee recommendations. There are some very real things we can do for the children. When they turn 18, they leave FSCD supports. They're still in children's services, and they move to adult supports, which is PDD. Now, that is a disaster. I will tell you right now that the transition from children's services to adult is a disaster. Very often people fall right off the map and they don't get any supports at all, so we've invested all of this money and time in intervention and installing supports and bridging services and then they turn 18 and, poof, it's gone. These recommendations actually address a lot of that.

The number one to reduce the barriers is to change the kind of home that they live in. This government likes to talk a lot about red tape reduction. This is actually an area where we can reduce some red tape. Sometimes the placements for people when they turn 18 need to be somewhat creative. They don't fit into the normal boxes, whether it's, you know, a supported home or supported independent living or a transitioning group home. Sometimes that doesn't work and we need some flexibility, so one of the recommendations is: let's be flexible.

Second is to provide a way for service providers and families to share resources and work together. That is actually pretty straightforward, to hook people up together because sometimes that's where you get the best result and the best support. But I'll tell you what, Madam Speaker, what this government did: they cut contracts with adjacent organizations that actually help families do this very thing. Not very forward thinking.

The next is looking at – again, it goes into more detail about the home living options. It looks at assistive technology that can be added to other supports to actually support that person on their journey to being more independent, because we know that once you assist people to get there, they require less support.

And then, finally, there are some recommendations around service providers, rules about supporting caregivers in emergencies, and those kinds of things. These are just some of the really simple – some of them are easy to meet – recommendations that would actually make the work of the OCYA better but not just the work of the OCYA; the outcomes of the work of the OCYA. Instead, we've got a private member's bill that seeks to install a person that doesn't understand the work to be an adviser but fails to actually understand the unmet recommendations that this office has made, actually, for years. That's alarming.

There are some other recommendations for children with disabilities, and of course this is a different support. I mentioned PDD, which is for adults; FSCD is for birth to 18. There are some very specific things that we can be doing here. Even just tweaking some of the policies would actually make life better for a lot of families.

One of the things, I think, is very easy. Let me just say it right here: the government could actually report on the wait-list so that families would have some kind of understanding about what they're looking at. I don't know about you, Madam Speaker, but my office pretty regularly hears from families with kids with disabilities. One of the things that they all have in common when they write to me or they call is that we just don't know how long this is going to take: "You know, we applied, we got assessed, we got approved; that was

two years ago. We applied, we paid privately for an assessment, we got approved; that was three years ago. We applied, we waited, we're still waiting for an assessment; that was two years ago." That happens all the time.

There are all kinds of families and children that need these early intervention supports, and they can't get them because there's a wait-list. And for four years, Madam Speaker, this government has failed to tell us – tell families, not us; we're not the ones that need to know. It's actually the families that need to know how much longer are they waiting. Instead, we're going to install someone in the OCYA office to be an adviser or liaison of some kind. We're not going to meet the actual recommendations that are tested, that are based on data, that are based on science, that tell us if we do these things, life will get better for children and youth. Instead, we're just going to devise our own system and plop someone into the office and, yeah, things will get better.

Well, they won't. They won't get better because some of the basic things to meet the needs of children with disabilities and adults – well, over 18 with disabilities – have been very clearly identified by experts. An expert, independent office of the Legislature has said that these are the things that we can do as a Legislature, these are the things that we can vote on to make services for children with disabilities better. Some of them are very simple. Some of them are not. Some of them require a bit of a commitment and an investment, but there are some things that are very simple.

I would suggest starting with some clarity with the Alberta people, to say: look, we have this many people applying for this much money of support, and for four years we've been unable to meet that need. We now have – I don't know – 8,000 people waiting for service. I hear there are 12,000 families waiting for assessment, but nobody knows. The speculation will continue because nobody really knows how many children, whether they're on the autism spectrum, whether they have cerebral palsy, whether they're born with some kind of brain injury – we don't know.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Ip: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and contribute to the debate on Bill 206, Child and Youth Advocate (Parent and Guardian Liaison) Amendment Act, 2024. I often say this, that I am reminded every day that we have a tremendous opportunity, all of us in this House, to make a difference in the lives of Albertans. But it does come down to the details. The devil is in the details, so to speak.

Let's talk about whether what this government is proposing, and in particular the private member who has brought this legislation forward, actually helps Albertans. While the bill is well intentioned, it also shows that there isn't an understanding of the role or work of the OCYA or the needs, frankly, of many young people in care or the needs of families, because rather than addressing, perhaps, underfunding for families with children who need intervention supports or youth in care or properly addressing some of the underfunding in education or youth mental health or gaps in youth mental health care, what we're seeing is something that doesn't really do very much for those that it purports to support.

3:50

The reality is that the structure that the UCP is proposing doesn't work. Ironic, perhaps, because it ultimately doesn't empower parents. What this bill does do in fact is it weakens the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, and ironically we've seen precipitous underfunding and cuts to this specific office. So while the bill talks

about wanting to strengthen the work of the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, it actually weakens it. It creates further confusion.

Oftentimes when I rise, Madam Speaker, I like to talk about patterns. I like to talk about patterns that I often see from this government, and this is no exception. What we're seeing actually is that this government likes to signal that they're doing something when, in fact, they're not doing anything at all to improve lives for families or strengthen children's rights. Often what I see is a tactic of what I like to call divide and confuse, carving out functions and creating positions and sort of re-creating particular existing structures to distract from, really, the incompetence of this government. We've seen that in health care, and we're seeing that with this particular bill.

I should point out that what this bill does do is it creates an additional burden on the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, an office that is responsible to the most vulnerable Albertans, whose guardian is the government themselves oftentimes. Think about it. The OCYA is supposed to be an independent advocate to hold government accountable, to ensure that children in care or receiving supports from the government are properly cared for, their needs are met. It is so important, Madam Speaker. This is the original intent of why the OCYA office was set up, and that is to ensure that the office remains independent. But what this bill does is it blurs the line.

There is no question – on this side of the House we agree – that parents need more supports. But by tinkering with the structure of the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, it is not where this adviser role should live. In fact, I guess my question to the member who has brought forward this bill is: why did the government decrease the budget of the advocate's office, further hampering their ability to do their work?

My second question is: why is the government not providing funding for organizations in the community that already do the work of wayfinding and supporting parents and advising parents? That is the family resource networks. We're seeing – and I'll quote from a CBC article because I think this is quite telling – a record. It goes: As More Albertans Turn to Free Family and Community Programs, Operators Say Funding Hasn't Kept Up. In the article it further says that they have seen, particularly family resource centres, an increase of 63 per cent within one year of accessing services across the province, from 78,700 points of service to 128,300. So the reality is that there are organizations already doing this work, but they're not receiving the funding that's needed.

Madam Speaker, I have a lot to say on this particular bill, but I want to give my colleagues an opportunity perhaps to also make some comments. I will just say that if you look at the record of this government on children, on families that need support, it is absolutely abysmal. We're seeing an increase in child poverty. In fact, child poverty levels have now returned to prepandemic levels, 1 out of 5 children live in poverty, and what we're seeing in this most recent budget is that the kids at risk are in fact targeted by Alberta government funding cuts. All of that added together is absolutely shameful. This bill doesn't do anything for the families and children that need support, and I would encourage all of my colleagues to vote down this bill.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members to join the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, and then Calgary-Fish Creek.

Member Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to briefly – I will only say a few words, and I won't take very much time so that the member opposite can have an

opportunity to also address this bill. But I will say that Bill 206, Child and Youth Advocate (Parent and Guardian Liaison) Amendment Act, 2024 – the liaison as it's proposed for parents and guardians is not appropriately placed in the OCYA's office.

I take the member at his word who introduced this, that he had relatives that were confused and challenged by their two children who are on the spectrum, and they are looking for government resources to be able to address those children's needs. That's an important thing, Madam Speaker, for parents to find the right resources, make sure that their children are thriving to the extent that they're able. When that doesn't happen, it can be quite frustrating. It can be hugely problematic. You're figuring that your kids aren't getting all the supports they need and they may not achieve and be the best individuals they can. It's very, very troubling. I'm not a parent myself, but I certainly appreciate and empathize with the desire to help your family members out. I think being a legislator and being able to use a private member's bill is an incredible thing, but I don't think it's properly placed both in the OCYA's office or here before us.

I think if the member wanted to properly place something before this Legislature, that would be at budget, that would be trying to get his colleagues across there to invest more in, say, for instance, the FCSS program, a program that has hundreds and hundreds of programs through agencies throughout the province that it supports at \$100 million. If it were \$150 million, Madam Speaker, so many more resources from the nonprofit world could be marshalled to address the needs of autistic children and other kinds of challenges that parents look for support for their kids.

So there is a way to address this need. It's not in this office with limited resources; it's in the nonprofit sector. The nonprofit sector can flex and address and do so many things, and we're so proud of our nonprofit sector in this province. On the health side, on the preventive social services side, on the community support side all of that is there, and I just wish the member would have focused his attention on trying to get more resources in that area for parents, for families. It would make a great deal more sense.

If we look to just some of the duties that this liaison, as proposed by the member, will be responsible for, the duties of a liaison "provide information, assistance and referrals to families for the purpose of improving the well-being of children." Well, that's already done through many agencies throughout this province, and if they had more supports through the FCSS and other kinds of investments, either through the children's ministry or other ministries that support families, more of that could be done.

Another duty identified by the member is to "assist families with respect to an education program offered by a school, as defined in the Education Act." Again, you know, there are huge numbers of agencies in our communities and in our rural areas that are supporting parents right now, doing those things. If they had more support, they could do more.

4:00

Another duty is to "identify systemic barriers with respect to Government programs." Yes, we need to do that. We need to identify how to improve the programs and services that this government provides. That doesn't need to be an internal person within the OCYA office. It is done all the time. My colleague from St. Albert talked about a report already done.

Some of the functions – again, functions that are already in the community, functions like "meet with families to understand the unique needs of each [family member] and provide information and assistance." Well, I think there are about 8,000 social workers registered throughout this province. They do this every day, Madam Speaker. If there are challenges with the coverage of those social

workers and other professionals throughout the province, then maybe we need to see parents through nonprofit organizations step up and provide greater coverage, provide greater advocacy, go for grant funding to make sure that those programs exist in other parts of the province as well that aren't well covered.

"Make referrals to organizations, programs and services." Again, Madam Speaker, I don't know why this needs to be in the OCYA office. It's done all the time in our province – all the time – by mental health professionals, by social workers, and by others. The other two functions here of that person as reported by the minister: "report to the Advocate [again] on any systemic barriers" and then to "perform . . . other functions prescribed by regulation."

Madam Speaker, I don't want to belabour the fact that I think this is a good idea but not in the right place.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but the time has come for the mover of this bill to provide five minutes to close the debate.

The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to provide the closing remarks for the third reading of my private member's Bill 206, the Child and Youth Advocate (Parent and Guardian Liaison) Amendment Act, 2024. I'd like to thank everyone who has helped me bring Bill 206 to this stage over the course of these last 12 months, including all members from both sides of this Chamber and the stakeholders who sat down with me to make this bill a little bit better.

Thank you to my dedicated constituents, who have also provided important feedback to me on this and the many other important issues. They allow me to continue to do my important work in this House.

I want to thank the staff of the UCP, and I want to thank the Minister of Children and Family Services' office in addition to the minister himself for all of their constructive feedback and dedication on this file.

Of course, Madam Speaker, I would like to also thank my family for their valuable insights and support of me. If not for them I wouldn't be here in the first place. This includes my wife, Megan, and my two daughters, Amelia and Charlotte. I'd also like to thank my sister Melonie and my brother-in-law Ben and my two nephews, Matthew and Kaden, that have inspired this legislation and now we hope to become law. I am extremely proud and thankful for all of you.

The challenges finding available supports for these two amazing young men led me to question if we can be improved. I sincerely believe we can. My sister and brother-in-law are not the only ones, Madam Speaker, and for this reason I have brought Bill 206 forward. I know it is a rare privilege for a private member to have their bills reach this point, let alone twice. I am so appreciative of everyone else who has helped us get here. They will get an opportunity as well, for my caucus mates, if they haven't had one already.

This is a wonderful bill, Madam Speaker, and it is an important one, too. This bill, if passed, will fill a clear need for Alberta parents and guardians to create a centralized advocacy resource for them, a resource that does not currently exist. This resource would act as an invaluable liaison to ensure parents and guardians seeking help can turn to any government service available to them. The parent and guardian liaison would help support families in numerous ways that would help guide them through the difficult but rewarding journey of raising children. They would also contribute to continuously improving the government services, and Alberta's parents and guardians rely on all of them. In addition to transparency and

accountability, by mandating the delivery of this comprehensive annual report to the Child and Youth Advocate on their work, they will be improving our entire government system.

I firmly believe that Alberta parents and guardians deserve a strong voice, and Bill 206, the Child and Youth Advocate (Parent and Guardian Liaison) Amendment Act, 2024, provides that strong voice, Madam Speaker. I believe it is so valuable, it will grow and expand as something into the future that we as parents and grandparents will be able to really benefit from.

This has been a very enlightening and engaging process to bring this important piece of legislation to this Chamber and Albertans, Madam Speaker, and I genuinely hope for support from all members in this House.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I close debate.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:06 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

Against the motion:

Arcand-Paul	Dach	Miyashiro
Brar	Haji	Renaud
Ceci	Hoffman	Sabir
Chapman	Ip	Tejada

Totals: For – 46 Against – 12

[Motion carried; Bill 206 read a third time]

The Speaker: I understand the hon. the Government House Leader may have a request to be made. The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request unanimous consent of the Assembly to waive Standing Order 8(1) in order to proceed immediately to consideration of Motion Other than Government Motion 520.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a request for unanimous consent to set aside the remainder of debate available to private members during private member bill debate and move immediately to Motions Other than Government Motions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Motions Other than Government Motions

Alberta's Energy Industry

520. Mr. Boitchenko moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the federal government to recognize the government of Alberta's

- (a) role as a reliable and responsible energy supplier, and
- (b) efforts to
 - (i) become a global commercial energy hub for natural gas transportation and liquid extraction, and
 - (ii) bring Alberta energy products to international markets based on the demand for ethically sourced oil and gas and world-wide energy security.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Sorry. I'm just going to interject, and I'll give it back to you in one second. Let's just let some members who may be moving around the Chamber, and then I'll call for you.

Order. The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Boitchenko: Mr. Speaker, I'm rising today to speak on a topic that is very good and very important to many Albertans. Energy, especially reliable energy, is vital to not only my constituents of Drayton Valley-Devon but all Albertans. We must reaffirm Alberta's role as a reliable energy supplier while also securing our position as a responsible leader in the energy industry.

Across the globe countries, industries, leaders, and companies turn to Alberta as the foremost reliable global energy hub. Alberta is indeed the international gold standard for reliable energy. Moreover, our great province is already a global commercial energy hub for natural gas transportation and liquid extraction that keeps Alberta at the forefront of the Canadian economy. With the search for potential new markets, this motion urges the federal government to recognize the Alberta government's role as an ethical energy supplier and offers to bring reliable Alberta energy products to international markets.

Mr. Speaker, contrary to the federal Liberals' rhetoric for the last decade, Alberta has constantly demonstrated leadership as a responsible energy producer with world-class regulatory standards that ensure environmental protection and social responsibility. Moreover, Alberta's energy comes much cheaper and safer than the alternatives found in other parts of the developed world. Our province's energy sector operates under some of the most rigorous environmental, safety, and labour standards in the world, standards that we as Albertans and as the stewards of this safe and reliable energy can be proud of. Our province's reputation as a reliable supplier strengthens not only our province's and Canada's standing on the global stage but also brings more bargaining chips to the table when navigating these uncertain times with threat of tariffs.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Madam Speaker, this motion does more than simply reaffirm Alberta's role as a reliable and responsible energy supplier. This motion seeks to promote Alberta as a global energy hub for natural gas and liquefied natural gas. Alberta has the resource, expertise, and infrastructure to continue its role as a global energy hub. The only thing inhibiting our province from achieving its full potential are the federal Liberal antienergy and anti-Alberta policies.

My constituents care deeply, as we all should, about the future of our province, and they understand that the future of Alberta is tied to the successful handling of our natural resources, particularly natural gas and other energy products. This motion will secure not

only jobs but also Alberta's future as a world leader in reliable and responsible energy supply.

This motion will establish Alberta's energy products for what they are. They are tools of energy security and stability for our own province, for our country, and for our allies around the world.

4:30

Madam Speaker, for my constituents Alberta energy is not simply a commodity but a means to secure our own self-reliance thanks to safely and ethically produced oil and natural gas. We live in trying times. The world around us is changing, and it's changing very rapidly. With alliances shifting, nations are re-evaluating who they rely on for the oil and natural gas and other energy products that we have. Alberta stands ready to fill these gaps with ethically produced oil and natural gas. By increasing Alberta's access to the global markets, we are contributing to a more stable and secure global energy supply, benefiting not only Alberta's growing economy but our allies in Europe and around the world.

Madam Speaker, there is a reason that Alberta remains the fastest growing province in Confederation. Albertans are exceptionally hard-working people who have built an energy sector from the ground up based on our province's core values of ethical and responsible practices. Moreover, as the parliamentary secretary to Indigenous Relations, I am beyond proud that Alberta's energy sector is built on the meaningful partnership with Indigenous communities and commitment to high environmental, social, and governance standards, standards that my constituents and all Albertans for that matter have come to expect from not only our amazing energy sector but also of our government. The writing is on the wall. The world is demanding ethically sourced energy, and Alberta is uniquely positioned to supply it, reinforcing our province's key role as a responsible and democratic energy alternative to the undemocratic and unstable regimes like Russia and Venezuela.

The federal Liberals would have Canadians believe that promoting Alberta oil and natural gas products means dirty and irresponsible energy, but Albertans know that promoting Alberta's energy products means promoting human rights, environmental accountability, and fair labour practices, the values that Albertans cherish. Federal support for Alberta's energy sector is not only in Alberta's interest; it is in Canada's national interest. Our success benefits the entire country through economic growth, job creation, and increased energy security.

Madam Speaker, supporting this motion sends a strong, clear, unified message that Alberta is open for business, ready to lead, and deserving of our federal government's recognition and support. With this motion we can ensure that Alberta's energy sector continues to thrive for the benefit of all Albertans today and for generations to come.

With that, through you, Madam Speaker, I ask all members of this Assembly to support Alberta and all Albertans through this great motion. Thank you. I count on your support.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, can you please say the words for me on the record: I so move Motion 520.

Mr. Boitchenko: Oh, yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Just say: I move Motion 520.

Mr. Boitchenko: I move Motion 520.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, I am seeking other members to speak. The hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington.

Ms Chapman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and speak in support of private member's Motion 520. This motion asks for federal government recognition of Alberta's role as a reliable and responsible energy supplier. Further, it continues to urge recognition of Alberta's efforts to bring Alberta's energy products to international markets.

Madam Speaker, Alberta has tremendous potential to become a global commercial energy hub, with our abundant resources, skilled workforce, and strategic geographic position. Now, unfortunately, I would say that the UCP's confrontational approach with not just the federal government but also investors and environmental stakeholders has actually created uncertainty. It's damaged Alberta's reputation and jeopardized our ability to access international markets.

As I was considering this private member's motion today, I was reflecting on the long history of Conservative governments in Alberta. [interjections] Of the last 54-odd years, we've had a Conservative government in Alberta for 50 of those years. That's where I thought you guys would applaud. That's 50 years of failure to diversify our economy, 50 years of failure to get a pipeline built, 50 years of failure of building the infrastructure that we would need to upgrade our oil right here in Alberta.

It's pretty similar to this government's failure to build the schools that Albertans need. In just four years an NDP government managed to build or modernize 244 schools.

An Hon. Member: And how many pipelines did we build?

Ms Chapman: Heck, yeah, we built a pipeline; we also built the Calgary cancer centre because we built the services that Albertans need.

But Conservative governments are just not very good at building: no new pipelines, no infrastructure to upgrade our oil ourselves. Instead, year after year of Conservative governments have allowed our province to become almost completely dependent on Americans as the consumer for our crude oil exports. I think it's something like 90 per cent of crude oil exports are sold to the Americans. They have built decades of reliance on a single consumer because they're bad at business.

The Americans: this government has a long history of failure at collaborating with the American government. The current Premier has failed to have any impact whatsoever on the tariffs placed by current American President Donald Trump. You know, it wasn't that long ago that former Premier Kenney dropped the ball when it came to the Keystone XL pipeline. Despite years of obstacles and legal challenges and the very obvious possibility that this government's preferred MAGA leader in the south would not win re-election that time, the former UCP Premier still chose to gamble \$1.5 billion of Albertans' money on Keystone XL.

An Hon. Member: How much?

Ms Chapman: That was \$1.5 billion. How many schools do you think we could build for \$1.5 billion? A lot.

Look, I know. I know because I have kids. It's easier, so much easier to blame someone else for your problems. My kids do this all the time. Nothing is ever their fault. It is always someone else who's created the problem because it is hard work to be truly self-reflective, to admit that, in fact, you are the problem. So I understand why, instead of using the last 50 years of governing power to build the infrastructure that Albertans need, you know, they just fuffed about. They've fuffed about for decades, and now they're finding out because these conversations about energy have become much more

complicated. It is not just about the federal government. In fact, it's about the existential threat of climate change.

I think this motion is an attempt to address those ongoing tensions between Alberta and the federal government regarding energy policy and development. Unfortunately, it's all talk and no action. While I appreciate that this very well-intentioned member brought forward this motion and gave us this opportunity to speak to Alberta's role as a reliable, responsible energy supplier, which we are, and as I mentioned earlier on, Madam Speaker, that I will be voting in support of this motion, I do so with disappointment that this government seems set on confrontation for confrontation's sake because we could replace conflict with collaboration, obstruction with innovation, and rhetoric with real action.

4:40

Rather than building productive partnerships to advance Alberta's interests, the UCP wastes resources and taxpayer dollars on constitutional battles and political theatre that yields no tangible benefits for Albertans. The continued focus on painting the federal government as a bogeyman is an attempt by this highly ineffective government to shift attention away from their own lacklustre energy policy, its populist politicians more interested in posturing than rolling up their sleeves and getting to work to build the partnerships we need to truly advance the cause of Alberta energy.

This motion has no specific implementation measures, no time-lines, no funding mechanisms, no monitoring provisions. It speaks to a recommendation that Alberta be recognized as a global energy hub, yet it establishes zero concrete steps or recommendations to achieve the goal of becoming a global energy hub.

Instead of spending time cooking up motions that have zero useful actions tied to them, this government would be better off focusing on the development of emissions reduction technologies, value-added processing, and strategic market diversification, instead of just more political fighting. That's what the NDP did when we were in government, and it's what we'll do next term, when we're in government, because Albertans deserve a competent government that works for them. All they're getting right now is a petulant toddler pitching an endless tantrum.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. McDougall: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today in support of this important motion, which urges the federal government to recognize Alberta's role as a reliable and responsible energy supplier and our province's efforts to become a global commercial energy hub for natural gas transportation and liquids extraction. I want to first thank my colleague and member representing the Drayton Valley-Devon constituency for bringing forth this motion.

Alberta has long been the backbone of Canada's energy economy and has consistently demonstrated leadership as a responsible energy producer with world-class regulatory standards that ensure environmental protection and social responsibility. I challenge anybody in the House to point to one jurisdiction on this planet that is a major oil and gas exporter and producer that has better standards. Our province is blessed with the resources, expertise, and needed infrastructure to become a global commercial energy hub for natural gas transportation and liquid natural gas extraction.

This motion is the right step for our province in Canada considering recent economic happenings and realities of the global market. Madam Speaker, our promise is not just rich in resources; we are rich in innovation and environmental stewardship. Our unwavering commitment to global energy security has been demonstrated over

the years, especially under the UCP government's scorecard, despite actions and policies of our federal government to the contrary.

The recent trade war with the United States, which has put Alberta's energy market in a difficult position, makes the timing of this motion that will put Alberta's energy in a good and strong position very pertinent. We need the federal government to unshackle our sustainable competitive advantages. We need to recognize that we have a huge productivity problem here in Canada. Not only do we provide productivity to this country that has been stagnant, can you imagine what would be happening in Canada right now if we didn't have our oil and gas industry? Can you imagine what would be happening if we were unshackled and were allowed to exploit to our best advantage, and can you imagine what our fiscal capacity would be if we were allowed to increase our oil and gas production and its derivatives unfettered?

You know, I'm glad to hear that the opposition members will support this motion, but I want to talk a little bit about virtue signalling, the act of expressing opinions and behaviours primarily to demonstrate some kind of moral superiority other than a genuine conviction or intent to effect change. We need the federal government and the members opposite to stop virtue signalling. We need to consider the fact that not only does Canada have and produce oil and gas better and cleaner and more ethically than anybody else in the world, but we also have to recognize the fact that limiting our ability to do so and imposing costs that achieve nothing on our industry is not helping. It's not helping the climate. It's not helping the planet. It's not helping the workers of Alberta. It's not helping our capacity to pay for the government services that we so value.

Recognize that not one major oil exporter in the world has a carbon tax other than Canada and, to a lesser degree, Norway, but of all the other major exporters not one has. The reality, in the case of oil, is that if Canada cannot exploit and increase its oil production or is somehow restricted through production caps – because that's what an emission cap is, based on the current federal government set of policies. All it does is move oil production elsewhere on the planet. It's interesting to note that OPEC has unused capacity today of 4.6 million barrels per day. That's more than what Canada exports today. All we do by limiting or reducing Canadian oil production is give more market to other countries, many of which we cannot consider, like Iran, like Saudi Arabia, like Kazakhstan, like Russia. So what is the benefit of policies that have been restricting our production? We need to recognize that production of oil from Canada is a good thing, and restricting oil production from Canada does not achieve anything for the planet. We're just replacing oil production from Canada to another jurisdiction.

In the case of natural gas, which this federal government says that there's no business case – meanwhile we had 23 CEOs a couple of years ago come to Canada from the energy industry in Germany, only to be told by the federal government that there was no business case. So what did Germany do? They made a huge multibillion-dollar contract with Qatar, that, again, has no carbon tax or any other restrictions on their emissions. They didn't tell Qatar they had to put a carbon tax, and unlike what the current Prime Minister says, Germany did not insist that Qatar had to do that, and they would not and did not expect that Canada would do anything more than what Qatar does in the case of its industry. That's the reality. Those are the facts on the ground. We need to recognize this.

Madam Speaker, as I said before, Alberta's energy sector is one of the most ethically produced and environmentally regulated industries in the world. The global demand for responsibly sourced oil and gas is growing. Oil and gas demand continues to grow. While there's talk about potentially some levelling off on oil demand, which we will see what happens – it's certainly not going

to be in the next five years – for natural gas there is going to be no reduction in demand going forward in the foreseeable future. What we need is enabling environment support, especially from Ottawa, to achieve this, and that's not what the current Prime Minister and the NDP coalition talk about. Those are the facts.

By expanding our LNG capacity, Alberta can offer secure, responsible energy to the world while creating long-term benefits for Albertans. LNG products include petrochemical diversification.

4:50

You talked about diversification. There's all kinds of diversification in our industry happening right now. Perhaps you forgot about the \$10 billion Dow Chemical hydrogen plant that was, you know, announced recently. That's diversification, and it comes directly from our natural gas resource.

It also allows us to have what's called the Alberta advantage, low-cost taxes that attract and allow other companies to come, other industries, start-up technology companies, who locate to Alberta specifically in large part because of our low tax base and the high government services that we're allowed to provide relative to the rest of the world and the rest of our country. You know, diversification is happening despite the comments from the opposition. It continues to happen. It will happen even more if we're allowed to totally exploit our sustainable, competitive advantage that the oil and gas industry provides, including the Alberta advantage, which is a sustainable, competitive advantage.

Let me be clear. The world wants our energy. They want energy that is developed under the rule of law, protects human rights, and advances environmental progress. Alberta's oil and gas fits that bill, and it's time the federal government acknowledged that instead of fighting against it. It means promoting energy products, promoting human rights, environmental accountability, and fair labour practices, values that Albertans hold dear. This motion reflects a critical truth, that Canada has a role to play in global energy security and Alberta is in the best position to lead that effort. Whether it's displacing coal in Asia with Alberta LNG or reducing Europe's dependence on authoritarian regimes, we have the solution here in Alberta.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I urge all members to support this motion. Let us send a clear message to Ottawa and our current Prime Minister that Alberta is a leader in ethical energy development, and we are ready and willing to power not only our province and Canada but the world. Federal support for Alberta's energy is not only in Alberta's interests; it is in Canada's national interest. Our success benefits the entire country through economic growth, job creation, increased energy security.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there other members wishing to join in the debate on private member's Motion 520?

Seeing none, I would like to ask the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon to close debate.

Mr. Boitchenko: Madam Speaker, in closing, Alberta has been the pillar of Canada's energy sector, driving economic growth not only in Alberta but across the nation, creating jobs and providing the world with ethically sourced, responsibly produced oil and gas. Our province's commitment to environmental stewardship demonstrates that we are not only a reliable energy supplier but a leader in sustainable resource development. By supporting this motion, we send a clear message to the federal government that Alberta's energy products are vital to Canada's energy security, economic prosperity, and our allies. It is essential that the federal government recognizes and supports our efforts to bring Alberta's energy to international markets, ensuring Alberta and Canada remain a key player in the global energy market.

Madam Speaker, Alberta has been ready to provide our allies' energy needs while maintaining the highest environmental and ethical standards for some time now. This motion will affirm Alberta's critical role in ensuring energy security domestically and abroad. It is time for the federal Liberals to recognize the government of Alberta's role as a reliable and responsible energy supplier and to support Alberta's efforts to become a global commercial energy hub for natural gas transportation and liquid extractions, thereby bringing Alberta energy products to international markets for global security.

With that, Madam Speaker, once again through you, I ask all Members of this Assembly to support Alberta and Albertans through this great motion that we just put forward. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you, all.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 520 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:55 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Haji	Petrovic
Arcand-Paul	Hoffman	Renaud
Armstrong-Homeniuk	Hunter	Rowswell
Boitchenko	Ip	Sabir
Bouchard	Jean	Sawhney
Brar	Johnson	Schow
Ceci	Jones	Schulz
Chapman	LaGrange	Sigurdson, R.J.
Cyr	Loewen	Singh
Dach	Long	Stephan
de Jonge	Lovely	Tejada
Dreeshen	Lundy	Turton
Dyck	McDougall	van Dijken
Eggen	McIver	Wiebe
Ellis	Miyashiro	Williams
Elmeligi	Nally	Wilson
Fir	Neudorf	Wright, J.
Getson	Nicolaides	Yao
Glubish	Nixon	Yaseen
Totals:	For – 57	Against – 0

[Motion Other than Government Motion 520 carried unanimously]

The Deputy Speaker: I see the hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise to request the unanimous consent of the Assembly to waive Standing Order 8(1) in order to proceed with the consideration of government business for the remainder of the afternoon sitting.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 38

Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2025

[Debate adjourned March 13: Ms Hoffman speaking]

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

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. For everyone who's waited with bated breath since March 13, when I gave the first half of this speech, let me tell you what happened to Tory. Again, just for context, this is in response to what the government is calling a red tape reduction act but, in fact, is an act to take away accountability for the government when young people die who've been in their care. That is probably the most callous part of this bill, in my opinion, and it is what I focused the first half of my speech at second reading here on and what I will continue to focus on.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

In the specific case I'm referring to, her name according to the publication, which I imagine is a name changed for her identity to be protected, is Tory. Tory was 20 years old when she died, and I had an opportunity to recap some of the major significant events in the timeline of her life up until the age of 19. For a cribbed version, by age two child intervention had already been involved in her life. By age six they had been involved four times, and there had been some school assessments done but not a lot of information on any supports that might have been given. Child intervention was involved another five times between the ages of seven and nine. Custody was changed between both of her biological parents.

Eventually, not that many years later, at age 12 she was taken from both her parents, put into foster care, and there was a custody order. Child intervention involved an additional two times. She had at that point some individual program plans at school and then was apprehended at 13 and separated from her siblings and put into foster care. Then there was a permanent guardianship order, psychiatric supports already in place by the time she was 13 years old, but so was her path to addiction and heavy use of substances, which is ultimately why she died at just the age of 20. She was poisoned with fentanyl in methamphetamines.

Between 13 and that point, though, she lived in group care, kinship care and was hospitalized under the Mental Health Act at only 14 years of age. Just absolutely heartbreaking seeing how time and time again the system touched and failed, intervened and failed, apprehended and failed. She was at 16 already independently living and trying to establish a relationship with her parents but was later evicted from her housing as an independent living placement. At 17, living in a youth shelter and then independent living again and evicted yet again, and substance use continued.

I think the last two years of her life deserve extra focus and attention for our considerations here today. She did reach out and try to get into detox when she found out she was pregnant. She talked to the admissions person about the fact that she was using cannabis daily and methamphetamine two to three times a week, is what the documentation shows, and she tried to get into voluntary detox treatment and was not admitted. This is somebody who wanted help, and she wanted to have a healthy pregnancy. She wanted to support her child, and the system wasn't there for her. Her child was taken from her. That was at 19, and then at 20 she did, just two weeks before she died, get virtual opioid dependency treatment. She was able to have Suboxone, but clearly that was not enough, Mr. Speaker, because just two weeks later she was found on the street unresponsive from a toxic drug supply poisoning.

The reason why I want to share about Tory in this place is because the legislation that exists: we know these stories. We in this place are representatives, through our representative democracy, of her family. She was under the care of the province and we were her guardians, and we failed her. Any parent who loses a child wants to make sure that that never happens again in their family or to any other family. The way the legislation is written today is that we have

a responsibility to have these stories investigated, told and, for us as the legislators and for us as the guardians, to reflect on where we failed her and what we can do to make sure that Tory and other kids like Tory can live a happy, full, and long life.

We've already taken out benchmarks in the Ministry of Health for things like reporting in the annual reports on life expectancy for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people. Tory was Métis. We've already taken out the benchmark that used to be reported publicly in the annual reports on infant mortality rates. Now, they are on a website, two years old, that you can go to and look through them. Two years old: not timely. Taking away this measure of the OCYA to be able to report publicly on these young people's lives when they die having been in care so recently is a bare minimum that we owe to these children, to these young people, and to the families that are grieving their loss. To put in something that we call red tape reduction the silencing of these stories of these young people is beyond the pale of what I expected for us to consider in this place when we came in here to debate bills.

I thought maybe this session we'd talk about things that would make life more affordable. I thought maybe we could talk about what we were going to do in Alberta since the government seems to refuse to move ahead on the pharmaceutical initiatives that are being proposed at the federal level and that B.C., P.E.I., and Manitoba have already signed on to. I thought that we might find ways that we could talk about what we would do to catch up on the infrastructure deficit, to talk about how we were going to stand up for Alberta and Canadian companies, that we were going to focus on making sure that we have health care expanded so that people anywhere in this province can have access to great family care, a primary care network, a family doctor, a nurse practitioner. Almost a million Albertans don't have those things right now. Instead, what we get from the government is a bill to take away the truth in telling these stories about people like Tory.

5:20

I doubt anyone in this Chamber ran for election in the last term wanting to reduce the accountability and the work that we're doing around what should be efforts to reconcile the dark parts of our history with the policies that we create moving forward. This bill is completely wrongheaded. It is cold. It is callous. It is uncaring. Tory deserves better, and so do all of us.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Leduc-Beaumont has risen to speak.

Mr. Lundy: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to stand today and speak in favour of this piece of legislation, a piece of legislation that will make a difference in the lives of everyday Albertans. Bill 38, which is focused on reducing red tape: that's not just a policy. It's a promise, a promise to make life easier for our businesses, our families, and our communities. I hear from my constituents all the time first-hand about how overwhelming it can be to navigate a maze of rules and regulations. Whether you're a business owner trying to grow your company, a student trying to get through school, or a family trying to make the most of your resources, unnecessary barriers that come with red tape can be frustrating and disheartening.

My constituency of Leduc-Beaumont is filled with businesses both big and small who often have to jump through the hoops of red tape. This is really disheartening. Leduc-Beaumont is home to so many great businesses. Of course, we have the Nisku Business Park as well as the Leduc Business Park. It's really frustrating when business owners will come in and talk to me and they'll be frustrated that there's so much red tape that they need to work

through. All they want to do is contribute to our local economy but also to the economy of Alberta. These are folks who just want to help, who want to provide for their families and help the Alberta economy in general. That, Mr. Speaker, is why this bill is so important. It's about clearing these obstacles away and opening new opportunities for everyone.

Here in Alberta we've always prided ourselves on our spirit of innovation, our ability to think outside the box and get things done. When it comes to cutting through unnecessary red tape, we're already the best in the country, and we'll work hard to keep it that way. We've eliminated over 209,000 regulatory requirements and saved taxpayers more than \$2.9 billion to date. That, of course, is no small feat, but we won't stop now. We've got to keep going, and that's exactly what this bill is all about, removing the barriers that stand between us and a brighter, more prosperous future.

It isn't just about making things easier for businesses, Mr. Speaker. It's about making things better for all of us. Let's take, for example, the amendments to the Post-secondary Learning Act. We all know how important student associations are to the culture of our universities and colleges. But let's be honest. Right now they're bogged down with red tape and paperwork that takes away from the time and resources they could be spending helping students. These changes will simplify the way student associations operate, making it easier for them to focus on what really matters: representing students and creating a positive campus environment.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about the Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Education Act. As a province we rely on the hard work and dedication of our skilled tradespeople. In fact, I was happy to tour the NAIT campus recently and was very excited to hear about their plans for improving our supply of skilled tradespeople in the future. We know that in the coming years developing our skilled trades labour force is going to be an extremely important priority for our government to keep our economy going. The reality is that we need more young Albertans to enter the trades, and we need to make sure that they have the best training and support available. By clarifying the responsibilities of trade unions and employers in this bill, we're making it easier for apprentices to access training and ensuring they get the hands-on experience they need to build their careers and, of course, support our economy. These changes will help confirm that Alberta's skilled trades workforce remains second to none and will help us address potential future skilled labour shortages.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let's of course not forget about the business side of things. As a province we want to make it easier for businesses to grow, create jobs, and contribute to our economy. Our Conservative government understands how important this is. Economic growth needs to be created by the businesses in our community. Only by doing this will we ensure our economic future. As an example, the repeal of the Energy Diversification Act is a decision that will clear up confusion for businesses in the energy sector. By removing legislation that's no longer relevant, we can focus on the programs and initiatives that actually make a difference, allowing businesses to thrive without unnecessary distractions.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk about the Boundary Surveys Act. We all know how important it is to have clear and accurate property boundaries, whether we're talking about land ownership or resource development. The proposed amendments in this bill will make it easier to make minor adjustments to the Alberta-B.C. border without the need for expensive and time-consuming referendums. These changes protect Alberta's sovereignty and property rights while ensuring our borders are precise and up to date.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we come to the practical changes that will benefit all of us in our day-to-day lives. The amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act will make it easier for landlords and

tenants to communicate, making the process of serving documents like rent increases faster and more efficient. These changes aren't just about convenience; they're about confirming that both parties can resolve issues in a way that's clear, fair, and effective.

Mr. Speaker, when I think about the people who will benefit from this bill – the small-business owners working hard to grow their companies, the students striving to make a better future for themselves, the skilled tradespeople building our homes and infrastructure, the families who rely on the services that keep them safe and supported – it really hits home. This bill is about making life easier, removing barriers, and opening up opportunities. It's about making sure that everyone, no matter their background or where they are from, has a chance to succeed.

It's always been a staple of Alberta, laying the economic conditions to make it easier to succeed. As a proud Albertan I know that we're stronger when we work together, and we make it easier for people to achieve their dreams when we remove the unnecessary obstacles in their way. That's when we'll see the real power of our province unleashed.

Mr. Speaker, today I stand in support of Bill 38 because I believe in Alberta's potential. I believe in the people who make this province what it is, and I believe that by reducing red tape, we can create a future where businesses thrive, families prosper, and every Albertan has the chance to succeed. I would encourage all members of the Chamber to vote in support of Bill 38.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Any others wishing to speak? I would recognize the Member for Edmonton-Decore.

5:30

Mr. Haji: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 38. It's red tape reduction, but reading through the bill, I find it is kind of reducing the red flags that we get when young Albertans are going through difficulties, because it reduces the transparency aspect and the frequency of reporting.

Youth aged 18 to 24, especially those who grew up in government care, Mr. Speaker, still need our support. Just because a young person turns 18 doesn't mean they suddenly can navigate and they have the tools to navigate to adulthood on their own. In fact, these years are often the most vulnerable and uncertain, especially for those who haven't had stable homes, consistent support, or access to mental health and addiction services. Instead of pulling back, we should be doubling our commitment to these young people. The advocate for children and youth should be strong, it should be an independent voice, and it should not be the one that is to be scaled back.

Bill 38 proposes changes to seven different acts across five ministries. While some of these changes are minor and could be seen as red tape reduction, the most alarming amendments buried in this bill are those to the Child and Youth Advocate Act. These changes weaken oversight. These changes reduce transparency when it comes to the lives and deaths of vulnerable young people.

The key concern under this legislation, Mr. Speaker, is that the advocate will no longer be required to report or investigate the deaths of youth aged 20 and older. For 18- and 19-year-olds it becomes optional, left to the advocate's discretion, whether a death or serious incident is to be investigated. We're talking about the lives of young adults who have gone through difficulties and challenges throughout their childhood years.

The reporting requirements are also being reduced. Instead of releasing every six months, learning the stories that the Member for Edmonton-Glenora was talking about now that give us the red flags for the government to take actions to reduce harm and save lives,

these reports now will be once in a year at best, and there could be delays. Importantly, there is no obligation for these reports to be made public or tabled in the Legislature, so we actually wouldn't even know what happens to the lives of those. Why does this matter so deeply, and as the members from this side of the House talked about, why is it so important? Mr. Speaker, in January 2025 approximately 8,800 children in Alberta are receiving intervention services. About 7,500 of them are in government care. We want to know their life trajectories.

In December of 2024 it was reported that 76 per cent of children in government custody were Indigenous, and we know the lives of Indigenous communities through the history of this country. These numbers tell a clear story. We are talking about disproportionately impacted populations: many of whom face systemic barriers when it comes to access to health, many of them who face systemic barriers when it comes to their safety, many of them who face systemic barriers when it comes to access to opportunities. These young Albertans are not just numbers, Mr. Speaker. These are young people, many of whom have faced unimaginable adversities throughout their lives.

In Alberta youth aged 18 and older make up the majority of those reported on investigated child and youth deaths. In 2023 Alberta received 88 death notifications. In 2024 the total numbers were 83, and nearly 47 per cent involved youth 18 or older. Those are the ones that will not be investigated, will not be reported, will not be tabled, will not be available for Albertans. These youth are deeply impacted by the child welfare system even after they age out of care. Their stories deserve to be acknowledged, as the Member for Edmonton-Glenora had highlighted just a few minutes ago. Their stories are to be learned from so that we can prevent future deaths. Those stories should not be reduced. Those stories should not be once in a year, optionally.

We know that drug poisoning and substance use are among the leading causes of death for young people involved in care. Youth living in care often face housing instability, gaps in mental health and addiction treatment, disconnection from their communities, feeling a lack of a sense of belonging, and a lack of consistent adult support. When these supports aren't in place and when those challenges fill in the lives of those young people, the consequences can be devastating, Mr. Speaker.

The period after leaving care is not the time to step back from accountability and it's not the time to learn to lean and walk alongside these young people. This is when we need transparency. This is a specific demographic and population that needs to be monitored and reported, that needs to be invested in in terms of whether this investigation is knowing so that we can prevent future deaths.

The members opposite argue that there are systems that are in support that will prevent this. Alberta does have the transition to adulthood program, yes, but we have to ask: are these supports actually reaching the youth who need them the most? Are they comprehensive? Are they trauma informed? Are they consistent to reduce and prevent deaths? We do know that they are not consistent, we do know that they are not trauma informed, and we do know that they are not comprehensive. Reducing oversight, reducing reporting frequencies, reducing investigations makes it harder to understand when we are failing as a government and where we are failing because it becomes harder to fix when we don't know.

Mr. Speaker, we owe these young Albertans better. These young people are not just statistics; they are sons, they are daughters, they are friends, they are siblings, they are classmates, and, more importantly, they are Albertans. They have survived so much. Many have lived through trauma, loss, instability, discrimination, lack of belonging, isolation. When they ask for help or when their

lives end in tragedy, we owe them the dignity of being seen. Reducing oversight silences these stories. Reducing transparency and more frequent reporting makes it harder to learn from preventable deaths. We do need a strong system of care. We do need more timely support. We do need more transparency, not less.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

5:40

The Acting Speaker: Are there any others wishing to speak? The Member for Lethbridge-West has risen.

Member Miyashiro: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm going to talk to you not from prepared notes; I'm going to talk to you from experience. The first 13 years of my career as a 40-year human services professional were spent in the child welfare system, first as a front-line child and youth care worker in group homes, in receiving assessment facilities, and in locked assessment facilities. Another part of what I did was to work with the provincial government, actually, to change the child welfare system around to make it work better for kids and families. You know, in the mid-1990s about 75 per cent to 80 per cent of all the children in care were Indigenous, and according to our data now that number hasn't really changed, so we haven't made a lot of progress.

What I want to speak about today, Mr. Speaker, is the inhumanity of actually putting in a red tape reduction statute not reporting the deaths of young adults that had received children's services from this province. Why do I think that's inhumane? Because the kids that I worked with in a supported independent living program, kids that were 16 and 19 years old: our job was to actually develop the skills in them to be able to function on their own and do follow-up supports for them. These were people that needed help with school. They needed some group work. They needed individual counselling. They needed help finding a place to live. They needed help finding employment and the supports throughout to continue that.

If anyone here has their own children that are over the age of 20, I don't believe you just dumped them at the age of 20 or 22 and said: you're on your own. This is what we do continuously, Mr. Speaker, to kids that are leaving the children's services system. We say: "Here, you're on your own. We wash our hands of you. We're not going to provide any more supports for you, and not only that; now if anything happens to you, we're not going to report on it because it's going to reduce red tape somehow." The problem with that is that we need to understand what happens to some of these young people after they leave our care in the system so that we can maybe prevent that from happening.

I don't know how many people on the other side of the House, Mr. Speaker, have actually worked with young people that have taken their own lives because they had a lack of supports after they left the children's services system. I can tell you I've had at least six or seven, maybe more. Actually, I've had more. A couple of them actually made it to the age of 30 by some luck and some chance. When you hear of young people that you've worked with jumping off parkades because their life is so horrible because they couldn't get the supports they needed; young adults that have left the system that have overdosed, that have been murdered, that have actually been murderers, you tend to think that these are the kind of people that need more supports throughout their young adulthood so that at least you can set them up to have the best possible chance for success. When you're not reporting on young adults that have left the system that have passed away, you're not getting a good picture of how our system looks after people.

It just seems to me that we're lacking some kind of humanity. We're lacking empathy and the understanding that just about every single child that goes into this children's services system doesn't

ask to go in there. They don't say: oh, I wanted my family to be a certain way. They don't say: I wanted my parents to have drug and alcohol issues. They don't say: I wanted to be the next generation that experiences child abuse. None of them say that. You know what they cry out for? They cry out for help.

It's almost criminal that we can look at ourselves as a society, let alone a government, and say that we're just going to abandon them when they need us the most, when we think that they've actually turned the corner and are doing well but they don't have the skills and the abilities to understand how things are still affecting them.

You know, I'll give you a really good example, someone that I worked with when he was a teenager, a young man from the Kainai First Nation, a very smart but very troubled youth and a very troubled upbringing. He and I kept in touch for years after he left the care facility that I was working in. When I was running the Blood Tribe Youth Ranch on the north end of the Blood reserve, I happened to speak to this young man, and he came and worked for me. He came, actually, and worked as a child and youth care worker in this facility that we were serving First Nations children and their families. The sad part of that is that we thought this person had developed the skills and had turned the corner and was doing really well, but after a while he wasn't doing so well. After a while he didn't have the supports that he needed as an adult. When he was in his 40s, all of the things that he experienced in his life came back and crashed down on him. Unfortunately, he took his own life when he was in his 40s.

Mr. Speaker, we need to have, as I will say again, some empathy and some understanding for what these children are going through. We need to have the supports available to them. Something like this: all it says is that we don't care. We don't care what happens to you after you leave this child welfare system. It doesn't matter to us as a society. We're not going to care what happens to you, and we're just going to let whatever happens happen. We're not going to make any changes to actually try to help.

I think that's the biggest problem that I have with this amendment. I think the Minister of Children and Family Services needs to look at this again and to not implement this amendment to this act and look at some ways you can change the child and family services act or the child support act or whatever is under the minister's jurisdiction in order to help these children and families to not just survive but to thrive and to make a difference in their lives. Sticking them in a red tape reduction amendment is inhumane, and quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, it's kind of disgusting.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Klein.

Member Tejada: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak today about the grave concerns I have with Bill 38, Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2025. Specifically, I will also be speaking to the impacts it has on the reporting of the deaths of kids who have recently been in care. I just want to commend all of my colleagues here for humanizing this discussion and for also pointing out the callousness that is required to include the reporting of the deaths of kids in care into a red tape reduction act.

It's especially ironic to me that we just finished hearing debate on the office of the Child and Youth Advocate and a member on the other side referred to the UN convention on the rights of the child when this government is casually steamrolling those rights as well as the stories of those children in this bill. I've heard many members on the side opposite wax poetic on the sanctity of life, yet here we are talking about legislation that will obscure the deaths of youth our government has sworn to become the guardian for.

5:50

To speak to the amendments in this bill and to specify what they are, the legislation stops reporting on youth deaths at the age of 20-plus, and the reporting or investigating of 18- or 19-year-olds' deaths or serious incidents would now be at the discretion of the advocate if this were to pass. It also changes reporting times from every six months to once a year. In addition to this, the report doesn't need to be made public and it doesn't need to be tabled in the Legislature, one of the mechanisms that we have for accountability in this House. Let me just state this specifically. Not only does this bill obscure the data; it specifically prevents its collection and removes the accountability of publicly reporting it. By extension, it allows this government to abdicate responsibility for those kids and for their lives. If no evidence of the problem exists, I'm not sure how this government proposes to address it.

Prior to this bill the advocate would investigate the deaths of all youth who received care or intervention up until the age of 24. I just want us to think about the gap for a second here. We're talking about the gap from 18 to 24, when kids still require support. Their brains are still developing, as we have, you know, heard plenty from the members opposite about, but especially kids in care. Now, in addition to a loss of supports for these kids, the government is now blocking the collection of data we need to serve this vulnerable population.

It brings to mind the adage that when we know better, we do better, except in this case the government is definitely not committed to doing that. We have a legal responsibility to these kids past the age of 18. I know this as a parent myself. I have a legal responsibility to my kid after they turn 18, as they continue on into postsecondary education, which they are privileged to have the opportunity to have. When we're talking about kids who have just been in care, their opportunities for that are severely reduced. We're not only failing a moral obligation here; it's also a legal obligation. What I've seen already from this government is a shirking of responsibility to kids in care by removing supports as they become adults and need the most support.

Last fall they refused to restore financial supports for youth previously in care to age 24. These are supports that they rolled back to age 22 under the transition to adulthood program, or TAP. To say that I was struck by the callousness of that bill alone is an understatement, but here we are, and they continue the same in Bill 38. Rather than empower the advocate to provide proper resources and programs to at-risk children and youth, the government is willing to reduce it. With this bill Children and Family Services would intentionally block investigations and reporting on the deaths of youth 18 years of age and older. This is being proposed while we see an increase in the number of serious incidents and deaths for kids over the age of 18.

In the 2024 report *Calling for Change* the advocate found that of 48 cases of children and youth deaths, 47 died and one suffered serious injury; 26 included young people with severe mental health issues, substance use, or both. That speaks to some of the stories that my colleague was talking about in terms of suicide for kids in this group. A lot of these cases were actually kids from age 18 to 22 with substance use concerns that were given minimal support for their transition to adulthood. This is also confirmed and borne out in the report on the deaths of children, youth, and young adults receiving intervention services. This is publicly available information released in January 2025. We can see that the majority of kids that were impacted were kids over the age of 18.

I want to speak a little bit to Indigenous kids in care. As of December 2024 the government reported that 76 per cent of children in government custody were Indigenous. I'll point out that

the changes in this bill fly in the face of any stated commitments by this government to reconciliation with the Indigenous peoples here in Alberta.

According to the 113 Pathways to Justice report delivered by the Alberta Joint Working Group on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in 2021, there were identified issue recommendations, and at least four of them were listed under fatality inquiries, exactly what is covered and rolled casually into this bill. To not follow those recommendations and to instead systematically obscure the data is at best hypocritical and at worst a cynical approval and entrenchment of systemic racism and bias in our government institutions. It erases not only the already vulnerable youth who have died after leaving our government's care but any glimmer of opportunity to do better by them.

Specifically, they go against the government's stated goals to develop policy under the guidance of the Premier's Council on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two Spirit Plus People and the government's MMIWG road map under pathway 3. I'll just read it as it appears in the document, to "improve wellness and justice systems through policies, processes, programs and services to increase safety and prevent violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2S+ people. The focus of this pathway is violence prevention."

The government spends so much time patting itself on the back when it comes to reconciliation; it's clear to us all here that it's not a priority. The advocate has previously called on the UCP to provide better and increased supports to youth, and this is just doing the opposite. The advocate herself has stated that, though she can track the deaths of youth through other mechanisms, she doesn't support the changes in this legislation. The Ministry of Children and Family Services hasn't provided an alternative plan to track these deaths even though the advocate is actually not in support of this.

In closing, I just want to say that dead children are not and should not ever be considered red tape. As the parent of two children, one who just turned 18, I cannot overstate how objectionable it is that the UCP has failed to actually provide supports to youth and is willing to not only accept increased deaths but dismiss them as an administrative burden. Incredibly cynical and shameful.

These kids are our kids. They have untold potential, and they deserve our unmitigated protection and support in life, reverence in death, and a commitment to do better by them that is backed up by the data. By rolling the collection of critical data on the deaths of kids in care into a red tape bill, this government is effectively dehumanizing the kids it has sworn a responsibility to. It is shameful, and if they insist on including this as part of their bill, I urge all members to vote against it.

The Acting Speaker: Any others wishing to speak?

Member Ceci: I just have a minute or two, and perhaps I'll be able to carry this on – three; thank you very much, Mr. Speaker – when we reconvene later. I just want to agree with my colleagues that the challenges that this bill presents are not ones that we can support. It does not address the important things of reducing red tape, particularly in the whole area of the office of the Child and Youth Advocate.

My colleagues were eloquent in their concerns. I don't see why this is called red tape when you're talking about young people and their needs and the number of challenges that that office faces already with the reduction in its budget, with the huge number of investigations that are required there. My colleagues have talked about some other areas that perhaps make sense with this bill, but that one does not make any sense at all. I just wish the mover of this Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2025, would remove that wholesale. That's not red tape. Caring for young people in the care of the government should not ever be seen as red tape.

The parts that make some sense – I guess one part that makes sense is the Residential Tenancies Act. That's just updating some processes that occur now that weren't contemplated or put in place when that act was originally put in place. That's the one piece of the six or seven pieces of this bill that I can support, but overall I would oppose all of it, and my colleagues and I will do that as well.

The other person who has big concerns about this part of the bill is the advocate, Terri Pelton.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, the time is now 6 p.m., and the Assembly stands adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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