



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, April 2, 2020

Day 14

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

Second Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UCP)
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)
Dreeshen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),
Official Opposition Whip
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP),
Government Whip
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Issik, Whitney, Calgary-Glenmore (UCP)
Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),
Premier
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre
(UCP), Government House Leader
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),
Leader of the Official Opposition
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),
Deputy Government Whip
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),
Official Opposition House Leader
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Shannon Dean, QC, Clerk	Philip Massolin, Clerk of Committees and	Amanda LeBlanc, Deputy Editor of <i>Alberta</i>
Teri Cherkewich, Law Clerk	Research Services	<i>Hansard</i>
Stephanie LeBlanc, Clerk Assistant and	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Chris Caughell, Sergeant-at-Arms
Senior Parliamentary Counsel	Janet Schwegel, Director of Parliamentary	Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel	Programs	Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

Executive Council

Jason Kenney	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations
Leela Aheer	Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women
Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreeshen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas and Electricity
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

Parliamentary Secretaries

Laila Goodridge	Parliamentary Secretary Responsible for Alberta's Francophonie
Jeremy Nixon	Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Community and Social Services
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Orr
Deputy Chair: Mr. Getson

Allard
Eggen
Glasgo
Jones
Loyola
Nielsen
Singh

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Neudorf
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard
Armstrong-Homeniuk
Barnes
Bilous
Dang
Horner
Irwin
Reid
Stephan
Toor

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goodridge
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery
Carson
Ganley
Glasgo
Guthrie
Neudorf
Nixon, Jeremy
Pancholi
Rutherford
Yao

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Schow
Deputy Chair: Mr. Sigurdson

Gray
Lovely
Nixon, Jeremy
Rutherford
Schmidt
Shepherd
Sweet
van Dijken
Walker

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Cooper
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Dang
Deol
Ganley
Goehring
Goodridge
Long
Neudorf
Walker
Williams

Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills

Chair: Mr. Ellis
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Glasgo
Horner
Irwin
Neudorf
Nielsen
Nixon, Jeremy
Pancholi
Sigurdson, L.
Sigurdson, R.J.

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Mr. Smith
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Armstrong-Homeniuk
Carson
Deol
Ganley
Issik
Jones
Lovely
Loyola
Rehn
Reid
Renaud
Turton
Yao

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Ms Phillips
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Barnes
Dach
Guthrie
Hoffman
Reid
Renaud
Rosin
Rowswell
Stephan
Toor

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Mr. Hanson
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Dach
Feehan
Getson
Loewen
Rehn
Rosin
Sabir
Singh
Smith
Yaseen

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 2, 2020

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Hon. members, please be seated.

I see the hon. Deputy Government House Leader and Minister of Transportation has risen. It seems like he might have a question. I'm not sure what it is.

Mr. McIver: No. Actually, I'd like to, Mr. Speaker, request unanimous consent of the Assembly that members may be able to sit, speak, and vote from any chair within the Assembly for all of today's sittings.

The Speaker: I'm not sure if that was done this morning, but out of an abundance of caution, I'm more than happy to request unanimous consent.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Members' Statements

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

COVID-19 Related Business Adaptation

Member Ceci: Good. All right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a difficult time for all Albertans, and our thoughts are with those who have lost loved ones to the COVID-19 pandemic. We should never forget that we can bring the economy back to life, but we can't bring people back to life. But we also know that many Albertans have spent their lives building businesses that are currently experiencing the greatest challenge they have ever seen.

Many businesses' models simply can't be adapted to social distancing, but I've been heartened by how some of the businesses in my home community of Calgary have stepped up during this crisis. Annex brewing company now manufactures hand sanitizers. Calgary Co-op has given all hourly front-line employees a raise of \$2.50 an hour, supporting the workers we're all relying on. Shelf Life Books, Pages on Kensington, and Owl's Nest Books are all offering free book deliveries in Calgary. You can have kitchen knives biked to you by Knifewear and beer delivered by Cold Garden, Inner City, Village, and many more breweries. Rather than staging in-person performances, Verb Theatre debuted its Blue Light Festival on social media platforms. Even during COVID-19 the show must go on. These businesses know that we all have to adapt and make changes.

Unfortunately, the government seems to believe it is business as usual. They pushed ahead with radical changes to the health care system despite pleas from physicians across the province. They rammed through a budget that took no account of the disastrous drop in oil prices. Many businesses say that they are simply not being supported by the UCP government. Mr. Speaker, Alberta's businesses are doing what is necessary to get us through this crisis. When is the government going to wake up and put aside its ideological program and follow their lead?

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose has a statement.

Hardisty

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituency of Camrose includes the small town of Hardisty. It's a small town similar to others in central Alberta. There's one thing that sets Hardisty apart: the tank farm. Enbridge refers to Hardisty as the hub of the Canadian oil industry. It's hard to overstate the importance of Hardisty to Canada's energy sector; 3.5 million barrels of oil flow through Enbridge's facilities in the area each day, equivalent to 23,000 railcars or 80 per cent of American oil consumption.

Hardisty understands our oil and gas sector. That is why I was thrilled to receive a call from the mayor, Doug Irving. Last night he called to say the purchase of equity in Keystone XL is excellent news for Alberta and a great shot at bringing back prosperity to our area amidst today's doom and gloom. We know that this move is necessary. Construction must go forward with the project that will bring 830,000 barrels of oil to the Gulf. It must go forward soon in order to spur investor confidence and create jobs. If we can get this project and the TMX pipeline built, Mr. Speaker, we are well on our way to unclogging the transportation bottleneck that has hindered Alberta for so many years. This is much-needed good news in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the campaign the Premier was fond of telling the story of a 17-year-old boy he met in Hardisty in 2016, who asked him how long it would be before we would get rid of the NDP. On the eve of the election the Premier told Rick Bell that should we win, he'd like to tell that boy "it took three years but we... got 'er done." We don't know how long COVID-19 or the economic hardship currently facing our province will last, but I hope that soon I'll be able to tell the leadership of Hardisty that we got 'er done and that we have been grateful for their support all the way through.

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

COVID-19 Information and Community Response

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk about COVID-19 and how community response, communication, and awareness is essentially now a fight to flatten the curve and stop the spread of this virus. Over the past few weeks Albertans have been practising physical distancing, self-isolation, and quarantine. I would like to thank everyone who has been proactive and vigilant in following these public health orders.

Just a couple of weeks ago I asked the government: what are we doing to ensure all communities receive information regarding COVID-19? As we know, some people struggle with English. It is important for their health and the safety of their families that they also get the message. I was happy to participate in a video talking about COVID-19 in my native language, and thanks to some of my colleagues who have done the same. We are working hard to make sure everyone knows just how serious this pandemic is. Many community groups and volunteer organizations that work with some of our most vulnerable people are making sure that the message gets out and that people stay safe.

This will not be an easy fix, but Albertans can take on this challenge. The pandemic will change things for all of us in every corner of this province, across the country, and around the globe. As we navigate the new normal and unprecedented circumstances, I am inspired and encouraged by the spirit of co-operation and resilience being demonstrated by the community, by all Albertans. Our individual actions will determine how many people make it through this. We will get through this together, and one day soon, I hope, our phone calls and FaceTimes will be our handshakes and our hugs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has a statement.

Emergency Isolation Support Program

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, when asked about the government of Alberta's financial support program for Albertans impacted by the COVID-19 crisis, this Premier said that over 40,000 people have accessed the payments. The Leader of the Official Opposition then rightly pointed out that 40,000 Albertans is roughly 1 per cent of all of us. Countless Albertans who need help from their provincial government are struggling with a fiscal support program that seems almost intentionally set up to frustrate their efforts. All of our offices continue to hear from a great many Albertans who need immediate financial relief and who are frustrated by a website that continues to have technical difficulties, long digital queues, and various strange hurdles that can seem impossible to clear right now.

Yesterday, during the special debate on COVID-19, the Finance minister also made it quite clear that Alberta's emergency isolation support program is time-bombed. The website to apply will likely disappear as soon as the federal support programs come online, which we are expecting to happen on April 6. This is devastating news to many Albertans who are still struggling to get through the myriad of challenges this program has thrown at them. It is starting to feel like this government is more interested in limiting their budget for this program rather than providing financial support to every Albertan that needs it right now. It's hard to believe that a province that once sent \$400 cheques to every man, woman, and child is now struggling to provide funds to the people who need it.

One per cent of Albertans have managed to access this, but that is not a job well done. It's time for the government to step forward with a more streamlined approach to providing Albertans direct financial supports during the crisis as Albertans will likely be asked to continue staying home wherever possible for several more weeks and maybe even more months yet. It's time for this government to revise and expand the emergency isolation support program to support those we've identified that are falling through the cracks, not end it. Albertans need direct financial support from this government right now to put food on their table, Mr. Speaker.

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

1:40

COVID-19 Protective Measures

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The COVID-19 epidemic is causing vast amounts of concern and damage around the globe right now. Our province is currently locked in a battle with this virus, and we are doing everything in our power to stem its spread. Preventing the virus from spreading to our vulnerable people, our elders, those with underlying conditions, and within our communities should be our number one priority right now as a society.

The government of Alberta has laid out rules to follow to help stop the virus from spreading. If you have travelled outside of the country, you must self-quarantine for 14 days and an additional 10 days upon development of any symptoms. If you develop symptoms and you have not been travelling internationally, you must self-isolate for 10 days at a minimum. There are restrictions in place for mass gatherings calling for the immediate cancellation of all events with greater than 15 people. When out in public you should always maintain a two-metre distance between you and any other people as well as practise good general hygiene such as frequent handwashing, sanitization of surfaces, and avoid touching

your face. I implore all of those people who are isolating to actually isolate. Staying home and being off work does not mean taking your family to Jasper for the weekend. It does not mean going out unnecessarily.

If we do all of these things, we have the greatest chance of slowing and maybe even stopping the spread of this virus. Staying home and being safe is a small price to pay for helping to slow this pandemic, and it's the fastest way to get things back to normal. You can keep up to date from home on all the COVID-19 information at www.alberta.ca/covid19.

Finally, I would like to thank all of those who are still working. Farmers, essential services, and health care workers are putting themselves at risk to ensure that our province can function seminormally during this time. These workers need to be recognized and commended for their efforts in the face of this pandemic. I sincerely say thank you.

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

COVID-19 Response

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I was a therapist, I worked with many people who failed to be able to respond to the challenges of life with a sense of their own power to deal with barriers and challenges. Instead, they would sit back and wonder why others were not taking care of them. They would wait for those with initiative and a positive sense of self to take the reins and steer them clear of the problems at hand. This is exactly what I have witnessed by this government.

Last night I had the opportunity to question the Minister of Seniors and Housing. While she expressed concern for seniors, she was completely unable to identify one thing that her ministry had done for seniors. Instead, she said that they had been busy asking the CEOs of various organizations what they had been doing to prepare, providing no actual help from the ministry. Further, when asked about the provision of PPEs, the minister said that private companies had been asked to help out and were doing so. Nothing from the ministry except passiveness.

Then I had the chance to question the Minister of Indigenous Relations. When he spoke about the assistance to First Nations, he spoke about money going to every nation, but on questioning, it was clear that the money was coming from the federal government. "What," I asked, "did the minister do to help First Nations?" The answer: he was on the phone with the federal minister asking for help, waiting for the help to come from someone other than himself.

On the weekend the Ministry of Education laid off over 20,000 teachers' aides and other school support staff. You'll notice that I said that they were laid off by the ministry and not the minister, who, in true fashion, failed to attend the announcement. When questioned about this move, it was clear that the provincial government saw an opportunity to transfer responsibility for these public servants to the federal EI program rather than taking care of their own.

We live in the wealthiest province in Canada, yet we have been the least responsive to the needs of our citizens. Mr. Premier, it is time to stop being a victim of circumstances and show some leadership that does not count on the opposition forcing your hand or the federal government bailing you out.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

COVID-19 Community Response

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week we are continuing to see the extent of the heartbreak that the novel coronavirus can

bring to our communities. The news of multiple deaths as a result of this disease, including at several continuing care centres, highlights the seriousness of COVID-19, and I want to share my deepest condolences to all of the families who have lost loved ones to this terrible pandemic. Now more than ever Albertans need to support one another. These are emotionally challenging times, and they affect every one of us.

Between fears of our loved ones' health, widespread layoffs, and general uncertainty about what the future brings, it can be hard to find positivity these days. However, Albertans have a long and storied history of supporting their communities, especially at times of crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has proved to be no different. Across the province stories have emerged of communities finding new ways to come together while following physical distancing rules. There are countless stories coming out of our communities about how Albertans are supporting each other in this difficult and emotional time. The *albertacares* hashtag, started by Dr. Deena Hinshaw, put forth a spotlight on the kindness that Albertans are showing to each other. This hashtag has shown just some of the many generous ways that our communities are showing each other that they care.

The COVID-19 pandemic is frightening, and it must be taken seriously, but we are a strong and resilient province, and we are going to get through this together. To those who are feeling helpless in their situation, please reach out to friends and neighbours. Even the smallest act of saying hello can raise someone's spirits. Together we can support one another in the difficult days ahead and get through this.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge has a statement to make.

Keystone XL Pipeline Project

Mr. Toor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Years of economic stagnation have taken a toll on many of Alberta's households. Now the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and shocking drop in the price of oil as a result of Russia's price war have pushed our province's economy into crisis. Now more than ever our province needs some good news. That's why Monday's announcement that the Keystone XL pipeline will finally be started was so welcomed. In this time of unprecedented adversity and economic crisis this significant project is a bold move to retake control of our province's economy. The Keystone XL pipeline is moving forward with a \$1.5 billion government investment to accelerate the construction of the project.

As of yesterday this project is hiring and getting shovels in the ground. At a time when economic stimulus is needed more than ever, our government is pushing forward a project that will support this province's energy sector when support is needed the most. We cannot wait until the end of this pandemic to think of our province's economic recovery. With hundreds of thousands across the province potentially out of work, every day matters.

Our government has always been focused on getting Albertans back to work and helping our province's economy get back on its feet after several challenging years. The Keystone XL pipeline is expected to create 7,000 jobs during construction and will generate an estimated \$30 billion in tax and royalty revenues for our future generations. This project is an important step as we look ahead to economic recovery and build confidence in our economy.

There is no denying that the days to come will be difficult for our province, but I want Albertans to know that our government is looking at every option.

Trucking Industry

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic is causing many Albertans to appreciate the hard work that often goes unnoticed but keeps our society moving. In the early days of the pandemic many Albertans were shocked to see the empty shelves at the grocery stores. Before the pandemic many of us had overlooked the critical work of grocery store clerks, long-haul truckers, and many other roles that help keep our society growing.

Within days of the original shock of demand, most of our store shelves went back to normal, and this isn't by accident. It is a credit to the thousands of hard-working men and women who are maintaining the supply chain during this period of unprecedented crisis. If you drive down the QE II or highway 3 in my riding of Livingstone-Macleod these days, you won't see the typical commuter traffic. Many people are following the public health advice to stay home to prevent the spread of COVID-19. However, the highway is filled with transport trucks working to haul supplies that we rely on to their destinations. Food, fuel, medicine, personal protective equipment: none of it would be reaching its destination without truck drivers working around the clock to transport the essentials that we all need for our daily lives.

In this period of a pandemic and an economic crisis something as simple as picking up your favourite brand of cookies or having milk available at the store for when we run out at home is a boost to morale. This option is something that we often take for granted, but it would not be possible without the people working hard to maintain our supply chain.

So to the unsung heroes of this pandemic: thank you for keeping us supplied and ensuring that we can tackle the tough road ahead together. We are so truly grateful. Thank you.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The leader of the Official Opposition has the call.

1:50 Keystone XL Pipeline Provincial Equity

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We all understand the strategic value of the Keystone XL pipeline to our energy industry. We need more takeaway capacity, and we need it at the price that only pipelines can offer. However, \$7.5 billion is a considerable investment at a time when the risk is unprecedented. Indeed, after the investment was announced, TC's own credit rating went down. Can the Premier advise this House how many independent risk assessments this government has received, and, more importantly, will he make them public to Albertans, the ones who are making this investment?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I was proud on behalf of the government of Alberta to announce a historic investment to get a major pipeline, the Keystone XL pipeline, built after 10 years of delays, with a historic investment that saw construction begin yesterday and commission of this pipeline in June of 2023, that will move 830,000 barrels of Alberta oil to the U.S. Gulf complex. That will generate, we estimate, \$30 billion of incremental revenues. We gave a briefing to the opposition. We're happy to share certain details, but some of them are subject to commercial . . .

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That was starting to be the answer.

Let me just say that we support this project, but we know people need details, plus there are other factors that complicate it. Unlike the

TMX expansion, which exists inside a regulatory environment entirely under the federal government's control, Keystone operates in multiple jurisdictions. Can the Premier please explain to the House what contractual structures, guarantees, or other agreements are in place to mitigate the risk within state and international jurisdictions in which we have neither regulatory nor legal agency?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I was saying that there are elements of the agreement that are commercially sensitive and therefore to which we are legally bound to maintain confidence. However, I can assure Albertans that we worked with great diligence over the past many months with world-class external financial advisers to structure an investment that protects Alberta taxpayers. We are at the top of the capital stack with the \$1.5 billion Canadian equity investment. That protects Alberta taxpayers. Any construction cost overruns are the responsibility of TC Energy. I'm happy to answer further.

Ms Notley: Well, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we can't just take the Premier at his word. At a time when students, health care workers, patients, seniors, entrepreneurs, you name it are all being told to make do with less because the cupboards are bare, we owe it to all of them to show our homework when making an investment with such risk. Given we are now funding and backstopping over half the cost of this project, will the Premier release all the detailed risk and benefit analyses, and will he assure us that the people of Alberta will have equitable representation on the board of TC Energy?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I have to remind the Leader of the Opposition that she and her government provided absolutely zero information to Albertans on their pointless crude-by-rail deal, which risked \$4 billion in order to move, maximum, 120,000 barrels a day over two years. This is a \$1.5 billion equity investment, a preferred investment where we'll sell the shares at a profit, that will help us to move 830,000 barrels a day for decades to come.

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

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I will have more to say about the inaccuracies included in that answer.

COVID-19 Related Care Facility Safety Protocols

Ms Notley: Moving on, we currently have 41 cases of COVID-19 in continuing care facilities. A majority of those cases have been at McKenzie Towne continuing care. Four people have died at the centre, and, once again, we offer our condolences to their families. We also know that 23 staff members there have tested positive. This is not the only long-term care centre where cases have spread, putting staff and residents at risk. Will the Premier do what has been done in other places and ban employees from working at more than one facility?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Emergency Management Cabinet Committee received recommendations from the chief medical officer of health in that respect. An announcement will be made at 3:30 today about further restrictions on the operation of continuing care facilities to ensure that everything that is possible is being done to protect residents, who are uniquely vulnerable in those situations.

Ms Notley: I might suggest that we could make the announcement here since we're in question period.

Working in long-term care is not easy. These staff care deeply about their residents. That's why they are working so hard right now to make sure that people still have baths, meals, and some level of routine and comfort. They also need to be protected and to feel supported to stay home. Should the government move forward to ban them from working in more than one place and given that they need that for a full income, will the government commit to compensating these staff should their ability to work at more than one site be limited?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, the chief medical officer of health and AHS are consulting with the Alberta Continuing Care Association and the individual seniors' lodges and facilities to address labour market concerns because if orders are given that inhibit their workforce, we are concerned that it may inhibit their ability to care for the seniors, to provide food and medical attention. So we are trying to work out sensible protocols to ensure continued access to labour under restricted public health orders for continuing care facilities.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, we get that issue, but the answer is just to hire more people.

Now, in Vancouver there were nine deaths at a single facility, and they also found the virus had spread to three other homes in the area. There the city's health authority immediately prohibited staff from working at more than one facility. This is because they go between locations and enhance the transmission. In addition, we heard yesterday that staff are only getting tested when they become symptomatic. Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: why are we not testing all long-term care staff all the time, regularly, with or without symptoms in order to keep our loved ones safe?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the government is following the scrupulous advice of the chief medical officer of health with respect to prioritizing access to testing. I'm pleased to report that Alberta has by far the highest per capita incidence of COVID-19 testing in North America and one of the highest levels in the world. The chief medical officer has prioritized continuing care facilities and seniors' residences. There is daily temperature testing, I understand, of all staff if they are asymptomatic, and other protocols have been put in place.

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

COVID-19 and Seniors' Housing

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's chief medical officer said yesterday that the health and safety of those living in seniors' facilities is currently her greatest concern. Having spoken to several staff in seniors' facilities, they report being dangerously low on protective equipment and cleaning supplies. Some say that they will run out this week. When will the Premier make seniors' lodges a priority and ensure they have the supplies they need?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Pon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question. It's a very important question. We're going to continue to make sure we support and make sure that all front-line medical officers are safe and healthy to serve our seniors. Definitely, as I mentioned last night, again, we have planned very carefully. Since day one our caucus immediately addressed this issue. In fact, we have posted a link that asks all suppliers to provide all the PPE to our government.

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

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was another non answer from the minister. The lack of supplies is a serious factor since without them the spread of COVID-19 will dramatically increase.

Seniors' lodges are also dealing with tremendous challenges regarding staffing. We have learned that 30 to 50 per cent of staff are no longer coming to work due to self-isolation, child care issues, being symptomatic, or fear of COVID-19. What province-wide staffing strategy does the Premier have for Alberta's lodges?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Pon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, we have a daily call with all the leaders of the seniors' nonprofit organizations, who serve seniors. We watch very closely what the issues are. In fact, my staff have extended an invitation to the hon. members to discuss all the issues and any suggestions that they can provide and to work together. However, I'm still waiting for her reply.

2:00

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

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, we know what the issues are, so I don't know why the phone calls are coming to find out what they are. We know very clearly what they are.

I want to express my condolences to the families of those who have lost loved ones at the McKenzie Towne continuing care centre. Other families with loved ones there say that they're in, quote, a living nightmare and are receiving very little communication with their families or staff at the centre. Other jurisdictions have gone to great lengths to keep loved ones connected in these centres. Premier, this situation must be fixed today. How do you plan to do it?

Ms Pon: As I mentioned, my condolences to the friends and families who lost loved ones at the McKenzie Towne seniors' lodge.

In fact, we are working closely with my colleague the Minister of Health, who is doing a fantastic job – and thank you to your team – in managing this COVID-19, particularly in long-term care centres. We are continuously keeping in contact with the centres to see if there is any extra support that we can provide to them. As a matter of fact, we will continue to work on that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert has a question to ask.

Calgary's and Edmonton's Homeless Persons' Housing

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Community and Social Services said that every homeless shelter is in compliance with AHS guidelines for stopping the spread of COVID-19. However, she pointed to no real evidence that hotels and motels would not be more suitable than crowded convention centres in Edmonton and Calgary. By blocking Calgary's plans to use hotel rooms to decrease crowding at shelters, this minister is putting the whole community at risk. Minister, cities like Toronto and Vancouver are finding solutions. Why can't we?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, I just read an article this morning about how a hotel in Toronto has been found to be not suitable because they didn't have the sufficient retrofits required. In terms of providing evidence or data, I would invite anybody on that side of the House to join me tomorrow evening on a visit to the isolation site in Calgary to actually understand what the retrofits do look like. We had to move very quickly to comply with social distancing

guidelines, and hotels were not the solution because they take time to get ready.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Brian Wolfe, who's been homeless for about a year, had this to say about Edmonton's Expo Centre, and I quote: the distance between the beds isn't the only thing; there are other issues like illnesses, fights, and theft, and I don't feel safe. Nick Falvo has done front-line work in this area for a decade. He says that people sleeping in common areas and sharing bathrooms increases the risk. This isn't about achieving a minimum standard. This is about supporting every single Albertan, all of them. To the minister: if those most at risk don't feel safe, can you say that you're doing your job?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, there's nothing ideal in this situation. Homeless shelters are never the solution. Housing is the solution. But we're in a pandemic response. We have to move quickly. We have to ensure that we're complying with social distancing guidelines, and we worked with the city of Edmonton to come up with this solution. We are doing our level best in this situation to provide as safe an environment as we possibly can.

Ms Renaud: Your level best isn't good enough.

Calgary's Mayor Nenshi told the *Herald*: "This is not the solution I would have chosen. I think there are probably ways that would be more effective in slowing the transmission of the virus." This government is refusing to listen to municipalities, who are in the best position to stop the spread. This is not dignified. It is not proper social distancing, and it is increasing the risk. Minister, please listen to homeless Albertans, the experts in vulnerable supports, the mayor of Calgary, and reverse this irresponsible decision.

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, I was texting with the mayor of Calgary today. He's very well aware of the issues with the hotels. In fact, when this city was talking to the hotel association, one of the hotels backed out once they realized what retrofits were required.

We have been talking to the experts. We've been talking to Homeward Trust, the Calgary Homeless Foundation, and they are working with us to put together these interim solutions to make sure that we are keeping the homeless population as safe as we can and are complying with Alberta Health Services.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

COVID-19 and Seniors

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans stay up to date through social media, but we know seniors are less likely to access information in this way. As we continue to encourage best practices to stop the spread of COVID-19, we need to ensure that seniors have the best information to limit their outings. For example, it's been great to see many grocery store chains offering seniors-only hours to help them shop safely. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: what is the ministry doing to ensure seniors have access to the latest information, including the safest shopping options?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Pon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for her question. It's a very important question. I've made calls to the major grocery store chains asking them to implement special hours for seniors. Most of the managers were very happy to do so. I've also made calls thanking those grocery stores and businesses who

have already taken initiative very quickly for those seniors who cannot grocery shop in person. We are working with our seniors-serving organizations to serve them.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for her answer. Given that the seniors population is the most at risk of suffering fatalities if they contract COVID-19 and they are advised to stay at home and out of the public as much as possible to limit their risk of exposure to this virus and further given that some seniors do not have access to the Internet and technology, to the same minister: could you please advise this House what you are doing to ensure seniors are aware of their options to secure essentials such as groceries and prescriptions as well as other possible needs like meal delivery?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Pon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question again. I would like to thank the other dedicated community workers and volunteers who are helping to keep our seniors safe during this difficult time. We are working nonstop with our partners in the nonprofit sector to help seniors stay connected and ensure that they are receiving the supplies that they require. We are working with Community and Social Services to ensure funding is flowing to those organizations that support the needs of our seniors.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the minister. Given that seniors may require additional supports, including increased medical attention, daily living assistance, and health services such as regular blood work or pharmacy visits, and given that seniors have been advised to stay home as much as possible for their safety and to help stop the spread of COVID-19 and further that some seniors have no family to rely upon at this time to ensure their ability to access these services, could the Minister of Health please explain how seniors can receive the help they need to safely maintain their access to care and quality of life during this pandemic?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seniors, as we know, are at the highest risk from COVID along with people of all ages who have chronic conditions or suppressed immune systems. That means that seniors who are in continuing care are under extra restrictions, and I know it's stressful for them and their families. Seniors should call 211 for information on services that are available to them and for seniors housing providers. Alberta Seniors and my ministry have worked together to host a telephone town hall later today with the chief medical officer of health.

Environmental Monitoring

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, Albertans have a right to know if the air they breathe, the ground they grow their food on, and their waterways are contaminated. That's why it was shocking to see that the minister of the environment this week suspended environmental reporting that was previously required under the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, the Water Act, and the Public Lands Act. Can the minister explain why he is using a pandemic to suspend environmental monitoring?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, we are not suspending environmental monitoring. In fact, environmental monitoring must continue. We have made no changes to drinking water or to waste water at all. What we have made are some changes to when reports have to come in to the government to help industry, who are dealing with self-isolation amongst their staff, have more time to provide these comprehensive documents to the Alberta government. To be very, very clear, all requirements to monitor and to ultimately report remain intact.

2:10

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the minister just said that the monitoring and reporting requirements remain intact but his ministerial order says exactly the opposite and given that as recently as two days ago a company was facing charges under the Water Act for failing to monitor its water use, using water without approval, and failing to properly report its water use to the Alberta Energy Regulator and given that it's obvious to everyone that without a requirement to report, there will be no way to hold people accountable under the law, will the minister explain how lawbreakers will be held to account under the new system of less accountability, less transparency, and less reporting?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the answer is simple. There is no new system. All reporting requirements remain the same: daily, monthly, quarterly, depending on what is happening within the system. Nothing has changed at all for drinking water and/or waste water. This is purely about the filing of paperwork. Reporting of leaks or things that happen in the environment must happen immediately, as per all requirements. All investigations would continue within our department and would happen if there was some sort of a leak that takes place. As well, I'm happy to report that the entire emergency response apparatus of Alberta Environment is fully able to operate in the pandemic.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, given that all of those systems only kick into action when polluters have reported to the department that something has happened and given that Tuesday the environmental approvals were based on strict reporting requirements and given that these requirements included monthly reporting on things like flow rates for sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and particulate matter and given that the government hasn't made clear that these requirements will be impacted by these changes, will the minister clarify whether requirements to report will remain despite his changes, or will this be another level of accountability and environmental protection undone by this minister and this government?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the NDP spends so much time making things up. I can't be any more clear than this: all reporting requirements remain the same. If there is something that is wrong that would require reporting on an emergency basis, referring to what the member is referring to, that must take place. Earlier today the hon. member was telling the media that this changes how we report drinking water. In fact, the order specifically says that it has nothing to do with drinking water or waste water. It is about paperwork and helping companies comply with very comprehensive reporting as they go through the pandemic. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. I think you've had your opportunity to speak, and the minister has had his, and now it's the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora's opportunity.

Education Funding

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, last night, while we discussed the Education minister's response to the pandemic, the minister said that too much funding was given to children with special needs through program unit funding and that boards should use some of that money to prevent firing other support staff. She actually said that, that the funding designated for young children with special needs should be cut to cover up for her mistake. Does the minister actually believe that it's fair to cut funding for students with special needs because she chose to lay off more than 20,000 school staff?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, what I actually said last night is that PUF funding will continue to be provided to all students. There were a number of boards that approached me with the fact that they weren't able to spend all their PUF funding, and we absolutely gave them the flexibility to use it with all students. Beyond that, I'm happy to report that today I was able to attend a facilitated hour-long town hall with the Alberta School Councils' Association and over a thousand parents, who asked me questions, very hard questions, but we had a great dialogue.

Ms Hoffman: Well, I'll have more to say about that later.

Given the minister's repeated claims that school boards and superintendents told her to lay off more than 20,000 Albertans but given that during the debate last night the minister was unable to name a single school board, administrator, or superintendent who wanted these cuts – normally the minister is flanked by validators if they're actually calling for what she's doing; I can name many that are deeply opposed to what the minister has done – will the Education minister finally stand up and tell Albertans specifically, then, which school boards, superintendents, or administrators asked for these cuts, or will she admit that she made it up?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said and indicated last evening, I had a number of school divisions. As the hon. member knows, when school divisions or others approach you to speak in confidence, you keep a confidence. Therefore, I will continue and say that we have been very fortunate to have conversations and good dialogue with all of my education partners. They understand that these are unprecedented times. I've had numerous letters and e-mails of support since then. We'll continue to do that.

Ms Hoffman: Given that sounds like the minister is trying to use them as a scapegoat, given that many boards are showing exceptional courage – Prairie Rose, Medicine Hat, and now Red Deer public are saying they will not do the UCP government's dirty work – and given that these boards know more than the minister does about how critical these employees are to student learning, these boards are putting kids before cuts. Will the minister actually listen to these boards, boards that are publicly speaking up, and reverse her terrible cuts?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to say that at 11:45 this morning I had a conversation with the senior executive of Red Deer public as well as the board chair, and they stressed their support of our leadership and the fact that we were able to give them the flexibility that they needed to meet the demands of their students. It was a great conversation, and I appreciated their verbal support in amongst a letter that they also

sent as well. I'll also say that in these unprecedented times we all have to dig deep and do what we can for our students, and I'm so proud of the people that are.

COVID-19 Testing and Protective Measures

Ms Issik: Mr. Speaker, in a period of pandemic the need for information and data is particularly important. Our province has been leading in the COVID-19 testing. We have one of the highest rates of testing per capita in the world. This is a valuable distinction. The more that we test, the better that we can plan our province's response to COVID-19. When my constituents heard about a backlog in our province's testing, they brought their concerns to me. To the Minister of Health: how is our province increasing COVID-19 testing capacity?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta continues to test at some of the highest rates in the world. Our supply of reagents ran low over the weekend and temporarily slowed down our testing. On Monday a new shipment of reagent arrived, and we're now back at full capacity, I'm happy to say. In addition, Albertans will soon have faster, more convenient access to testing through a new partnership between AHS as well as Spartan Bioscience. It's another example of the leadership and the innovation here in Alberta, and it's a credit to our health system.

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

Ms Issik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that adherence to public health orders, including isolation orders and physical distancing measures, is essential to preventing the spread of COVID-19 and given that our government is taking seriously the need to enforce public health orders for the safety of our most vulnerable communities and all Albertans, again to the Minister of Health: how will Bill 10 help prevent the spread of COVID-19 throughout our province?

Mr. Shandro: Well, Bill 10 is going to be very important for us, Mr. Speaker, as well as the previous ministerial orders that were issued for us to be able to ensure the tools for our public health inspectors as well as added resources allowing community peace officers and police officers to help with the enforcement of the public health orders as well as adding some other tools to their tool box such as administrative monetary penalties for violations and increasing fines for the courts if somebody is very significantly contravening the act or an order.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Issik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the COVID-19 outbreak has affected every Albertan and given that many people are suffering due to isolation, uncertainty, and significant changes to their daily lives, and given that public health officials have continued to highlight the importance of Albertans' mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic, to the same minister: what resources are available to Albertans to support their mental health during this incredibly difficult time?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mental health is a critical piece of the overall response to COVID-19. If you need help, please call the mental health line at 1.877.303.2642, day or night, seven days a week. There is also the addiction helpline at

1.866.332.2322. Albertans can also visit the Alberta Health website for more resources, including other helplines and how to access treatment for mental health and addiction. I want to thank our community partners for stepping up with innovative solutions.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre has the call.

Acute-care Beds for Patients with COVID-19

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Premier told the House that AHS has 1,300 acute-care beds currently available for COVID patients, and that number will rise to 2,250 by April 22. On Monday the B.C. Health minister announced that they have 4,233 acute-care beds available for COVID patients. We don't currently have even a third of the acute-care bed capacity of B.C., and we might get to half by the end of the month. How does the government explain how we have freed up so much less acute-care capacity than our neighbouring province, which only has about 16 per cent more population?

2:20

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, I can't speak to B.C.'s numbers, but I can say this. The hon. member is ignoring as well that the current number of ICU beds that we have and ICU spaces is right now 295, and by April 22, I think, were going to get that up to over 1,290-something ICU spaces for patients with COVID – that's going to be very specifically for those patients who are suffering from COVID-19 – as well as the other 2,250 that we are going to be blocking as well as other beds that we're going to be finding in the weeks to come.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that Alberta's COVID bed capacity at present is considerably smaller than B.C.'s and given that that capacity is also being increased more slowly, is this slow response a deliberate choice by government based on modelling, just to understand the decision, and how quickly could it be accelerated if we should see the spread of COVID moving faster than the government may be anticipating?

Mr. Shandro: Again, Mr. Speaker, I can't speak to B.C. and B.C.'s numbers. I can say this. We have over 850 sites and facilities throughout the province. That includes our 100 hospitals. That means that we have almost 8,500 beds throughout the province of Alberta, significantly more than what B.C. has. I think they have only 5,000 in their entire province. Now, out of those 8,483 beds that we have here in Alberta, right now we have specifically blocked 1,300 as of today and are getting it up to 1,500 by the end of the week and continue to add and build new beds and new resources throughout AHS.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec are all developing plans for field hospitals in large public buildings and given that Alberta has been slower than B.C. to ramp up its COVID bed capacity, does the government have any plans to convert convention centres, arenas, other large venues into field hospitals, and if so, how advanced are those plans, and what venues are being considered for use?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do have contingency plans. We are through our modelling – we have the resources already to date for the probable scenario, even for the elevated scenario. For an extreme scenario, if we do see something as was being seen in Spain or Italy, which, frankly, I don't see as happening, considering what our testing is showing right now in Alberta, but if that were the case, we have been working with a local company here in Alberta to be able to build field hospitals throughout the province.

COVID-19 Supports and Red Tape Reduction

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, Albertans and their businesses are going through a very tough time right now. Many have lost their jobs, had to reduce working hours for staff, or had to stay home or work to shut down their business just to self-isolate. They need help, and they need it fast. What is the ministry of red tape reduction doing to cut red tape so Albertans and their businesses can get access to the benefits as quickly as possible?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can say on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Infrastructure that the ministry is under instructions to make things move as fast as they can by whatever means they can that is reasonable. It's not the detail perhaps that the hon. members wants, but I want the House to know and all Albertans to know that our government will clear obstacles and cut to the chase when that becomes necessary.

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

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it's now April and that many Albertans are in desperate need of financial support to put food on the table and given that the government's website to apply for the isolation benefit has been down repeatedly, with as many as 30,000 people waiting in the online queue to apply for benefits, can the minister explain why there is so much red tape preventing Albertans from getting the support they need?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration has risen.

Mr. Copping: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We appreciate the patience of Albertans during this unprecedented health crisis. We continue to work with Service Alberta to address these issues, and we are committed to helping families through these challenging times.

Now, the federal government initially emphasized that its program would be up and running by April 1. We've learned now that they will not be up and running till next week, and because of this, we are committed to keeping Alberta's emergency isolation support program open for longer than anticipated, which will result in us exceeding the initial cost of the program, which was pegged at \$50 million. Now, this number is obviously evolving as we process more applications.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the online application forces Albertans to create a MyAlberta digital ID account and given that many Albertans are complaining about technical issues in creating that account and given that this seems like an unnecessary step that is delaying much-needed financial support for Albertans, will the government cut this red tape out of the application process, or is the real problem the fact that this government cut too many IT staff to solve this problem?

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

Mr. Copping: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As indicated in debate last night, we announced this program two weeks ago. Last week we opened up the program for Albertans to apply, and we received an unprecedented number of applications. We are working very hard with Service Alberta to use this platform.

Initially this platform was for the fire outbreak and to provide benefits to those who were impacted by that, about 5,000. We have processed over 60,000 applications, and we continue to do so to help Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River has a question.

Orphan Well Decommissioning

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's energy sector has given immensely to the prosperity of this province and, as well, the entire prosperity of our Canadian economy. Understanding that the time to repay this debt is now and that the sector needs our help more than ever – oil and gas properties across Alberta sit abandoned; orphan wells sit stagnant – and that our government understands the importance of completing the life cycle of oil and gas sites, can the Minister of Energy please elaborate for this House why it is so important for the province to invest in the orphan well cleanup?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for your question. This has been a problem that has been in the works for decades in this province as previous governments have not set rules to adequately address the decommissioning of wells at the end of their life. Now with an industry that has been in financial peril for the last four years and with an onslaught of additional expected bankruptcies, we have literally thousands of orphan wells that we will have to deal with. Our government has invested an additional \$100 million in the Orphan Well Association to help fulfill these cleanups.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you also to the minister for her response. Given that the Orphan Well Association co-ordinates so much important work and oversight across the entire province on this issue and given that orphan well cleanup creates important jobs in the energy sector but, more importantly, helps to retain the skilled labour force which will be critical to the future of Alberta's energy sector, again to the Minister of Energy: how will increasing the capability of the Orphan Well Association support our province's economic recovery after this economic crisis?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you. Thank you to the member for your question. Increasing the authority of the Orphan Well Association will help deal with the thousands of orphan wells that are already in existence and will address additional wells that we feel will fall into the Orphan Well Association. By enhancing the authority of the Orphan Well Association, we will enable that organization to better deal with the inventory it has and will get, to be better able to clean it up and to operate the assets that still have a useful production life.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Williams: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the minister. Given that economic recovery and job creation will be critical once the pandemic ends and that many Albertans are not only concerned for their health but also deeply concerned for the financial well-being of their family and of this province and given that our government has extended a \$100 million loan to the Orphan Well Association to create jobs but then, again, also to make sure that we complete the life cycle of thousands of wells, to the Minister of Energy: what enhanced role for the Orphan Well Association is being proposed in Bill 12?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you for that question. Mr. Speaker, Bill 12 gives the Orphan Well Association the ability to better manage assets that are left behind by companies that are going bankrupt or are insolvent. The legislation will clarify the authority of the Orphan Well Association so that they are able to make agreements on the operation of those sites. They'll be able to make agreements with producers to help close sites, things like the area-based closure. They will ensure that oil and gas resources that are left behind by insolvent and bankrupt companies can continue to operate if they are not at the end of their production life.

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall is rising with a question.

Canadian Energy Centre Funding

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday the government announced that they are going to be temporarily reducing the budget of their failed war room. While this was a start, the war room has been an international embarrassment for our province, and it is still getting some funding while more than 20,000 school staff that were actually helping kids have been fired. Can the Minister of Energy please explain why the government is wasting a single dollar more on the war room? Why doesn't she put this terrible creation out of its misery?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian Energy Centre is reducing its operational budget by 90 per cent from \$30 million to \$2.84 million annualized over a 12-month period. We've reduced its budget to bare-bones operations during the COVID pandemic.

Mr. Sabir: Given that the government has failed to properly support all Albertans who are facing the fallout from this pandemic and given that many who have lost their jobs can't even access the emergency funding support they were promised but given that a failed UCP candidate remains in his post at the head of the bogus war room, can the Minister of Energy explain why the government is prioritizing a failed UCP candidate's vanity project over supporting struggling Albertans?

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, we have reduced the budget of the Canadian Energy Centre down to bare bones, to mere operational things, to pay for things like administration, office infrastructure, administrative support staff, and to fulfill a basic research function. During the pandemic we have reduced its budget significantly. We will resume its budget after we get through this because it maintains an important function in our energy literacy.

Mr. Sabir: That reduction is not enough. It needs to be reduced to zero.

Given that the war room isn't even producing content, from what I can tell, and given that there is so little transparency when it comes to the war room that people are left to wonder just what Tom Olsen and his crew do all day, to the minister: when regular proceedings in the House resume, will you commit to have Tom Olsen come before a legislative committee to explain just what he does all day? If not, what are you hiding?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the course of the COVID pandemic the Canadian Energy Centre is still focusing on some basic research functions. In fact, they just published a couple of very, very interesting pieces that will help us as we come out of this crisis, this financial crisis into recovery, things talking about the importance of the Canadian energy industry to our economy and the importance of it to a North American-wide economy. These functions are needed, and they need to be fulfilled somewhere. We will continue and look forward to the Energy Centre resuming.

Highway Maintenance

Member Loyola: Mr. Speaker, we've heard in our technical briefings that the 25 largest government infrastructure projects have been impacted by COVID-19. In particular there have been workforce issues with Albertans needing to self-isolate and practise social distancing. The government currently contracts with the private sector to clear our highways of snow. To the Minister of Transportation: can you assure the House that you have enough people power to 100 per cent clear the highways if we get a major snowstorm in the coming days or weeks? Is the full workforce in place, or are you expecting any challenges?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can report to the House that we experience challenges at the very best of times because Alberta has a winter climate, and when it snows, that's part of the reason why we set priorities where the busiest routes get cleaned first, and the second-busiest, and from there until they all get done. That hasn't changed. Our contractors are still expected to be staffed up, have equipment ready, and do the full job every single time. I've gotten no indication thus far that anything other than that will occur.

Member Loyola: Given that we have also heard that virtually all of the major government construction projects are plagued with problems and delays because of the supply chain issues and given that the projects are suffering because businesses can't get the necessary inputs when they need them and given that we need a consistent supply chain to maintain our highways and make sure that these critical corridors stay open and safe, can the Minister of Transportation ensure the House that in every corner of our province our highway maintenance contractors have sufficient supplies to get through to the end of the winter season and keep our highways fully open? Lives might well depend on it.

Mr. McIver: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I would say to the hon. member that on supplies like, for example, what I think he might be referring to, things like salt and sand and other things that go on the roads, our contractors, generally speaking, put them up before winter starts and have them in storage, so I expect that would have been what happened. I have heard no indication that we won't have enough supplies. Our contractors, under contract, are expected every single time to perform according to that contract, and the contracts actually include penalties when they don't.

Member Loyola: Given that we know the government and industry are facing workforce and supply chain issues because of COVID-19 and given the stated need for this government to focus on the future, to the Minister of Transportation: with all the workforce and supply chain issues that come with COVID-19, can you share with the House all the steps that you've taken to be ready for flood season and keep our highways open? What measures and what stockpiling have you undertaken to be ready for the spring thaw? Simply put: are we ready for flood season?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would say to the hon. member that no one is ever ready for a serious flood season, but we're as ready as we ever have been. Since the 2013 floods we have done some flood preparation work at berms and one thing and another. The hon. member is probably aware of the SR 1 dam, which we're trying to get approval for. The previous government wasn't able to get it approved completely. I don't blame them for that; it just takes a certain amount of time. We are continuing along with that, and I think we're as ready as the government has ever been for a flood season.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East has a question.

COVID-19 and Indigenous Communities

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. COVID-19 affects all of us. Every community is preparing for the arrival of this devastating illness. COVID-19 response is equally at the front of mind throughout indigenous communities. In these small and often isolated communities facing the threat of a deadly pandemic brings its own challenges. To the Minister of Indigenous Relations: what preparations are being made in First Nations and Métis communities to protect them from COVID-19?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Wilson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Our government has been in constant communication with indigenous communities across the province, and we continue to develop pandemic response plans and necessary actions to respond to the COVID-19 health crisis in collaboration with indigenous leaders, the Ministry of Health, Alberta Health Services, Indigenous Services Canada, the First Nations and Inuit health branch, and the Provincial Operations Centre to develop an appropriate response as the crisis continues to develop. Indigenous leaders have expressed many concerns such as access to protective equipment, medical supplies, food security, challenges in spacing in regard to self-isolation, just to name a few.

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

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that indigenous communities want to support vulnerable members throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and given that our government recognizes the critical role of civil societies in supporting vulnerable communities in the front-line COVID-19 response and given that there are many organizations with a mandate to support vulnerable indigenous Albertans, to the same minister: will indigenous communities and organizations have equal eligibility for emergency social services funding?

Mr. Wilson: Thank you again for the question. Indigenous peoples are eligible to benefit from the over \$7.7 billion that we've announced to date, including emergency isolation support and

support for businesses through various tax deferrals and loan relief programs. The province through our community services and social services announced \$30 million in funding for homeless shelters and women's emergency shelters. As indigenous people are overrepresented in the homeless population, this funding will help to address the concerns around health and safety of indigenous people.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you again to the minister for his answer. Given that the threat of COVID-19 has spurred innovation in communities province-wide and given that each community is working hard to find unique ways to appropriately respond to COVID-19, can the Minister of Indigenous Relations please share with this House examples of the steps that indigenous communities are taking to respond to this public health crisis?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you again. Indigenous communities are taking great steps in protecting their communities and being proactive in responding to this health crisis. The Stoney Tribal Administration, for example, has set up an on-site command control system to manage emergency incidents, and their main focus is to get accurate information out to their members. I'm encouraged by the strong and level-headed indigenous leadership in Alberta and committed to working together to protect the health of Albertans.

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

2:40 COVID-19 and Services for Vulnerable Albertans

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so thankful for the heroes in the charitable sector, including staff and volunteers who are working on the front lines of this fight. Every aspect of society has been affected by this pandemic, and organizations that provide shelter, supplies, and guidance for the most vulnerable are seeing increased demand. This is placing additional pressures on organizations that must adhere to strict public health regulations in order to protect the safety of those they serve. There was \$60 million announced to support this response. I'm wondering if the Minister of Community and Social Services can share when organizations can expect to receive this emergency funding.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mrs. Sawhney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. Civil society organizations are in direct contact with their communities. They know their needs and often are in the best position to respond, and we have seen that in real time with the way homeless shelters and surveying agencies have responded. This pandemic is the greatest challenge that we have seen in generations. Many Albertans are struggling, and their needs are greater than ever. That is why we moved quickly to put \$60 million in social services funding in place, including \$30 million for community-based organizations providing direct support to Albertans.

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

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for her efforts. Given that housing the homeless in our province has been a priority that needs to continue to be a priority throughout this pandemic and given that many people experiencing homelessness can be particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 due to underlying conditions and close proximity to others and given that

typical shelter conditions do not maintain the same physical distancing protocols that are necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19, to the same minister: what is our government doing to help community organizations that provide shelter and housing for the homeless to maintain compliance with public health recommendations?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, we know that people are struggling with homelessness and that they're particularly at risk due to this pandemic, and we need to be doing everything we can to ensure their immediate safety. From the beginning of this public health emergency our government has acted aggressively, providing \$25 million to homeless shelters. Organizations are using these emergency dollars to increase shelter capacity, meet physical distancing guidelines, support rapid rehousing, and address additional needs as they emerge. We're working with the chief medical officer of health and her team, and I can confirm that all shelters are in compliance with public health guidelines.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the minister for her compassion for vulnerable people in our community. Given that some Albertans do not have a healthy home environment in which they can safely self-isolate and given that experts have recognized that domestic violence will likely increase significantly during this time of crisis and the period of staying at home and practising social distancing and given that Albertans experiencing violence need somewhere to turn to in a very difficult time, again to the minister of social services: what resources are available for Albertans who are experiencing family violence during this difficult time?

Mrs. Sawhney: Thank you very much for asking that question. It's a very important question. I am deeply concerned about the well-being of families facing domestic violence, and we are taking steps to ensure their health and safety. As Albertans endure extreme financial and emotional distress with the rhythms of their lives being disrupted due to this pandemic, we know that these supports are more important now than ever. That's why we are providing women's emergency shelters \$5 million in emergency social services funding, and shelters will be able to hire temporary staff and address physical distancing.

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

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there any tablings today? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have with me the requisite number of copies of a news release that was issued from Red Deer public schools, where they talk about how distressed they were with the announcement made by the Minister of Education and their local MLA.

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 the hon. Mr. Wilson, Minister of Indigenous Relations, pursuant to the Metis Settlements Act the Metis Settlements Appeal Tribunal 2019 annual report.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Panda, Minister of Infrastructure, responses to questions raised by Ms Hoffman, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, on March 17, 2020, Ministry of Infrastructure 2020-21 main estimates debate.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Schweitzer, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, responses to questions raised by Ms Ganley, the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, on March 4, 2020, Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General 2020-21 main estimates debate.

The Speaker: Prior to proceeding to Orders of the Day, I would like to remind the Assembly that pursuant to the notice received by the Speaker on April 1, 2020, from the Government House Leader and pursuant to Government Motion 10, the Assembly may sit beyond 4:30 p.m. today.

We are at Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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

Bill 10 Public Health (Emergency Powers) Amendment Act, 2020

The Chair: We are on amendment A1. I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre rising.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise again and speak to what I think is a very important amendment – well, three amendments within one – that we brought forward to Bill 10 as the Official Opposition now. I'm looking at my inbox from my constituency, and it's clear to me that this is a bill that is of interest to Albertans. I have received over 70 e-mails to my office concerning this bill in the last 24 hours. Indeed, I would say that this bill is perhaps the weightiest of those that we have come back, in these extraordinary circumstances, under exceptional orders, to consider.

I recognize that indeed we are operating in difficult times, so the business in this Assembly in this past week has been moving at lightning speed. Our caucus is acutely aware that the resources are stretched thin, that our traditional due diligence that we give to legislation at this time is simply not possible in the traditional fashion. Therefore, in some respects we're relying on the good faith of government to honestly and to the best of their ability provide the most accurate information possible to this Assembly about the legislation that we are considering here today. Information: it is essential that it must be absent of any kind of political spin. Simply put, there is no place at this time for the traditional give-and-take when it comes to debating legislation. If we are going to be effective on behalf of Albertans, we need to have fair dealing between both sides of this House. We must be, during this pandemic, honest with each other. Facts matter, and indeed legislation like this, Madam Chair, absolutely matters.

2:50

While the government is obviously working at lightning speed, so is our caucus. Legislative Counsel, the table officers, and indeed many Albertans, like the over 70 that e-mailed me, are pitching in to provide additional insight, advice, and analysis. Let me just take

a moment to thank all of those Albertans, many of whom are social distancing and working from home, who have been helping us as the Official Opposition to respond to this emergency legislation that's before the Assembly. With the support of many and with the particular aid of some of the finest legal minds in our province, we brought forward this amendment package to this legislation.

Let me just briefly recap in plain language what we're asking the government to consider: first, a sunset clause on all ministerial orders brought forward during this pandemic. If approved, these orders, which have sweeping force and effect, will be terminated on July 1, 2020. If, in the government's view, they need to keep those orders going, they can of course reconvene the House for an extension. We would be happy to meet them here to discuss that. In the view of the Official Opposition, in a democratic society we cannot simply allow those orders to be in force and effect at a time to be simply determined by the government.

Second, we're putting forward an amendment that compels the government to publish their ministerial orders on the COVID-19 website. With the sweeping powers that are given to government during a pandemic, I can't think of anything more important than compelling the government to actually publish all of those new laws and the rationale for them publicly.

Third, we're amending this bill to give the government sweeping powers, indeed, but reasonable powers to manage this pandemic. I hope it wasn't by design, but we've worked hard with Parliamentary Counsel and caucus and some of the finest legal minds in the province, who all believe that the powers as currently listed in this bill go way too far. Indeed, Madam Chair, that is the greatest fear in the e-mails that I am receiving from everyday Albertans, that government might go too far in appropriating power for itself.

Right now ministers already have the authority to suspend laws. They have the power to modify laws, and they can do this without the consent of the Legislature. These are the powers that currently exist in this legislation. The new power that the government is asking for is the ability to write entirely new laws and have them supersede other laws. Most importantly, the only standard here on whether the new law is appropriate is the exclusive judgment of the responsible minister. That individual, with the stroke of their own pen and without any consultation – to be clear, Madam Chair, without the consultation of the Legislature, their officials, their caucus, or any other experts, they have that power to write an entirely new law that could override every other law in the province of Alberta.

So we've brought forward these amendments. Yesterday the Deputy Government House Leader rose to respond to our amendment, and indeed he said a few things which, in the view of the Official Opposition and in consultation with Parliamentary Counsel and legal experts, do not reflect what this amendment actually does. Now, I want to be crystal clear. I do not believe and I would not suggest that the hon. deputy House leader was misleading the House. You know, I think we're all moving quickly, perhaps in some respects too quickly, and I don't want this Assembly to make a misinformed judgment based on any misunderstanding of what we are actually trying to do. During this pandemic and now more than ever we need to be crystal clear with ourselves and with the public on the legislation and the powers that we are granting to government, the exceptional powers being granted to government.

Let me respond to each of the claims that were made by the hon. deputy House leader. I'll paraphrase here, but his first argument basically had to do with disclosure. The deputy House leader basically noted that right now the government is already publishing orders on the government website. You know what? That is

absolutely true. Nobody disputes that. Nobody thinks otherwise. The issue is that the government is not compelled to do any disclosure. Certainly, I appreciate the voluntary decision of the government to post those, but given the extreme powers being given to government, we think that disclosure should be enshrined in law for this government and for any future government. I figure it would be an abrogation of this Legislature's responsibility not to compel this government or any future government to publicly disclose any changes to laws when it cannot do its own job to question and compel information from the minister.

The second claim by the Government House Leader was that the sunset clause is already in effect and therefore this amendment doesn't really do anything. Let me be clear. That could not be further from the legislative truth. Now, given the comments of the deputy House leader we can only infer that he was perhaps talking about the order which establishes the public health emergency – if that was the case, he was correct – the overarching order that establishes the public health emergency. But that's irrelevant to our amendment because our amendment is putting a sunset clause on all orders issued under the broader public health emergency order to ensure that they are also time limited. To be clear, there is currently a sunset clause for the larger order. We are simply proposing that there also be a sunset clause, then, for all of the other orders which government may put in place underneath it.

Now, that is not a distinction without a difference. This is fundamental to our democracy. This amendment ensures that the Legislature and not the government ultimately has authority over the laws that govern the people of Alberta and our society. That's fundamentally important because of this last point: finally, the deputy House leader repeated that the legislation simply gives powers to the minister that would allow them to modify or suspend laws. To be clear, ministers already have that power under the current legislation. If that was all that wished to be accomplished, then nothing would need to be changed, and we would not be debating that change here in the Legislature now.

What this proposal by the government does: their amendment act adds another and, I should point out, universal power to ministers, to any minister within the government, the ability to write their own new laws and have those laws supersede other laws. In the view of experts – again, Parliamentary Counsel, whom we depend on for the functioning of this Legislature and the protection of our democracy here in the province of Alberta, and some of the finest legal minds in Alberta – these are draconian powers that are entirely not justifiable under any circumstances and precisely the kinds of powers that these over 70 Albertans in the last 24 hours have written to me and asked me and my colleagues to ensure that government is not trying to take for itself.

I can also offer to this House that in our technical briefing on Bill 10 we asked officials whether this new legislation was Charter proof. We asked whether this legislation followed the best advice of officials. While the officials we spoke with could not and would not answer the question based on solicitor-client privilege, we were able to ask the client, that being the minister's office, who was the client who solicited that legal advice, whether, in their view, this legislation was Charter proof, whether it complies with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms of Canada, and whether this legislation follows the best advice of officials. Now, when we asked that question on the phone call, at first they refused to answer.

Now, let me say that that is exceedingly rare. Speaking with staff that we work with, who have been part of many, many briefings, that was the first time they had ever experienced a representative refusing to answer during a technical briefing. Now, in fairness, the minister's office did offer to follow up in writing and provide us a response, and we did receive that response, the Official Opposition,

about four hours later. But, to be clear, what we received was a response and not an answer. On behalf of the minister all that they would tell us was that the minister had received legal advice.

So the minister's direct political representatives would not say whether they followed that advice, and they refused to answer whether they even believed that this legislation, their legislation, which they are asking us to pass in this Legislature, is actually in line, in compliance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is beyond disconcerting to me and all of my colleagues when the minister's office won't tell the Official Opposition that they have faith, that they believe they are bringing forward a law that is in line with the Charter. It is troubling when they will not give that guarantee.

3:00

So here we are today. All we have to rely on in this extraordinary session of the Legislature, these rushed circumstances, which we as the Official Opposition have been co-operative and collaborative in allowing, is the knowledge retained in our caucus, the superb advice of Parliamentary Counsel, and the honest and best faith efforts of some of the finest legal minds in the province, who took time out of their schedules on short notice to offer to pitch in. Now, in no uncertain terms – let's be clear – they all unanimously agreed that this legislation goes too far, whether that's by design or simply because maybe everyone is just stretched thin and moving a little too quickly.

We as the Official Opposition are doing our best to protect our traditions, to protect our democracy, to ensure that the government has sufficient authority to protect Albertans, from a health perspective, during this pandemic. So my simple ask of the government side is this: carefully read our amendment. Please, carefully consider our amendment. Go back to your senior Justice officials. Go back and talk to senior law partners and our most esteemed professors and ask them – ask them – if the amendments offered by the Official Opposition are both reasonable and in the public interest. The minister would not give certainty that his law complies with the Charter, but I will tell you this. If you go and talk to those experts and ask them if our amendment is reasonable and in the best interests of the province of Alberta, I can tell you with certainty that they will say yes.

Let me also ask that the government members give us the benefit of the doubt that we are indeed here in good faith and that we are bringing forward an honest amendment with integrity to protect our democratic institutions and the underlying principles that define our society, because we need to work together. Indeed, if there is any reason that government feels it needs to afford itself such extraordinary powers, that Parliamentary Counsel and the finest legal minds in the province all agree are an extraordinary and, indeed, potential overreach, then please tell us what it is you need to do, because, frankly, we are here to work together, and we need to work together. We are asking this on behalf of the people of Alberta, fundamental democratic principles that we all stand by. Recognizing the integrity and responsibility we owe to every Albertan we represent, we in the most honest and most sincere terms ask for you to support this amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

Seeing none, I shall call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:04 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

For the motion:

Ceci	Gray	Shepherd
Eggen	Schmidt	Sigurdson, L.
Feehan		

3:20

Against the motion:

Allard	Nally	Toor
Copping	Nicolaides	Turton
Goodridge	Pon	van Dijken
Guthrie	Reid	Williams
Issik	Rosin	Yao
LaGrange	Savage	Yaseen
Lovely	Schow	

Totals:	For – 7	Against – 20
---------	---------	--------------

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Chair: We are now back on the main bill, Bill 10. I'm wondering if there are any members wishing to speak.

Are you ready for the question?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 10 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: I would request to rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. van Dijken: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 10. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. Carried.

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 10 Public Health (Emergency Powers) Amendment Act, 2020

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Yes. I would seek unanimous consent from the House to move to one-minute bells for the remainder of the day.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: I would rise to move that the bill be read for third reading, to move third reading.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. That'll work.

Are there any speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak in the final phase of the debate on Bill 10. I want to start by just clarifying one point from my comments on the amendment. In speaking and referring to the counsel that we received from various sources on the particular clause in the bill affording new and extraordinary powers to the government, to be clear, we heard from all sources that we consulted with – the outside legal experts, Parliamentary Counsel, and all – that indeed this was an extraordinary step and confers extraordinary new powers on the government. All experts were united in referring to that.

However, when I referred to experts that said that those powers were draconian, I should be clear that that would not include Parliamentary Counsel because, of course, while they give their expert advice on the ultimate impact and what a bill precisely does, of course, as an impartial body they would not render a value judgment to that effect. So, to be clear, it is not the view of Parliamentary Counsel that this bill in that provision is draconian, but they were clear on what the effect of this is in that it does indeed confer brand new, sweeping, and extraordinary powers on the government.

With that, speaking again more generally to the bill, I think we've been clear, Madam Speaker, that we are not here as the Official Opposition to be obstructionist. We are here to participate in the debate on what this government has told us are significant pieces of legislation, significant enough that we would overlook and set aside the protocols and indeed use extraordinary powers to go against the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health in being here in this Assembly and transporting ourselves across the province during a time when we are asking people to remain in their homes and not to travel. We acceded to this debate and to that choice because we want to do our due diligence on the part of democracy, on the part of Alberta, and because the government assured us that the legislation we would be debating is essential to their response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

On this bill, as I referred to earlier, we have no disagreement with the majority of what this bill does. Indeed, it's putting forward the fines that we've spoken of. To be clear, again, those fines are already in place by ministerial order. This legislation is not required for those fines to exist, and neither do we dispute their existence. We support those fines. Those are appropriate. Those are an appropriate response to individuals that knowingly and intentionally choose to breach the recommendations of the chief medical officer of health during a global pandemic and, indeed, endanger the lives of other Albertans. We support that.

Now, there is the section about police officers being able to accompany inspectors. Okay. I believe that is a novel addition in the legislation, and we certainly do not object to that. We think that is fair and reasonable. We have had some discussion around the element of the government being able to take the ability to directly direct peace officers rather than having to go to the employer of those officers to ask permission. We've had some varied discussion on that, but in general we're not in opposition to the government, again, in a state of public emergency, during a global pandemic, having the ability to take some exceptional steps to ensure that we're keeping the peace and protecting the Alberta public. That's

reasonable. We may have some difference of opinion on exactly sort of where to place that line there, but in general that's not an item of serious concern to us, and indeed as the Official Opposition we feel the government generally had that power already.

But, as I noted during our amendment, there are three things which we felt would have improved this bill. Well, let's put it this way. There are two things that would have improved this bill, and there is one thing that simply leaves this bill as something that we are unable to support. To be clear, we believe that there should be a sunset clause on all of the ministerial orders, not just on the larger, overarching order for a public emergency, that for any of the steps that a minister takes, the extraordinary power which they choose to exercise which is done in the interest of Albertans during a public emergency, every one of those ministerial orders have a clear end date, that Albertans have that reassurance. Then government has the opportunity, if any of those ministerial orders need to extend past that, to come back to this Legislature, just as we as the Official Opposition have been happy to do this week, and provide that justification. Indeed, if it is in the best interest of Albertans, we would be happy to support that. That's all we're asking there.

Secondly, the government has said that it already voluntarily is publishing all ministerial orders. There is nothing in the law which compels a government to do so, and let us be clear, Madam Speaker. We are not just talking about this particular government. They are empowering all future governments through this legislation. So if a future government lacks the integrity that I'm sure all members of this government feel that they themselves hold, they may choose not to voluntarily publish all of those ministerial orders. I'm sure that that is not the intent of this government. I'm sure they have every intent of continuing to voluntarily comply with publishing those ministerial orders, but I think it is in the interest of Albertans to have the assurance that every government will be required to meet that same reasonable standard. I find it unfortunate that the government doesn't want to choose to make those two simple changes, but in essence I'd say that those two are forgivable. I could probably overlook those two.

3:30

However, the third and the final, which I have spoken on and I've been clear about, so I won't go on at great length – but I will be clear. This bill, if passed, gives the government of Alberta, gives each and every minister the opportunity not only to modify or adjust an existing law but to create entirely new laws, laws which do not currently exist in the province of Alberta and which could supersede laws that went through this Legislature, that were debated in the full view of Albertans, held to the highest of account, voted on by this Assembly, and put in place by the will of this Assembly on behalf of the people of Alberta. That can be undone based on the subjective judgment of any minister in any government with the stroke of a pen. That is far and beyond what currently exists in the legislation, and to be clear, Madam Speaker, not one member of this government has provided any clear or coherent reason why they need to grant themselves or any future government that power.

That is something which concerns me. That is something I think which concerns a great number of Albertans, who've already begun

to reach out to me, and I think many more will once this bill has passed. I'm sure I will not be the only member that will hear about this.

It is a choice of each member of this House. For government members, it's your choice if you have this much faith in each of your ministers that you feel they should be afforded that extraordinary power. Frankly – I'll be honest – I do not. And that's not simply because we are on opposite sides of the aisle and because we do not agree on all issues and values. I don't believe any government and any minister, including, should we ever have the honour of serving as government again, ourselves should hold that much power. The choice to take that much power for oneself in the midst of a pandemic, in the midst of a public emergency, at a time when we are working on, frankly, reduced representation and extraordinary measures within the Legislature – I would like to believe, Madam Speaker, that if that is the choice of this government, I certainly hope it is due to a lack of understanding and not of intention. We owe far better to ourselves, to the integrity of the honour of the positions we hold, and indeed to the people of Alberta.

I and my colleagues in the Official Opposition will not be voting in favour of Bill 10. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other speakers to the bill?

Seeing none, shall I call the question?

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:34 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Copping	Nicolaides	Turton
Goodridge	Reid	van Dijken
Issik	Savage	Yao
LaGrange	Schow	Yaseen
Nally	Toor	

Against the motion:

Ceci	Gray	Shepherd
Eggen	Schmidt	Sigurdson, L.
Feehan		

Totals:	For – 14	Against – 7
---------	----------	-------------

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a third time]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Pursuant to Government Motion 10.A.(a)(i) I move that the Assembly now stand adjourned.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:38 p.m. pursuant to Government Motion 10.A.(a)(i)]

Bill Status Report for the 30th Legislature - 2nd Session (2020)

Activity to Thursday, April 2, 2020

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

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

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

Bill 1 — Critical Infrastructure Defence Act (Kenney)

First Reading — 4 (*Feb. 25, 2020 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 12-18 (*Feb. 26, 2020 morn.*), 96-98 (*Mar. 2, 2020 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 2 — Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Amendment Act, 2020 (Hunter)

First Reading — 30 (*Feb. 26, 2020 aft., passed*)

Bill 3 — Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Amendment Act, 2020 (Glubish)

First Reading — 30 (*Feb. 26, 2020 aft., passed*)

Bill 4 — Fiscal Planning and Transparency (Fixed Budget Period) Amendment Act, 2020 (Toews)

First Reading — 62 (*Feb. 27, 2020 aft., passed*)

Bill 5 — Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2020 (Toews)

First Reading — 110 (*Mar. 3, 2020 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 224-32 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft., passed on division*), 222-23 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft.*)

Committee of the Whole — 232-33 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft.*), 234-41 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 241 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft.*), 242-48 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 20, 2020 Outside of House Sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2020 c3]

Bill 6 — Appropriation Act, 2020 (\$) (Toews)

First Reading — 215 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft., passed*), (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft.*)

Second Reading — 216-22 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 222 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft., deemed passed on division*)

Third Reading — 222 (*Mar. 17, 2020 aft., deemed passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 20, 2020 Outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force March 20, 2020; SA 2020 c1]

Bill 9 — Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2020 (Madu)

First Reading — 276 (*Mar. 20, 2020 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 277-80 (*Mar. 20, 2020 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 280-82 (*Mar. 20, 2020 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 282-83 (*Mar. 20, 2020 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 20, 2020 Outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force March 20, 2020; SA 2020 c2]

Bill 10 — Public Health (Emergency Powers) Amendment Act, 2020 (Shandro)

First Reading — 296-97 (*Mar. 31, 2020 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 307-20 (*Apr. 1, 2020 morn.*), 337-44 (*Apr. 1, 2020 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 354-57 (*Apr. 1, 2020 aft.*), 407-09 (*Apr. 2, 2020 morn.*), 426-28 (*Apr. 2, 2020 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 428-29 (*Apr. 2, 2020 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Apr. 2, 2020 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force April 2, 2020; SA 2020 c5]

Bill 11 — Tenancies Statutes (Emergency Provisions) Amendment Act, 2020 (Glubish)

First Reading — 297 (*Mar. 31, 2020 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 298-301 (*Mar. 31, 2020 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 301-03 (*Mar. 31, 2020 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 303-05 (*Mar. 31, 2020 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Apr. 2, 2020 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2020 c6]

Bill 12 — Liabilities Management Statutes Amendment Act, 2020 (Savage)

First Reading — 297 (*Mar. 31, 2020 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 320-25 (*Apr. 1, 2020 morn.*), 344-49 (*Apr. 1, 2020 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 350-54 (*Apr. 1, 2020 aft.*), 401-05 (*Apr. 2, 2020 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 406 (*Apr. 2, 2020 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Apr. 2, 2020 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2020 c4]

Bill 201 — Strategic Aviation Advisory Council Act (Gottfried)

First Reading — 62 (*Feb. 27, 2020 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*), 136 (*Mar. 5, 2020 aft., reported to Assembly*)

Bill 202 — Conflicts of Interest (Protecting the Rule of Law) Amendment Act, 2020 (Ganley)

First Reading — 136 (*Mar. 5, 2020 aft., passed; referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills*)

Table of Contents

Members' Statements	
COVID-19 Related Business Adaptation	415
Hardisty.....	415
COVID-19 Information and Community Response	415
Emergency Isolation Support Program.....	416
COVID-19 Protective Measures.....	416
COVID-19 Response.....	416
COVID-19 Community Response.....	416
Keystone XL Pipeline Project	417
Trucking Industry	417
Oral Question Period	
Keystone XL Pipeline Provincial Equity.....	417
COVID-19 Related Care Facility Safety Protocols	418
COVID-19 and Seniors' Housing.....	418
Calgary's and Edmonton's Homeless Persons' Housing.....	419
COVID-19 and Seniors	419
Environmental Monitoring	420
Education Funding.....	421
COVID-19 Testing and Protective Measures	421
Acute-care Beds for Patients with COVID-19.....	422
COVID-19 Supports and Red Tape Reduction.....	422
Orphan Well Decommissioning	423
Canadian Energy Centre Funding.....	423
Highway Maintenance	424
COVID-19 and Indigenous Communities	424
COVID-19 and Services for Vulnerable Albertans	425
Tabling Returns and Reports	425
Tablings to the Clerk	425
Orders of the Day	426
Government Bills and Orders	
Committee of the Whole.....	426
Bill 10 Public Health (Emergency Powers) Amendment Act, 2020.....	426
Division	427
Third Reading.....	428
Bill 10 Public Health (Emergency Powers) Amendment Act, 2020.....	428
Division	429

Alberta Hansard is available online at www.assembly.ab.ca

For inquiries contact:

Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875

E-mail: AlbertaHansard@assembly.ab.ca