

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, November 15, 2005** **1:30 p.m.**
 Date: 05/11/15
 [The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon. I'd ask the members to remain standing after prayers so that we may pay tribute to our former colleagues who have passed away since we were last in the House.

As we commence proceedings today in this Assembly, we ask for divine guidance so that our words and deeds may bring to all people of this great province hope, prosperity, and a vision for the future. Amen.

With our admiration and respect there is gratitude to members of their families who shared the burdens of public office. Members of John Batiuk's and Sheila Embury's family are with us today in the Speaker's gallery.

Mr. George Ho Lem
June 15, 1918, to July 9, 2005

The Speaker: Mr. George Ho Lem passed away on July 9, 2005. Mr. Ho Lem was first elected in the election held August 30, 1971, and served until March 26, 1975. During his years of service he represented the constituency of Calgary-McCall for the Social Credit Party. During his term of office Mr. Ho Lem served on the select standing committees on Law and Regulations; Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing; and Public Affairs. He also served on the Select Special Committee on Foreign Investment.

Mr. John Batiuk
March 20, 1923, to August 1, 2005

The Speaker: Mr. John S. Batiuk passed away on August 1, 2005. Mr. Batiuk was first elected in the election held August 30, 1971, and served until May 8, 1986. During his years of service he represented the constituency of Vegreville for the Progressive Conservative Party. During his term of office Mr. Batiuk served on the select standing committees on Law and Regulations; Private Bills; Public Accounts; Public Affairs; and the Select Special Committee on Chief Electoral Officer Appointment or Search.

Mrs. Sheila Embury
June 6, 1931, to August 1, 2005

The Speaker: Mrs. Sheila Embury passed away on August 1, 2005, at the age of 74 years. Mrs. Embury was first elected in the election held March 14, 1979, and served until May 8, 1986. During her years of service she represented the constituency of Calgary-North West for the Progressive Conservative Party. During her term of office Mrs. Embury served on the select standing committees on Members' Services; Private Bills; Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing; Public Accounts; and Public Affairs. She also served on the Select Special Committee to Examine the Role of Upper House in Canadian Federal System.

Our prayers are with them.

In a moment of silent prayer I ask you to remember hon. members George Ho Lem, John Batiuk, and Sheila Embury as you have known them. Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them. Amen.

Hon. members I would now invite Mr. Lorieau to lead us in the singing of our national anthem. Please participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Please be seated.

head: **Statement by the Speaker**
Sound System Renovations

The Speaker: Hon. members, many of you will have already noted that your desk console is different from when we last sat in the Chamber in the spring. Upgrading of the Chamber sound system has resulted in changes to the console which will facilitate both better sound production in the Chamber and the use of member laptops. You will find on your desks a brief description for the purpose of the varied aspects of the new console.

Experience tells me that during the first week when a new sound system comes into play, minor adjustments may be necessitated or required concerning the operation of the system at its optimum level, so if there are momentary lapses in the next number of days, please bear with us as we work out the bugs. If you have any concerns at all with respect to the system, please advise the Sergeant-at-Arms as we proceed during the Routine.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's an honour for me to rise today to introduce to you guests who are seated in the Speaker's gallery. These guests are family members of our former colleagues, and I would ask them to rise as I introduce them. The family of Mr. John Batiuk, former MLA for the constituency of Vegreville, is represented by John's widow, Mrs. Rose Batiuk, who is here with her daughters Mrs. Marlene Solowan and Mrs. Eleanor Cowan and Mrs. Sylvia Zacharkiw and son-in-law Mr. Harold Zacharkiw and John's brother Mr. Ed Batiuk.

Mr. David Embury, widower of Mrs. Sheila Embury, former MLA for the constituency of Calgary-North West, is here with family friend and former MLA the hon. Tom Chambers.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce two very active representatives of postsecondary students in our province. Ms Elaine Ho is the provincial director of the Alberta College and Technical Institute Students' Executive Council, ACTISEC, and Mr. Duncan Wojtaszek is executive director of the Council of Alberta University Students, CAUS. Both of these individuals have played an integral role in the recent review of our province's advanced learning system. They represented their associations at regional meetings and at the A Learning Alberta minister's forum, which was held earlier this month. Their perspective and input has been invaluable as we develop a new vision and overarching policy framework for advancing learning in this province.

The government has always welcomed feedback from student groups and will continue to do so. I look forward to working with them in the near future so that we can create a system which is even more accessible, affordable, and high quality for Alberta learners in the 21st century. Mr. Speaker, I thank Duncan and Elaine for

joining us today, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my distinct pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two guests who are involved in programs dedicated to the prevention of family violence. My guests are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon, and it's my honour to introduce Sister Lucinda May Patterson, the executive director of Lurana Shelter, and Deb Thomlinson, provincial co-ordinator of the Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Centres. Both of these women work tirelessly to give victims of family violence the support and help they need at a difficult time. I would ask Sister Lucinda and Deb to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Government Services.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly some special visitors from Qingdao, a city in China. Qingdao is situated on the eastern coast of China about 600 kilometres south of Harbin, which of course many of us are familiar with. They're here to look at waste-water treatment, how to generate energy from that and also to produce clean water. I would ask them to rise as I introduce them: Zhong Wei, the director of the Qingdao municipal overseas investment bureau; Guobang Li, the general manager, Qingdao e-tech development zone; Hong Kun Chu, project manager, Qingdao municipal overseas investment bureau; their translator; and they're hosted by Ken Weenink and Brian Grossen. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional welcome.

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

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you a very special constituent of mine. He holds many titles, and he's been introduced here several times, but currently he is the mayor of Breton, the president of ASCHA, and the vice-president of AUMA. I'd ask that Darren Aldous would stand along with his daughters and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a couple of sets of introductions today. The first is to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Bill and Margaret Kurtze, who I believe are seated in the public gallery, and they've travelled from Calgary to be with us today. Bill was originally born and bred in Saskatchewan but moved to Calgary in 1970. It was there that he and his wife, Margaret, raised three daughters. Bill worked for most of his life in the petroleum industry, on the nonprofit and regulatory side, and through his work he took a particular interest in safety regulations for sour gas wells. Bill and Margaret, a retired school-teacher, are looking for a government that realizes the need for greater community development and support. Please join me in giving our guests the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

My other introductions, Mr. Speaker, are of new staff who have joined us since the last time this Assembly sat. I'd like to introduce to you our new chief of staff, Jacqueline Foord, who has a long career in executive administration in the nonprofit sector; Mr. Chris

McLeod, our director of communications, who's got many years of experience as a communications professional; and one of our new researchers, Paul Way. Would they please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly fabulous students from Lago Lindo school up in the north side. They are accompanied by teachers Mr. Peters, Miss Goodall, principal John Eshenko, and parent volunteers Mrs. Salha El Hakim, Ms Mullet, Mr. Lapierre, Mrs. Rodrigues, and Mrs. Bye. If they would please stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all hon. Members of this Legislative Assembly Mrs. Sandi James, a grade 6 teacher from one of Edmonton's finest public schools, Clara Tyner, located in the Edmonton-Gold Bar constituency. Mrs. James is accompanied by 26 of her grade 6 students not only today, but they're here in the Legislative Assembly for the entire week to participate in that very good program that the Speaker has developed over the years for public school students. Mrs. James is accompanied by Mrs. Carmen Koble, Mr. Robert Proudfoot, and Mrs. Damaris Crawford. They have taken time from their busy schedules to participate today with the students. It is interesting to note that yesterday, in order to recognize Alberta's centennial, the students and their teacher dressed up as students and teacher from 1905 in period costumes. They are in the members' gallery, and I would now ask them to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a honour to introduce to you and through you two individuals. The first is Stewart Mawdsley. Stewart is currently enrolled at the U of A, pursuing a degree in pharmacy. He is an academic all-Canadian, maintaining a 3.9 GPA as well as competing as a decathlete for the Alberta Golden Bears.

The second person, Mr. Speaker, is well known to all of us. His name is Kyle Franz. Kyle has recently returned to Alberta after graduating with first-class honours from Simon Fraser University to complete his graduate research in labour history at the University of Lethbridge. Some day Kyle is going to be known for his research work in the mining communities in the Crownsnest Pass, but to all of us he is known as a former president of the PC Youth.

I would ask both of them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Darlene Friesen. Darlene previously worked in the field of accounting but has since retired. She is advocating for a fair society where seniors receive the benefits and recognition for their worthy contributions. I'd ask that she rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I have a second introduction. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Bertha Nohr. Bertha is a long-time constituent of Glenora who is also part of the newly formed group called Election Oriented Seniors. Bertha has worked as a deputy returning officer in a number of federal, provincial, and municipal elections but has recently decided to retire from this work to allow the next generation the opportunity to be involved in our electoral system. I ask that she rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Mason: I'm pleased this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Mr. Albert Opstad. Albert has been a tireless advocate for seniors' equality for a number of years. His involvement includes being the first president of Seniors United Now, playing an active role with the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, and forming the group Election Oriented Seniors. This morning his group met with my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. I would ask that he now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Ms Diane Zinyk, who is seated in the public gallery. Diane has been a strong supporter of mine since I first ran in 1997. In the past Diane has worked for HRDC and then subsequently for Alberta Human Resources and Employment. Diane has also been very active with a number of community organizations, including Catholic Social Services, Strathcona Baptist Church, and many arts organizations across the city. I would now ask that Diane rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: 1:50 **Oral Question Period**

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Budget Surplus Expenditures

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta needs a government that makes a budget and sticks to it. If spending on a project is justified, it should be in the budget. To the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: can this minister tell us how far over budget his department is so far this year?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It certainly is an honour to take the first question. My department is absolutely right on budget. We have received another \$400 million since the budget was passed, and I want to guarantee that those dollars are being spent in the absolute best interests of Albertans for Albertans' future.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. Fiscal hawks turning into fiscal turkeys. My next question to the Minister of Advanced Education: can the minister tell us how much in unbudgeted spending his department has committed so far this year?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question really is not

one of how much in unbudgeted spending but how, because of the physical realities of the province and the good management in the province, we've been able to take additional revenues and apply them to the planned strategies and the planned projects that were already in place.

We've been able to announce projects across the province such as the water building at the University of Lethbridge, which is an integral piece of the water strategy for the province. We've been able to announce money for planning at SAIT so that we can renew the platform at SAIT to train and accredit workers in this province that are sorely needed to keep our economy alive. We've been able to announce money at the University of Alberta for the ambulatory learning centre. There have been a number of projects: at Red Deer for an expansion to their trade centre and at Lakeland College. These are all projects that have been in the strategic plan that each of these institutions has put forward in their 10-year plans, and because of the fiscal realities in the province we're able to allocate the resources to do it.

Dr. Taft: Well, Mr. Speaker, that minister doesn't have a clue either.

To the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations: can this minister tell the Assembly if his department is on target to finish the year on budget?

Mr. Stelmach: Yes, we are. We completed the opening of the Washington office. We're currently working feverishly with the federal government on a number of initiatives. One of them is the world trade talks, trying to build consensus across Canada. The second task is to find some common ground with respect to the softwood lumber dispute. That's just part and parcel of what we're doing on behalf of Albertans.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's be brutally honest. This government's budget is barely six months old and has already been blown to smithereens. The government seems to have abandoned all pretense of control of the public purse. It feels like there are more holes in the budget than in a mad cow's brain. To the Premier: does the Premier accept the principle that if an expenditure is well thought out and properly justified, it should be in the budget?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, I'm not a leadership candidate, but I'll be glad to answer the question. If the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition was listening during the budget speech, he would've heard these words delivered by our Provincial Treasurer.

It's the responsible course to take. And yes, it means there will be years when resource revenues are higher than expected. That is the nature of oil and gas revenue. When that happens, there are choices we can make about how surplus funds can be used, strategically and deliberately, to invest in Alberta's future.

Obviously, that member was not listening.

We could increase the Sustainability Fund, add to our current endowment funds, or increase funding for capital to meet emerging needs for infrastructure. All of these choices are possible because of our strong financial position. And they will be made throughout the year . . .

They will be made throughout the year.

. . . as our financial forecasts are updated.

Dr. Taft: To the Minister of Health and Wellness: can this minister tell us, say to the nearest million dollars, the total unbudgeted spending she has announced so far this fiscal year?

Ms Evans: Well, yes. Mr. Speaker, the first thing is that I'm not a leadership candidate, and I'll make that very clear.

I would identify that this government announced \$1.4 billion worth of health expenditures. For those expenditures that were identified last year in June and again in October, that would give, in fact, the city of Edmonton, the capital region, some \$647 million worth of needed bed reclamation on four sites and would also provide us with some support for Eastwood and Fort Saskatchewan and Strathcona county. So, in fact, we have followed through on commitments we made last year, planning that was done last year, and I think Albertans welcome that. Mr. Speaker, there would be none of my constituents in the entire capital region that would say that this is a bad idea.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. If they're such good ideas, why weren't they in the budget that was presented here a mere six months ago? Why is your budget process so full of holes?

Ms Evans: Was that for me?

Dr. Taft: Yes, to the same minister.

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, if we're going to talk about the budget process, maybe I should get into the discussion, and I won't make any comments on candidates or anything.

Clearly, this government laid out a budget in April, and what the hon. member has to try hard to understand is that there is a budget process and that we base our program spending on our best information from the best analysts in revenue of all types. It's incredibly important that that program spending is there and is sustainable. We recognized, as the Premier correctly read from our budget speech, which was presented in this House in April of this year, not that long ago – one could remember it – that there would be a very distinct possibility of in-year spending if there were unanticipated increased revenues in oil and gas. Now, Mr. Speaker, everyone is a good predictor of oil and gas revenues and prices after the fact. I didn't hear anyone saying that we would have \$60 or \$65 oil or \$12 or \$13 gas in April of this year.

So we base our budget on good information, good planning, and Albertans are very happy that we are able to follow through on commitments to capital and savings, and they consider it smart spending.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Private Health Services

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The health minister has repeatedly promised that this government will not violate federal health legislation, yet in documents obtained by the opposition, this government clearly plans on violating the Canada Health Act by allowing doctors to be paid from both the private and the public systems. My questions are to the Premier. Given that a violation of the Canada Health Act in 1996 caused the federal government to stop all health transfer payments to the province, will the minister explain why the government is pursuing privatization at any cost?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Klein: Oh. I'm sorry. I thought it was to the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, first of all, everything that was in the documents is on the website for Alberta Health. You can look at those documents and see exactly what's there.

What we have suggested as a discussion point, which has yet to be ratified, is whether or not doctors can opt in or opt out and work in the private system or, in fact, work in both systems. It is not a contravention of the Canada Health Act. It is, in fact, Mr. Speaker, something that several provinces currently have as an arrangement with their physicians. It's one of the things that we believe we should talk about in terms of how we commit ourselves to long-term sustainability in health.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the Premier: why is this government planning on introducing a policy that would encourage Albertans to buy private insurance for a wide range of medical services when they admit in their own documents that "Albertans may not qualify because of illness or predetermined condition"?

2:00

Mr. Klein: We haven't adopted anything, Mr. Speaker, other than the policy to pursue the investigation into making our system consistent with the Supreme Court of Canada ruling. Now, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in the case of a Quebec patient that that person was entitled to alleviate his pain and his suffering if he wanted to buy private insurance or pay for it out of his own pocket.

Mr. Mason: Because the province left him waiting for over a year.

Mr. Klein: That could have been the case, Mr. Speaker, that the province left him waiting for over a year. That could have been the case and legitimately so because his doctor probably said: we can treat you, but you're going to have to wait a year or two or three.

Mr. Speaker, unlike the NDs and the Liberals, this government is not ignoring the elephant in the room. We are dealing with it. The worst thing is to be afraid of change and to do nothing. That's exactly what the Liberals and the NDs want. They want us to do absolutely nothing other than to throw more money at the situation. I've said before that the health system is like a Pac-Man: it gobbles up the money. We don't see a healthier Liberal, we don't see a healthier ND, we don't see a healthier Conservative, and we don't see a healthier Albertan because of it.

The Speaker: I'll now call on the hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the Premier: why is this government ignoring evidence presented at their own Health Symposium last spring that indicated that privatization does not improve access to health care and has a negative impact on the public system?

Mr. Klein: Well, Mr. Speaker, that was an opinion. The word "privatization" is a forbidden word to the opposition. It's a forbidden word and not open for democratic discussion, not open for discussion in this Legislature. Well, for us, no option is forbidden for discussion.

Mr. Speaker, I would remind this hon. member that right now, as we speak, people in British Columbia, Quebec, and elsewhere – and the federal Liberals, their cousins, turn a blind eye to it – are in fact paying out of their pockets for some surgical services. Yet they get all flustered and beet red and stamp their feet when Alberta even talks about it. How hypocritical of them. In those provinces the health system has not collapsed.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party.

Premier's Travel

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Between the spring and fall sittings this Legislative Assembly will likely end up sitting for a total of only 50 days out of 365, yet the Premier has once again organized his schedule to avoid being in the Assembly to account for the government's policies and its spending. Billions of dollars are being spent without a financial plan, health care is being privatized, and the Premier is hiding from the elected representatives of the people. To the Premier: why is the Premier deliberately avoiding being accountable for his massive and unplanned spending spree?

Mr. Klein: Well, I don't think it's massive, and I don't think it's a spending spree. It's a tour that was planned some months ago, I think about last May, to be exact. It hasn't exactly been a secret that I would be away next week, touring the rest of Canada, explaining, really, that this is a caring and a sharing province. It is our centennial year, and there will be some interesting announcements along the way. As a matter of fact, we'll be visiting their Liberal cousins in Ontario and some Liberals in Quebec and some Conservatives in Atlantic Canada, so they shouldn't be all that mad about it.

Relative to the question, there are 23 ministers, and in this very, very short time they've proven themselves very capable of answering any question that you may have.

Mr. Mason: So the Premier is superfluous, then, I suppose, Mr. Speaker.

Why is the Premier deliberately avoiding being accountable for the government's policies of pushing more costs for health care onto individuals through the privatization of Alberta's health care system?

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, the fundamental question is: what do we do as a Legislature to make our legislation consistent with the Supreme Court of Canada ruling? I can understand the individual in Quebec, the patient who is suffering extreme pain but is told by his doctor that he might have to wait a year or two years or whatever it is – the opposition NDs say that it's a year – that he has to wait a year, and he says: "I don't want to wait. I am suffering pain. I am hurting, and although it's a nonemergency procedure, I want to have it done. I'm hurting." The Supreme Court has ruled that he's entitled to get that service to alleviate the pain. The NDs would rather have him exist in pain and suffering. That's what they're all about.

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the Premier was around here a little more, he'd know that that's not true.

Why does this Premier, alone among all the first ministers in Canada, feel that he has the right to govern without being accountable to the Legislature for his actions?

Mr. Klein: I really don't understand that statement, Mr. Speaker, because we are accountable to the Legislature. Indeed, all of the information relative to health care, for instance, will be coming back to the Legislature in the spring. There will be ample time for debate, ample time for the NDs to make their point and the Liberals to make their point and the Conservatives to make their point. There will be an SPC process. There will be a caucus, cabinet process.

An Hon. Member: SPC: what's that?

Mr. Klein: A standing policy committee of government. SPC, standing policy committee; OG, of government.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Continuing Care Review

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you are aware, this past summer myself along with the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka and the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East were members of an MLA Task Force on Continuing Care Health Service and Accommodation Standards. Our mandate was to hold consultation meetings with a variety of continuing care stakeholders, to hold public forums, to tour many long-term care facilities, and to ask many questions in order to gain insight into the quality of continuing care services being offered here in Alberta. A final report was developed and submitted to the government, indicating what we heard during our consultations, and 45 recommendations were suggested in order to improve the quality of services for Albertans and their families who require continuing care services. My question is to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness. Now that the report is in your hands, when will your ministry implement the immediate actions recommended in order to ensure that residents receive quality health and personal care services?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, along with members of this Assembly I think that we should thank every member of that task force for the incredible work that they did throughout the summer.

Mr. Speaker, continuing care is a very difficult and emotional issue. We have received the report. I'm very pleased to work with my colleague the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports to examine what we can do immediately and in the upcoming years to answer the recommendations and to have a thorough discussion of the report and to make sure that we follow through on the recommendations.

2:10

Mr. Webber: Again to the Minister of Health and Wellness. During the consultation period the task force heard day in, day out how there is a shortage of health care professionals. What new strategy does the minister plan to develop regarding the recruitment and retention of these health care professionals?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, we will come out with more information on that in a very short period of time, but may I say that after the Auditor General's report we immediately increased the staffing level requirement in all regional health authorities from 3.1 to 3.4. In concert with the regional health authorities we're examining the training component that's recommended in the report, the workforce requirements, the workforce needs, the predominant recommendations about medications. I know that the minister of seniors is also looking at the accommodation needs and may wish to address that as well.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Webber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. Given that the needs of seniors living in our lodges have grown more complex in recent

years, can the minister advise how she is working to ensure that lodge operators can provide appropriate services to our seniors?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, we have 144 lodges in Alberta, and those lodges, as the hon. member indicated, are providing care for seniors that are more frail. It is one of the first points of entry in the continuum of care that was addressed in the report for our seniors, and being more frail, they have higher needs, especially related to mobility and personal care needs. We do provide a per diem to lodge operators through our lodge assistance program.

I can tell you, hon. member, that based on this excellent report from your committee, I will ensure that lodge operators have the resources that are needed to ensure that their clients have high-quality services, but more importantly I also will ensure that it not affect the lower income and moderate-income seniors.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Postsecondary Education Review

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Advanced Education committed months ago to doing a tuition and affordability review of postsecondary education, but after watching it morph into a huge exercise in blue skying a policy framework for A Learning Alberta, students still don't know how much it's going to cost them to go to college or university next fall. They've heard the minister warn them to prepare for a tuition increase and the Premier say that he's fundamentally opposed to raising fees. To the minister: will students have to pay higher tuition fees in September 2006 or not?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, it would appear perfectly clear that they will not.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister has said that he sees equal merit, on one extreme, in two years of free tuition and, on the other, in letting institutions charge students as much as the market will bear, will he advise us as to which way the wind is blowing on this issue today?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I'd like to thank the hon. member for being a participant in the forum, in which we talked about the vision for advancing education in Alberta and about a policy framework for ensuring that that can happen. We will from that forum be developing game plans relative to access, affordability, and quality in the postsecondary institutions and also foundational learning and literacy issues in our communities and ensuring that aboriginal people in this province have access to and participate in advanced learning in this province. So it was a very important forum. I thank the hon. member and all members of the public who participated because it was a very, very useful exercise in helping us get further down the road.

In the context of that exercise, I was asked what sort of ideas were coming forward, so I put two ideas that basically bookended the tuition question that was on the table. One was that if education is a public good and if you need more than a postsecondary education, then perhaps we should be paying as a public for K to 14 instead of K to 12. That comes with benefits for students, and it also comes with problems. The other end of the extreme was that perhaps you shouldn't regulate tuition at all, but then you have to make sure that

there's affordability in place, student finance in place so that everybody can afford to go. Those were two extremes of the discussion.

As the Premier said earlier, we're a party and we're a government that believes that all ideas should be allowed to be on the table and be aired. When we come through the process, we will have in place next spring a tuition policy and an affordability policy for students in this province.

Mr. Taylor: Well, Mr. Speaker, while the government decides which way it's leaning on that tuition issue, will the minister commit now to freezing tuition at public institutions until the new tuition policy is ready, however long it takes?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, that's what I indicated our policy was, that the tuition will stay the same for students in Alberta through the next year, and we will put in place in the next year the tuition and affordability policy so that students will know what to expect for the fall of 2007.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Agricultural Assistance

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The grain producers in my riding are in dire straits. The crops started out well, but Mother Nature and other forces united against the agriculture sector. Many crops are only feed grain quality, and the prices of good-quality wheat are poor. The cost of fertilizer and fuel is taking a huge bite out of the producers' margins. My questions are to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Your department addressed the challenges of the beef industry when it was in a crisis. What are your plans to help the grain sector, which is in the same desperate situation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and a very, very good question because our producers in the cereals sector are hurting right now. This spring we did do some support levels on the spring price endorsement. We had hoped that the CAIS program and some of the changes that we might be able to put forward in the summertime with our federal and provincial counterparts would also take it up.

We heard over and over again, Mr. Speaker, that the reference margin on the CAIS program was not working, that the CAIS program was difficult to administer for the producers, so we have taken steps to make the difficulty level a lot less. We have also initiated a pilot project which will recalculate those reference margins from 2003-2004 and, when 2005 is done, recalculate them as well retroactively. This will put this fall close to a quarter billion dollars into producers' hands in Alberta. We're taking the lead to try to fix the problem.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the same minister. Many of the producers don't believe that CAIS is working for them. How will these changes make CAIS work better?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, what we heard during our round-tables, during our discussions with producer groups across the province was that the Olympic averaging method of calculating a reference margin, which directly leads to their entitlement, in an era of back-to-back disasters was not working for them. In fact, we were averaging the reference margin down. By taking the approach in this pilot project of actually giving an option of calculating the reference margin based on the last three years or the Olympic average, we believe that that will deal with back-to-back disasters and bring their reference margins up, which will bring their entitlement levels up. By doing it retroactively, we get the dollars in producers' hands right away.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. CAIS is a national program. To the same minister: why isn't it a national solution? Why does Alberta have to go it alone one more time?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a very, very good question. We presented our proposals in the summertime, we've had discussions with our federal counterparts, we've had somewhat of a lukewarm response, and quite honestly I can't tell you why they're not stepping up to the plate. We decided to put our money where our mouth was in terms of proving out this pilot project. We're going to share the information and the impact that this has on our producers with our provincial and federal counterparts. We would hope that they will come to the table and help us with this program rather than doing some sort of ad hoc program which doesn't work for governments or for producers. But we will continue to support a national program because we believe in the national program. We just want to make it better.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, followed by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Lakeside Packers Labour Dispute

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The weakness of Alberta labour law was starkly clear in the strike at Lakeside Packers. The strikers settled for a \$20 a week increase and a coffee break. More importantly, they now have a contract which gives them protection against assaults on their human dignity. It's a shame that the brutal strike at Lakeside Packers had to happen. My question is to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Why has the minister said that he will delay first-contract law in Alberta until 2007 even though the Premier and the MLA from Brooks support the law as necessary?

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Yes, Mr. Speaker. It is, of course, very unfortunate when there is a dispute or a disagreement between a company and the union. You know, it's not something we want to see either. But as you are aware, the labour relations issue in Alberta is really good. To start with, 99 per cent of all the collective agreements last year and the year before were approved without any disputes. There are over 1,300 agreements. Seven hundred and fifty or so are private-industry agreements, and they have been generally settled.

As far as the first-contract binding arbitration legislation, Mr. Speaker, what I indicated to the press and to the opposition was that definitely we will be looking at that particular issue. There are some jurisdictions in Canada that have that particular legislation. I've

asked my department to pull that information together within three months, and I'll assess it. If it requires more work, then of course the process will continue, but at this time that is what we are doing.

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier to supplement.

Mr. Klein: Mr. Speaker, just for clarification since the hon. member mentioned my name and said that I support first-contract legislation. What I did say is that we will consider it. I also said that for every action there is an opposite and often negative reaction, and the opposition well knows that because they react negatively to just about everything we do.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Premier. We do need first-contract legislation.

To the same minister: will the minister release the many thousands of pages documenting occupational health and safety complaints at Lakeside Packers to the Official Opposition so that at least this side of the House can examine them?

Mr. Cardinal: Well, Mr. Speaker, in relation to that particular issue, you know, I did check to see how many complaints there were in relation to working conditions at Lakeside Packers, and there have been very few calls from the employees at that particular plant to complain about working conditions. In fact, I also promise that mid-December I will be touring the plant.

Mr. Backs: It's 2,600 pages.

To the same minister, Mr. Speaker: will the minister make a move to respect basic human dignity and enact bathroom and coffee breaks into Alberta employment standards law?

Mr. Cardinal: Mr. Speaker, of course, that was a concern where I believe one individual had some difficulties healthwise in relation to washroom breaks. What I indicated was that, yes, we'll have a look at that. But if one individual has a medical problem out of, say, 2,000 employees, then maybe that individual should get a medical certificate from the doctor. Instead of changing company policy entirely, maybe that person should get a medical certificate from the doctor to say that this person needs longer bathroom breaks.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Softwood Lumber Trade Dispute

Mr. Strang: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. I understand that attempts to resolve the softwood lumber dispute are stalled, with no decision currently under way or no immediate plans for a resumption of talks. Can the minister advise the Legislature on the status of the softwood discussions between Canada and the United States?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, just before question period today I learned that the World Trade Organization had released a decision finding that the U.S. was in compliance with its WTO obligations in the softwood lumber case. Once we heard that, we're certainly urging the federal minister to appeal that decision.

We are of the position that we expect the United States to live up to their NAFTA obligations. We expect them to refund the money that they have collected, and once they assure us that they will live up to these obligations under NAFTA, then we will be prepared to get back to the table and negotiate.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental question is to the same minister. Can the minister tell the House when a resolution of this dispute can be expected?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, I don't have a crystal ball. Just to work back a bit, the current softwood lumber dispute started in April of 2001. It's the fourth consecutive dispute. The first one dates back to 1982, and of course it's been a long-standing irritant with Canada and the U.S. I'm not sure how long it'll take for the federal government to appeal the WTO decision. Obviously, that's going to take time because that will be used as a stall tactic, I'm sure, by the Americans in this particular situation. We'll find out soon. I'll be meeting with the federal minister early next week to get a further update on what their plans are and will report back to the House at that date.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Can he advise the Legislature on the impact this dispute is having on the Alberta forest industry?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Coutts: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As national leaders in forest sustainability our companies in Alberta are working hard to maintain their competitive advantage given the softwood crisis. A hundred and eighty million dollars a year goes into a deposit in order for Alberta companies to continue to export into the U.S. In addition to that pressure, we are very, very aware of current market downturns and conditions that might affect the Alberta economy as well as the communities where our forest-based companies exist. So as a government we continue to work with that industry to make sure that they can maintain that competitive advantage that we're so proud of in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Budget Surplus Expenditures (continued)

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend the Premier stated that he had pretty much spent all of the projected surplus and that, in fact, there would be no more major spending announcements, yet just yesterday a further \$224 million was announced by the agriculture minister for the CAIS program. The Premier says that he has a surplus plan but it's none of the opposition's business. My question is for the Minister of Finance. Is it not true that the only surplus plan this government has is to spend every single penny as it comes in?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, it just depends on how you look at things. I consider the spending that has occurred

mid-year, which we clearly outlined would happen in our budget speech, as an investment in the province of Alberta. So I, of course, come from a little bit different tack on this: it's positive; it's dealing with things that are required to be dealt with.

Mr. Speaker, rather than dither like the federal government does on agriculture programs when our producers are in desperate straits, we act. Not six months from now or when we study it; we act today. If these members across the House left the city and went out and visited some of the farms that are facing some of the costs, that are looking at snowed-under crops, deteriorating conditions, they might understand why there was a desperate need for an adjustment to a farm income stabilization program that the federal government assumed a full partnership in not two years ago. Alberta acts; we don't apologize.

Mr. R. Miller: Not even drunken sailors can spend money this fast.

My next question is for the same minister. Given that the minister recently stated her preference for tax cuts over rebates, what changed her mind?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, we've said that there are ways of giving back, and there are two ways. One is in rebates, and one is in tax reductions. I stand on the record of my statements. My preference and I think the preference of every member in this Conservative caucus is tax reductions. Not only is it our preference; we've acted on it. Because we've acted on it, Albertans today enjoy the lowest overall tax burden in Canada. However, when you have one-time surpluses which are caused by a spike, an unnatural spike, I might add, in oil and gas revenues, and you already have the lowest overall tax burden in Canada – this government trusts Albertans with some of their own money, and we're giving it back to them.

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: instead of rebates, why didn't the minister extend the funding for the furnace replacement program, as an example, or fund a hot lunch program for every child in Alberta or, for God's sake, at least fund the recommendations of the long-term care review committee?

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, we're going to have an opportunity to debate the expenditures in this House – we always have that opportunity – and I look forward to the opportunity for each minister to have a debate on the expenditures in their particular departments. It would never have occurred to me that this member opposite would not have supported \$1.4 billion in health facility improvements, particularly when there are over 600 million of those dollars in needed programs to provide access to services in this particular region here. It would never have occurred to me that this hon. member would not have supported the investment that has been made in postsecondary education facilities, particularly at the University of Alberta, in the ambulatory care. It would never have occurred to me that this member would not have supported new-schools building. I'm shocked.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Aon Consulting Inc.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is hell-bent on a massive privatization of Alberta's health care system. It just doesn't want to make public the details of a third way privatization

scheme until after the federal election is safely out of the way. A key plan in this privatization scheme is a \$1.5 million study on private health insurance being done by Chicago-based insurance giant Aon Corporation. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Why is the government stubbornly refusing to cancel this contract given Aon's well-known track record of corporate wrongdoing on both sides of the Canada/U.S. border?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Evans: Thank you for the question. The Aon contract is with Aon Consulting in Alberta, and the contract is essential in order to get an actuarial review and costing of anything that we would do or contemplate relative to how we pay for Alberta health. The Aon Consulting contract is one that I believe is being awarded to the group that had the best presentation, the most credible references. In fact, from the security checks the actuaries that are involved with this particular project have done an exemplary job of presenting themselves.

One final point, Mr. Speaker. Aon Consulting is, yes, a part of an international group that employs 47,000 people in 120 countries, 800 of whom work in Canada, and only one charge in Ontario relates to a different part of the company relative to a different part of the service. So to make the link that doing this particular contract with this company is the wrong thing I believe is not correct.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does Aon's contract contain a provision that would bar Aon's insurance division from participating in any future private insurance scheme that Aon Consulting helps this government design, and if not, why not?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, our expectation is that Aon Consulting is not doing a contract to open the door for insurance; it's doing consulting on actuarial expenses. However, the very fact that they have an understanding of insurance in their corporate body is helpful to us in terms of how we model this, and it does not preclude anybody at Aon in future from bidding on it, but that has not been the experience. I suggest that of all the contracts that have been released this year, this one will be under the greatest scrutiny and will be just one piece of what we look at when we look at how we advance our third way.

Dr. Pannu: Will the minister do a favour to this House and make public in their entirety both Aon's detailed proposal in reply to the request for proposals plus the Aon contract and related documents, and if not, what's she got to hide?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, there was a confidentiality agreement relative to all of the participants in this contract, and relative to the terms of the contract I will follow through as our policy dictates. I'm not sure, in the signing of that final document, whether or not that confidentiality was to be maintained, but we will make very transparent both the results of the contract and how they met their obligations.

Mr. Speaker, one more point. The RFP had been published. All of the terms of that had been on the web and had been published since the summer. I think we're going to get a very credible result from the work that this group will do.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Veterinary Profession Legislation

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Human Resources and Employment, and they are regarding proposed changes to the Veterinary Profession Act. The rationale for changing the VPA document, put forward by the minister's office, states that the Court of Appeal ruling indicates that a change is required. After reading the court ruling several times, it is apparent that no such statement is made by the court. Can the minister please clarify what the real motivation is behind the proposed changes to the VPA?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, let me state that this matter will not be presented to the Legislature this fall. The court states that presently dentistry is not specifically referred to in the act. The proposed change is to simply clarify the definition of veterinary medicine to include dentistry as part of the definition.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you. To the same minister: given that the minister's office indicated that the draft was written after consulting with the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association and associations representing beef, pork, chicken, turkey, and egg producers, will the minister please name the horse industry groups or individuals who were contacted to help write the draft of proposed changes to the VPA?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Feedback was requested from two of the leading practitioners of horse dentistry in Alberta in drafting the proposed changes. We are also reviewing initial input from beef, pork, chicken, turkey, and egg producers, and these associations will be consulted further over the next year.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister, my final supplemental: given that Alberta is already critically short of large-animal veterinarians, can the minister please explain how possibly granting a larger monopoly to veterinarians will improve the care of animals, reduce costs to producers and owners, and improve the level of service?

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, there is no monopoly being granted. Government's goal is to simply clarify the definition of veterinary medicine included in the act.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Fort McMurray Infrastructure Needs

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past spring a delegation from Fort McMurray, led by Mayor Melissa Blake, put forth a compelling argument for \$1.2 billion of provincial support to allow the municipality's infrastructure to catch up with the rapid pace of tar sands project expansion. The unfettered development speed is not only affecting the quality of life of Fort McMurray residents but is leading to labour shortages and development delays throughout

the rest of the province. My first question is to the Deputy Premier. When will this government balance its role of promoting sustainable growth in the tar sands with protecting Fort McMurray residents?

2:40

Mrs. McClellan: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is entirely accurate. We had a very good submission from a number of people representing the Fort McMurray area, and we did have a discussion about their total needs in that area. What the hon. member might not understand is that there is already a very large amount committed to that area and to its development, something over \$600 million, and the minister of infrastructure may want to supplement to give you a closer figure. In addition to that, we responded with an immediate \$200 million, which again the minister of infrastructure could speak to. And in addition to that, our Minister of Municipal Affairs has sat down with them to talk about ways to proceed on their municipal infrastructure such as water treatment and so on. So there is a combined plan including, I might add, the Minister of Energy, who will add input to it because of the importance of the development in that area.

In the interest of accuracy on some of the activities that are occurring, I would invite the minister of infrastructure to respond.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. My second question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Will you commit to providing the necessary infrastructure support grants to Fort McMurray rather than forcing the municipality further into debt through loans?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, the municipality of Fort McMurray is in a relatively unique situation in that they're growing extremely rapidly, and for the population base today to invest in the necessary infrastructure for issues such as water and waste-water treatment, solid waste management, the cost and the scale of those developments would exceed the ability of today's citizenry and today's tax base and ratepayers to reasonably pay for those costs. At the same time, the growth that is expected and, frankly, has been predicted as a virtual certainty means that in a relatively short time they will be in a position to be in the same position as any other municipality in the province to deal with this kind of infrastructure on a rate-based formula.

So what the government has done is provide bridge financing to the municipality whereby we provide \$136 million interest free for the next four years. In addition to that, we do not require any principal payments over that same period of time, so that much-needed infrastructure can get in the ground today, the work begins, and the facilities are complete by the time the population has reached the point that they're needed. At that point, the municipality will be well able to deal with any additional debt that would be associated with these municipal projects.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. My third question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. How much longer will the thousands of permanent residents and commuting workers in Fort McMurray have to wait until both highways 28 and 63 have been twinned from Edmonton to Fort McMurray?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I find this line of

questioning especially ironic after the first question that was posed to me. The hon. member knows full well that \$200 million of the unbudgeted surplus was spent specifically – specifically – on the Fort McMurray area for their infrastructure concerns. So on one hand they're questioning why we have these surpluses, why we are spending them. On the other hand, they're asking us to spend more on Fort McMurray. This is very, very ironic. There has been \$530 million that has been committed to Fort McMurray over the next five years. There has also been another \$70 million in the Alberta municipal infrastructure program that has been given to Fort McMurray. The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs just alluded to a \$136 million interest-free loan.

Does Fort McMurray have demands? Absolutely. Do they have needs? You bet. This government is working very hard to meet those demands in a very timely fashion, which we are able to do because we have unbudgeted surpluses.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in a few seconds from now I'll call upon the first of six members to participate today. Before I call on that first hon. member, the historical vignette for the day.

Vignettes from Alberta's History

The Speaker: On this day in 1918 RCAF Flying Officer L.W. Powell was born in Pickardville, Alberta. He joined the Royal Canadian Air Force on March 6, 1940, and headed overseas a year later to serve as a World War II pilot. Unfortunately, Flying Officer Powell was reported missing and presumed dead after air operations on June 17, 1943. In 1947 Powell Lake, located 65 kilometres northwest of Grande Prairie, was named after Flying Officer Powell.

head:

Members' Statements

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

Dorothy McDonald

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On November 13 our province lost a very special Albertan after the passing of former Fort MacKay First Nations Chief Dorothy McDonald, whose funeral was held this morning.

Ms McDonald was born in Fort MacKay, which is 90 kilometres northeast of Fort McMurray. Ms McDonald began her apprenticeship as an hereditary chief at the age of 16. When she worked with her father, the late Chief Philip McDonald, she watched her dad fight for her people's rights and followed in his footsteps. As she worked on his correspondence, he talked with her about the decisions, duties, and responsibilities of being the chief, which she took to heart. She followed in the footsteps of her father, and when he passed away as chief in 1980, she was elected as the first female chief in Alberta.

She championed environment and economic initiatives, which included being a key mover in dealing with oil sands development. She took on the oil sands companies so that the people of Fort MacKay would have a fighting chance for employment and contract opportunities. She was successful, although it took its toll on her health. Despite that, her spirit was strong. Recently, the Fort MacKay First Nations honoured her for her contributions to her community with the dedication of a new learning centre.

On behalf of the government of Alberta we wish to express our condolences to Dorothy's family and to the residents of Fort MacKay, who benefited from her unwavering dedication, in the loss of a great leader.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Bow Valley College
Prairie College of Applied Arts & Technology**

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 18 in Three Hills, Alberta, an historic memorandum of understanding was signed between Bow Valley College and Prairie College of Applied Arts & Technology. This unique partnership, a first of its kind in Canada between public and private postsecondary institutions, will allow Bow Valley College to offer health and child care programs to Prairie College students.

Starting in September 2006, Prairie College of Applied Arts will become the first college to offer two-year vocational programs in conjunction with a Christian education. Graduates of these programs will receive a two-year associate of arts degree that includes Bible theology courses. Within the same two years the students will also have earned a provincially recognized diploma in the vocation of their choice. Those choices may include hospital unit clerk, nursing assistant, lab assistant, or child care worker. Students completing one of Prairie's vocational programs will earn a two-year diploma plus a full-year certificate in Bible; in other words, three years of training in two years for the price of two years. What a bargain that is.

I invite members of this Assembly to congratulate Prairie College of Applied Arts and Bow Valley College for their vision of expanding postsecondary educational opportunities for Alberta students in rural Alberta.

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

Veterans Memorial Highway

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few years ago, when I was in the Netherlands, I paid a visit to the Canadian Memorial Park near Arnhem. It was late in the afternoon. My wife, Kim, and I stood in silence looking at the long rows and rows of grave markers. Our emotions rose inside us when we read the names and the ages of these many brave young Canadians.

Standing in front of the cenotaph against the light of the setting sun we bowed our heads, and I whispered my saying of deep gratitude: thanks to your ultimate sacrifices myself, my wife, and our family all have the quality of life we have today. Indeed, in Canada it's thanks to our veterans and our active members of the Canadian armed forces that we can live in peace, safety, and security and the freedom of our nation. It is of the utmost importance to remember the sacrifices those men and those women have made and continue to make for the rest of us.

2:50

Mr. Speaker, it's obvious that I share the oriental culture, that has been through thousands of years of practice. Yes, in this long tradition of culture I carry in myself an ancient proverb: when eating fruit, remember its planter; when drinking water, remember its source.

Indeed, from this background of feelings I decided to take on an initiative when a friend, Mr. Bob Gray, Dominion VP of the Royal Canadian Legion of Canada, came to talk to me about the Year of the Veteran. I proposed to our Premier and to our Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation that Alberta should designate a highway to commemorate the Canada Year of the Veteran and the centennial anniversary of Alberta. I want to thank the Premier, the minister, and my government MLA colleagues for making the idea come true. I also want to thank Mr. Harvey Shevalier, Mr. Bob Gray, and Mr. Don Ethell of the Royal Canadian Legion for working with me on this idea.

I'm told that Alberta's Veterans Memorial Highway is the longest in Canada, over 600 kilometres. Its stretching length symbolizes the

depth of our gratitude to members of the armed forces of the past, the present, and the future. We will remember them.

Thank you.

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

Remembrance Day

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Remembrance Day, on November 11, is a day of great importance. We remember and honour those many heroes that have given their lives in the service of our country. An incredible number of Canadians, many, many of them Albertans, made the ultimate sacrifice in the bloody conflicts of the last century. We remember all who died or were injured. We also remember the huge effect that these sacrifices had on so many of the families at home.

Last summer a military centennial tattoo was staged in Edmonton, and thanks is due to the Speaker and to Edmonton Councillor Gibbons for their role in that fine event. Included was a re-enactment of many touching moments in the lives of servicemen and their families. One of the most moving was when the actors recreated the euphoric feeling and celebrations that marked the end of World War II. There was dancing in the streets. Almost everyone was hugging and kissing in the relief and happiness that the great struggle, the great conflict, was finally over. But in the background were the families of those who didn't come home. A tearful and endearing moment ensued as an officer presented the families with a memorial of their loved one in honour of their loss and sacrifice as well as that of the soldier who had been their father, husband, son, daughter, brother, or sister.

These heroes died to maintain our Canadian way of life. We have the freedom to live and to love, the freedom to work where we choose, the freedom to move where we want, the freedom to be entrepreneurs and start a business, and the freedom to join a trade union if we desire: many freedoms. We have the freedom of democracy, which many in this world still die to achieve. It is something we too often take for granted.

There always must be those who bravely put themselves forward to protect our way of life. We must remember those that have come before us, and we must also ensure that those who are presently in our armed forces are properly paid and equipped and deployed in the best interests of our country.

The year 2005 is the Year of the Veteran. Please always remember on Remembrance Day.

Prevention of Family Violence

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about an issue that affects us all: family violence. It's an issue that is often ignored by many people who feel that what happens in someone else's private life is none of their business, but preventing family violence is everyone's business.

It is estimated that almost 7 per cent of Canadians have experienced spousal violence in the last five years. Approximately one-quarter of all violent crime victims are also family violence victims. These statistics are alarming. We must break the wall of silence that surrounds this issue and allows it to continue. Family violence impacts everyone, from children who witness the abuse to families who are trying to cope with a horrific situation. It's a global issue that deserves our attention as individuals and as government.

A few weeks ago our government hosted the first ever World Conference on Prevention of Family Violence. Over 1,000 people from 31 different countries met in Banff to talk about their experiences and share ways in which we can eliminate family violence. This conference showed us what is possible if we work together.

But it is only the beginning. We must continue to address this issue on a daily basis and be the voice for those who don't have the strength to speak up for themselves.

Today, a message of hope and remembrance hangs in the Legislature pedway. The Quilting in Learning and Tribute project is an initiative of the Eagle Women's Emergency Shelter in Black Diamond, the Nanton family and community support services, and the Okotoks family and community support services. The squares for this beautiful quilt came from victims, survivors, and people connected or concerned with family violence. It serves as a memorial and educational tool for rural communities in the Alberta foothills.

We are also wearing purple ribbons today to spread the message that we will not tolerate family violence in this province.

Even though November officially marks Family Violence Prevention Month, we know that family violence happens all year-round. We must talk about this issue with the people in our lives and be part of the solution to ending family violence in our province.

Mr. Speaker, the youth at the world conference committed to taking a stand against family violence. We, too, must take a stand. In the words of those youth: "Together we can make a choice. Together we can use our voice. Put violence in the past."

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Lakeside Packers Labour Dispute

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to congratulate the workers of the UFCW local 401 at Lakeside Packers in Brooks. When anti-union employers like Arkansas-based Tyson Foods choose to thwart the democratic right of their employees to join a union, Alberta's labour laws let them get away with it. But this time Tyson Foods underestimated Albertans' sense of fair play. Tyson also underestimated the resolve of the UFCW workers.

A fair deal and a respectful workplace was achieved not because of but in spite of Alberta's unfair labour laws. The strike was only settled because it was turning into a public relations disaster for both the provincial government and Tyson Foods. The Lakeside Packers strike, like so many before it – A-Channel, Shaw Conference Centre, the *Calgary Herald* – was completely avoidable if Alberta had fair labour laws.

We did not need to launch our beef industry into another economic crisis. We did not need to risk worker safety or divide the town of Brooks. All we needed was a simple stroke of the pen. Alberta could easily join eight other Canadian governments and enact first-contract arbitration if a first collective agreement could not be achieved within a year of a certification vote. It's easy. It makes sense. It's fair. I call on this government again today to pass such a law during this fall sitting of the Legislature.

The workers at Brooks deserve our highest praise. They stood up to an American multinational corporation, one of the biggest food companies in the world, and they won.

We will continue to press this government for first-contract legislation in order to avoid bitter disputes, divided communities, unnecessary economic hardship, and risk to safety and security. We saw all of this at Lakeside. If this government acts now, we do not have to see it again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition from 103

tradesmen and women from Fort McMurray, Calgary, Edmonton, Vegreville, Leduc, and Gibbons. It reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government of Alberta to prohibit the importation of temporary foreign workers to work on the construction and/or maintenance of oil sands facilities and/or pipelines until the following groups have been accessed and/or trained: Unemployed Albertans and Canadians; Aboriginals; unemployed youth under 25; under-employed landed immigrants; and displaced farmers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Notices of Motions**

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two notices of motions today. This is pursuant to Standing Order 15(2). I'm providing formal notice of my intention to continue with the point of order that I gave oral notice on on May 18. This being the next sitting day of the fall session, I'm now giving the required written notice concerning the words and/or actions of the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar in his dealings with the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford on May 18, 2005. I have copies for everyone in the Assembly.

3:00

The second notice of motion that I would like to do at this time, again pursuant to Standing Order 15(2), is to provide formal notice of my intention to raise a question of privilege and contempt of the Assembly regarding the unauthorized release to the media of information contained in the October 2005 Report of the Auditor General on the Alberta Securities Commission's Enforcement System.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wish to rise on a point of privilege in accordance with Standing Order 15. Notice was given to your office in writing yesterday, Mr. Speaker, and I am proposing to raise the matter at the earliest possible time as per Standing Order 15(2).

Would you like me to proceed now with the point of privilege or just give the notice?

The Speaker: We're just in the notice portion now.

Mr. Mason: Thank you.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

Bill 43

Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 43, the Alberta Resource Rebate Statutes Amendment Act, 2005. This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will create amendments to three pieces of legislation, which are needed to allow the government to provide Albertans with a \$400 per person resource rebate. Bill 43 will make amendments to the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act so that the

rebate can be delivered as a refundable tax credit to avoid federal and provincial taxes; secondly, the Fiscal Responsibility Act primarily so that payments can be made to Albertans without a change in the contingency allowance; and thirdly, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act so that the rebate can be provided to children in care of the province.

[Motion carried; Bill 43 read a first time]

Bill 44

Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

Mr. Lund: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce a bill being the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2).

Amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act in 2004 allowed for the creation of an alternate dispute resolution service for landlords and tenants. This service will be known as the residential tenancies dispute resolution service, or RTDRS. Before RTDRS can begin operating, the legislation needs to clarify the role of the new service in relation to the court. Once the legislation is in place, the RTDRS will begin operations as a one-year pilot project in the city of Edmonton.

The RTDRS will provide a more appropriate forum for RTA disputes, many of which are not well suited for resolution through the much more formal court process. It will also help the court system dedicate its resources to more complicated matters.

[Motion carried; Bill 44 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Bill 45

Maternal Tort Liability Act

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 45, the Maternal Tort Liability Act.

The proposed legislation is designed to provide a measure of compensation for a child who sustains prenatal injuries as a result of the negligent driving of his or her mother. This proposed provision relates only to motor vehicle accidents, and it's a very narrow exception to the law. The current common law already allows a child to sue anyone else, including family members. This is just about adding the mother in a very specific situation. The change to the common law would provide protection for mothers by prohibiting claims against them beyond the limits of their insurance policies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 45 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that Bill 45 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Bill 46

Criminal Notoriety Act

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 46, the Criminal Notoriety Act.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is aimed at preventing criminals from

making money from recounting their crimes either through books, movies, on television, or the Internet. As government we have a responsibility to protect victims, and it is unacceptable that criminals benefit from the pain and suffering they have caused others. The legislation will apply to people convicted of serious crimes such as sexual assault and sexual offences against children and youth or those that involve violence against another person or endanger others.

[Motion carried; Bill 46 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that Bill 46 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Bill 47

Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 47, the Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act.

This bill will create a nonpartisan association of former Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Membership would be open to all individuals who have been but are not currently a member of this Assembly. This association would be able to use its knowledge and experience to promote the ideals of parliamentary democracy in Alberta.

I'd like to thank the Speaker of the House for his support and encouragement of this initiative as part of the upcoming centennial anniversary in March 2006 of the first sitting of the Alberta Legislature.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 47 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd move that Bill 47 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Bill 48

Justice of the Peace Amendment Act, 2005

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 48, the Justice of the Peace Amendment Act, 2005.

The justice of the peace system was reformed in '99. Reforms included a provision to require existing qualified JPs to be appointed in the reformed system. The amendment clarifies that there are no continuing legal requirements mandating the automatic appointment of a justice of the peace who subsequently becomes qualified. The existing provision was intended to be transitional so is being updated with this amendment.

The regulation-making power under the act is also being broadened. With the amendment the constitutional notice regulation can be issued under this act as well as under the Provincial Court Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 48 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

The Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of the Victims Programs Status Report for 2004-2005. This annual report shows a 61 per cent increase in grants for community organizations that provide assistance to victims of crime; \$3.2 million was provided to 88 organizations in '04-05, these programs reportedly handling more than 33,000 new cases, over half of which involved assisting victims of violent crime.

I'd also like to highlight the incredible amount of time put into the program by volunteers. Over 1,600 volunteer advocates and board members contributed more than 200,000 volunteer hours in '04-05, the equivalent of about 124 full-time employees.

These are important programs that serve our communities, and we will continue to support them.

3:10

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane and chair of the Legislative Offices Committee.

Mrs. Tarchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of the annual report of the Auditor General of Alberta 2004-05, which was distributed to all members on October 3, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to table five copies of the Report of the Auditor General on Alberta Social Housing Corporation – Land Sales Systems, dated October 2005. Copies of this report were distributed to all members on October 20, 2005.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table five copies of the Report of the Auditor General on the Alberta Securities Commission's Enforcement System, dated October 2005. Copies of this report were distributed to all members on October 27, 2005.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a couple of documents to table today. First, I have two stories from the *Edmonton Journal*, to which the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood will be talking about in privilege. They are dated October 13 and 25.

I'd also like to table a news release issued by the Auditor General on October 25. In the release Mr. Dunn says that the premature disclosure of his work interferes with "the integrity of the audit process thereby treating the Legislative Assembly with disrespect."

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Two quick tablings today: five copies of information from the Edmonton Community Loan Fund Society, which has recently changed its mandate – it is to facilitate economic self-reliance for people living with low income through asset building, financial education, community partnership; so these are brochures on that – and additional information on the Stars of Literacy, International Literacy Day, that was held back in September, with a good deal of information on the projects that are sponsored by the participating organization, of which there is a long list included in the documents I'm tabling.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the required number of copies of the address by the Hon. Stephen Harper, PC, MP, leader of the Conservative Party of Canada and Leader of the Official Opposition in Parliament, delivered on November 4, 2005, in Ottawa. I urge all the government members across the floor to read it carefully and to consider its implications on the state of democratic affairs in this province, mainly with issues like transparency and accountability, being accountable to the public.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a letter from my constituent for tabling. She's on social assistance, a single parent of one and two teens part-time. She's urging the government to increase funding not just for her but for all Albertans. She's not getting the basic necessities of life: food, clothing, and shelter.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Well, hon. members, I have a number of tablings today. Pursuant to the Legislative Assembly Act I table with the Assembly copies of the following Members' Services orders: first of all, Members' Services Committee Order 07/05, dealing with members' allowances, which came into force on July 1, 2005; Members' Services Committee Order 08/05, which dealt with members' allowances, which is deemed to have come into force on November 22, 2004; and Members' Services Committee Order 09/05, which is the transportation amendment order, which came into force on July 1, 2005.

As well, pursuant to section 46(1) of the Conflicts of Interest Act of the Revised Statutes of Alberta, I'm pleased to table with the Assembly the annual report of the Ethics Commissioner. The report covers the period April 1, 2004, to March 31, 2005. A copy of this report was distributed to members on September 8, 2005.

I'm also tabling with the Assembly the report by the Ethics Commissioner into allegations involving the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, dated October 20, 2005. This report was previously distributed to members.

I'm doing something which I would not normally do. I'm tabling an internal Legislative Assembly security report relating to an incident in the Legislature's south members' lounge on May 18, 2005. I'm tabling it, which will not be my normal practice in the future, simply because of the interest expressed to me by a number of members who requested such a copy, and if several members are going to get it, then all members should get it.

Hon. members, there was a situation that occurred in the Legislative Assembly on the last day of the last session, and one of the hon. members involved has contacted me with a request to make a statement about that. I'm now going to call on the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Member's Apology

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regard to the conversation that took place in the foyer on May 18, I would like to apologize for raising my voice at the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. I did try to contact the member immediately after it happened to set up an opportunity to apologize, but that didn't happen, so I'd like to do it here. I'd like to make it clear, though, that I'm not apologizing for physical assault or molestation as the record states or for uttering profanities as was reported in the media by the hon. member because those clearly did not happen. But what did happen was inappropriate, and I apologize sincerely.

The Speaker: Notice was given earlier in the afternoon by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre dealing with a point of order. It may deal with this matter or not. The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar has now apologized to the House. Normally that terminates matters. If the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre has a point of order she wishes to proceed with that's different than that, please proceed.

Ms Blakeman: Well, I find myself in an interesting situation, Mr. Speaker. I recognize that the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar has apologized. My dilemma is that he's apologized selectively.

I believe that there was a point of privilege here in that the ability of the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford to enjoy free speech in the House and for there to be no accompanying intimidation or threats that would carry through, obviously not preceding this act but following it, that was clearly – I think that the threat was intended, and it was certainly perceived. That is a difficult situation for me because I have heard the member apologize sincerely for raising his voice, but then I'm not sure what to take of the second part of the member's statement, in which he refused to apologize for anything else.

I would prefer not to proceed with the point of privilege. It's a serious business, and it does take up this Assembly's time and the Speaker's patience. Could I ask the member if he understands that the effect and consequences of his actions that day were intimidation? Is he willing to understand that and apologize for that?

The Speaker: Hon. member, please. Just a second. When the hon. member gave notice a little earlier, the hon. member – and I wrote this down – said that she was rising on a point of order. She then tabled on a matter dealing with a point of privilege. So this is not a matter of debate, I think, internally in here.

If an hon. member chooses to stand in the Assembly, as was afforded to the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, the hon. member apologizes to the House. That's who the hon. member apologizes to. So it's not really a question of one member saying: I agree or I don't agree. The hon. member has apologized to the House.

Now, if the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre has a point of privilege that the hon. member wants to deal with, the hon. member can proceed. She has been recognized, and I'm giving her the opportunity if she chooses to proceed.

3:20

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did give oral notice of a point of privilege on May 18. I did send written notice of a point of privilege to the Speaker on November 10. This morning I also sent over a notification of my intention to raise a point of privilege. If I misspoke myself earlier and said "a point of order," I'm sure the Speaker would accept that slight misstatement.

The Speaker: Agreed. That's not the issue.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you.

At this point I have conferred with the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford. He has instructed me not to proceed, and therefore I will not at this time. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members. I am now going to recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, the Official Opposition House Leader. She's given proper notice to rise on a point of privilege: contempt.

Please proceed.

Privilege

Contempt of the Assembly

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This particular matter is the second point of privilege. Again there was written notice sent over to the Speaker on Thursday, the 10th of November. I did rise under the Routine of the day under Notices of Motion and gave an additional written notice that was circulated to all of the House.

This is regarding the unauthorized release to the media of information contained in the October 2005 report of the Auditor General on the Alberta Securities Commission enforcement system. This matter is being raised at the earliest opportunity. The report was released in October 2005. The House was not sitting. This is the first opportunity that I have had as House leader to raise the point of privilege.

The issue at hand, Mr. Speaker, is that in the wake of the problems that were alleged at the Alberta Securities Commission, the Auditor General announced that he would be submitting a special separate report on the Alberta Securities Commission. This report and one other were leaked to a member of the *Edmonton Journal* staff and was reported on prior to being delivered to the Assembly or the appropriate committees. The particular reporter in question did report in his column that "the interim draft of Dunn's report" – that is, the Auditor General – "has been circulating in government circles for more than a week." I believe that this unauthorized release of this information prior to it being made available to all members of this Assembly does constitute a contempt of the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, what happened and what were the consequences that affected individual members' privilege and, generally, contempt for the Assembly? We had an Auditor General's report that was leaked. We had a situation where media and possibly others had it, and people who should have had it, those being the members of this Assembly, did not. So members of this Assembly were not able to comment to the media as they had not seen the report. The members' ability to fulfill their job was prevented, and I believe their privilege was breached.

The Auditor General's report does make several stops. It is mandated to go through the internal audit committee and a courtesy copy to the branch affected before going to the select standing committee to be laid before the Assembly. But, Mr. Speaker, each of those stops carries with it an expectation of embargoed activity, and the ultimate end is to be distributed to the Assembly before it goes to the public. I would argue that given the sensitivity of the material this leak is on the same level as a leak of the budget; that is, being privy to this information can give an advantage to some and not to others.

This report was concerning the Alberta Securities Commission, which regulates our stock market and which must be credible and trustworthy for all to survive. Therefore, the information that was in that Auditor General's report, depending on what it had said, could have been of tremendous advantage to some and disadvantage to others, and not having the MLAs being privy to it before the public is serious.

I believe that all members of the Assembly and particularly the Leader of the Official Opposition had their privileges breached by this release. We were not able to specifically comment to the media on the important issues.

Mr. Speaker, did this leak constitute under the precedents and authorities of the Assembly a breach of privilege or contempt of the Assembly? I say yes. There are two precedents I'd like to refer to. They are both Speaker's rulings. One is from Speaker Milliken ruling around the Toews bill briefing from March of 2001 – that

would be federal – and, Mr. Speaker, your ruling from March 2003 in response to a point of privilege brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

My final issue on this is: if there is no identifiable culprit or perpetrator, can a contempt still be found? I argue that it can be.

So I've gone over the specifics of the case where the Auditor General did release the report. His act does allow under section 20.1(1) that when the Assembly is not sitting, which it was not at the time, Mr. Speaker, it be made available to the Speaker of the Assembly, and copies would be delivered to each member of the Assembly. Under section 24 of the Auditor General Act the annual report shall be made available to an internal audit committee as well before it is presented to the select standing committee. "After the Speaker has distributed copies of the report under subsection (1)," just mentioned, "the Auditor General may make the report public." The other relevant section here is section 28 because the Auditor General "as soon as practicable" shall advise the appropriate bodies that are involved with it. So a courtesy copy goes to those that are mentioned in the report.

That was what was supposed to have happened, Mr. Speaker, with the Alberta Securities Commission report, but somebody somewhere released this document or released substantial information on it to the media, and according to the media it had been circulating in government circles for a week prior to its public release.

We have the relevant citations and cases, Mr. Speaker. The Legislative Assembly Act, section 10, talks about breaches of privilege and contempts. Our own Standing Order 15(1) talks about: "the rights of the Assembly or of the parliamentary rights of any member constitutes a question of privilege." *Beauchesne* 25 talks about two key rights: the freedom of speech in the House and the right of a member to discharge their duties. In *Maingot*, pages 224 to 226, they say that if it's not a violation of a specific defined individual or corporate right, it is more properly a matter of contempt.

So does the Leader of the Official Opposition have a right as an individual MLA to have had access to that report prior to it being made public, and does the leak restrict his ability to discharge his parliamentary duties? I argue yes on both counts.

Does the Assembly as a corporate body have a right to the report prior to it being made public? Well, Mr. Speaker, that's obviously what's intended by the Auditor General Act, but was a specific identifiable right violated here by the leak? Now, *Erskine May* – the 22nd edition is what I'm quoting throughout – on page 108 says, "generally speaking, any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any Member" should "be treated as a contempt." I'm paraphrasing here rather than trying the Speaker's patience by quoting unduly.

Marleau and Montpetit, page 52, also notes that "contempt may be an act or an omission; it does not have to actually obstruct or impede the House or a Member, it merely has to have the tendency to produce such results," which I argue has happened.

Also, *Marleau and Montpetit*, page 58, notes that it "is causing, or is liable to cause, substantial interference with the performance of their respective" duties, that being the members. I argue that in this case the ability of the Leader of the Official Opposition to respond knowledgeable to the media on this issue, on an issue he originally raised, was impeded. He didn't have the information to be able to do it prior to the media having it.

In *Marleau and Montpetit*, on pages 66 to 67, "any disregard of or attack on the rights, powers and immunities of the House and its Members . . . is referred to as a 'breach of privilege' and is punishable by the House."

Maingot, page 226, also finds that contempt has no codification and no limit.

When we look at the precedents, Mr. Speaker, we have the Toews incident in the federal media briefing on the bill from March 2001. That is the Speaker Milliken ruling that I referred to earlier. More specifically to this Assembly was the Edmonton-Strathcona precedent around a Bill 19 briefing in March of 2003. In this case, the Minister of Energy held a technical briefing for the media on what appeared to be the final version of Bill 19 after it had been placed on the Order Paper but before it was introduced in the House. As part of his argument it was noted that Speaker Milliken affirmed the confidentiality of a bill on notice so that members could be well informed and to protect the pre-eminent role of the House in legislative affairs.

3:30

You, Mr. Speaker, took note of this recent federal precedent and concurred that the House's claim on the bill arises when the bill goes on notice for introduction. In other words, the Assembly should get the bill before the public. That's what that is all saying.

While we have the Auditor General's office as an officer of the Assembly rather than a committee, I think that where it concerns the rights and privileges of the Assembly, the same principles should be applied. More narrowly, the Auditor General's reporting structure does require the report to be laid before the chair of the select Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, who then, in turn, tables it in the Assembly unless we are not sitting. It's also allowed to be given to the audit committee, as I mentioned, and they may possibly have advised the Lieutenant Governor in Council on the results, which appears in section 23.

There are arguments to support that committee reports – and I believe that the Auditor General report qualifies the same – be treated the same as bills, therefore making disclosure of the same an act of contempt. Under that, we have *Erskine May*, on page 118, talking about premature publication or disclosure of committee proceedings. There's a long dissertation that talks about: "As early as the mid-seventeenth century it was declared to be against the custom of Parliament for any act done at a committee to be divulged before being reported to the House," and it goes on at some length. *Erskine May*, page 670, says: "Any publication of a draft report which has been submitted to a committee, before such report has been agreed to by the committee and presented to the House, may be treated as a contempt." I'll note that *Beauchesne* 31(10) does specifically exclude technical briefings. So the Assembly should see the committee reports before the public, and the Auditor General's report is substantively the same as a committee report and, indeed, would be viewed as a committee report had the chair been able to present it were we in session.

Erskine May, pages 118 to 119, demonstrates that there need not be an identifiable person against whom the charge of contempt is leveled. Since there was no identification of the individuals originally responsible, the successful charges of contempt also demonstrate that it does not have to be a member.

That is the situation we have here, Mr. Speaker. We don't know who released that information. Was it a contempt against this Assembly? I argue that, in fact, it was.

Although successive Committees of Privileges have concluded that such interference with the work of select committees . . . are a contempt of the House and damaging to the work of Parliament, in none of the modern cases involving draft [or other] reports has it been possible to identify those responsible for the original disclosure. In the absence of such information, Committees of Privileges have usually not been willing to recommend exercise of the House's penal powers against those who gave wider publicity to the

disclosure, and when they have done so the House has not been prepared to agree.

That would have been trying to bring the contempt upon the reporter, and we don't know where he got the information, so that may well be the same case here. I think it also demonstrates that the action in question does not necessarily have to take place within the Chamber or the precincts of the Assembly since we do not know precisely where or when the actual act took place, but certainly in the case of the Speaker's ruling in March of 2003 regarding Edmonton-Strathcona, that action took place in the media briefing room, well out of the precincts of the Assembly, and the Speaker certainly held sway there.

Mr. Speaker, this is not to attempt to stop appropriate public consultation but, rather, to protect the pre-eminent role which the House plays and must play in the legislative affairs of the nation. I think that in respect of the legitimate privileges of individual legislators, this Speaker indicated he could not condone the practice of providing information to the media that is about to come before the House. So, again, even if it wasn't the bill itself, the actual text, that was leaked, you yourself, Mr. Speaker, have already given a ruling that you include the provision of information to the media about something that is to come before the House in the same category as the actual document. There are both collective and individual privileges at stake here, and ensuring that the members of the Legislature have access to the information that they need in order to respond to media questions regarding legislative business is such a right, and indeed the Speaker also commented on that.

I raise the excellent example of Speaker Milliken, at the same time noting that this Assembly is not bound by the federal rulings, to ensure that the privileges of this Assembly and our members are accorded equal protection to that of the federal parliament. We have a situation here that is analogous in every important respect to that situation in March of 2003 that was raised by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. The Auditor General is an officer of the Assembly, and the preparation and presentation of reports is most certainly something which this Assembly has an important stake in protecting. It is our vital business, and the Assembly's rights respecting reports prepared by its officers I would argue is every bit as important as legislation on notice. In both cases the documents ultimately belong to the Assembly.

The Auditor General Act makes it very clear how the report should go, and it is to come to the Assembly before being made available to the public. This leak did interfere with the work of the officer of the Assembly and, further, with the members. It may in fact have been worse since the report of the Auditor General was to bring forth recommendations that would restore the integrity of a provincial agency vital to Alberta's economy. The leak predictably undermined the integrity of the provincial audit process itself, and thus will have the effect of undermining the remedial effects of the report and the subsequent reforms.

I ask the Speaker to find that a prima facie case of contempt took place, whether it was the release of the information or a copy of the actual Auditor General's report or a draft report on the Alberta Securities Commission, in that all members' privileges were breached and that that is seen and held in the same light as contempt overall for the Assembly.

I hope that I've covered all of the relevant points. Thank you for the opportunity to raise this very important issue before the Speaker in the House today.

The Speaker: Other members? The hon. leader of the third party on this point of privilege.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I just would request some guidance. Since my question of privilege also relates in part to the one raised by the hon. Official Opposition House Leader but also covers two similar leaks of reports being prepared by officers of the Assembly, is it appropriate for me to deal with my points now, or should we deal with it separately?

The Speaker: The dilemma I have, hon. member, is that I have no idea where your arguments will lead or what they are based on. I simply do not know what you'll be saying, so I don't know how I can advise, and that would be quite wrong on my part.

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, just to provide you with a little bit of information, my point of privilege with respect to the report that was leaked that was referenced by my hon. friend here is very similar, but there were also two other leaks of reports done by the Ethics Commissioner and the Auditor General in a similar fashion that we're treating as a group. My points are similar to those raised by the hon. member.

The Speaker: Okay. We're not going to have a debate here, hon. member, but you can see my dilemma, of course. I may rule one way with respect to the arguments put forward by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre and rule a different way with the points put forward by the hon. leader of the third party and then be questioned as to why or what. So I don't know. Again, if you simply say, "The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre has given all my arguments, and I want her to be my spokesman for this," then I'll understand exactly the position of the hon. leader. So there's the dilemma. Let's deal with one, and then we'll deal with the second one, okay?

Are there additional comments? The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General, I believe in this capacity as hon. Acting Government House Leader though.

3:40

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. My comments will be very brief indeed. The Auditor General on October 25 issued a news release in which he indicated that on a second occasion there was a premature disclosure of the work of the Auditor General. In the two disclosures referred to in the news release, the one that is being referred to in this particular motion was included.

I think what's important is that the Auditor General, who is well suited to investigation relative to this type of thing, indicated that he was going to seek to find out who it was that had leaked the reports. I think it's fair to say, his comments, that "until the source of the leaks is identified, many groups of people, including our staff and senior management of the audited organizations, remain under a cloud of suspicion."

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that the argument being put forward by the hon. member with respect to this contempt application is very much a situation of seeking an order in the dark. We do not have the facts before us. The Auditor General, who was the author of the report, who had control of the report, and who is certainly qualified in all respects to investigate the matter, has indicated that he will be doing that. He is an officer of this Legislative Assembly, and I would suggest that it's quite appropriate that we wait until the report of the Auditor General is available before considering anything.

The fact is that as long as I've been here, any contempt application in front of this Assembly has had a source. There have been some consequences associated with it. There have been circumstances that have been understood and that we could debate. In this particular case we do not know the circumstances. We do not have

a source. We do not know anything, for that matter, other than the fact that the Auditor General has clearly indicated that there have been unauthorized disclosures.

Mr. Speaker, it would be my view that the Auditor General is doing the right thing, that it is the right thing for this Assembly to wait until the Auditor General's report is available, and that it's inappropriate at this point in time to consider in the abstract an application of this nature.

The Speaker: Others?

I would like to point out to all hon. members that on October 25, 2005, a very senior official from the office of the Auditor General visited with me with respect to this matter, the matter of the so-called leak, whatever that meant, and advised me directly that he had absolutely no knowledge of the source of such but that they would be undertaking one review, and in terms of something that had happened, they would be undertaking a second one, and subsequently shared with me this draft of the press release that was issued October 25, 2005, when he quoted in the thing:

We will do our best to find out who it is who seeks to gain an advantage by leaking audit results. Until the source of the leaks is identified, many groups of people, including our staff and senior management of the audited organizations, remain under a cloud of suspicion. As a last resort, we may have to change how and to whom we provide draft reports.

Then he advised and we had a discussion about when they would be delivering these reports to me, and they were delivered to me at about one or two minutes before 11 a.m., and then they were released immediately from my office, which is the normal practice, the practice that we've had before.

On this first point, hon. member, I'm going to review the Blues for tomorrow. It's a very serious matter. The difficulty I have as to the point of privilege is that I believe there is a contempt, absolutely, but to whom? Who is the person? Who is the entity we have to deal with? Where can justice come? This is a matter that causes grave concern to me. I'll come back and say something further – well, it may not even be tomorrow. If we're advised that there will be a response from the investigators with respect to seeing if they can find the source of this, we may have to wait, but it will be as quickly as possible.

The hon. leader of the third party on your point, please.

Privilege Contempt of the Assembly

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I apologize if we go over some of the ground that's been covered. I'll try and bridge it if I can, as I go.

I'm rising on a point of privilege in accordance with Standing Order 15. Yesterday notice was given to your office in writing, and we are raising the matter at the earliest possible time.

I believe that the dignity and authority of the Assembly has been breached on three occasions and that these breaches constitute a prima facie case of contempt for this Assembly. Upon your finding of a prima facie case of a breach of this Assembly's privilege, I would intend to move that the standing committee on privileges and elections investigate the matter and recommend a resolution.

In making this argument, I cite *Beauchesne's* section 33; *Maingot*, second edition, on page 14 and on page 239; and *Erskine May* on page 148 of the 23rd edition. I also have reference to the Auditor General Act and section 25 of the Conflicts of Interest Act.

The facts of the breach are as follows, Mr. Speaker. Three reports were prepared by officers of this Legislature and have been leaked

to the media prior to their distribution to members of this Assembly and prior to their proper publication. The reports in question are, one, the Report of the Auditor General on the Alberta Securities Commission's Enforcement System, October 2005, Auditor General Alberta; second, the Report of the Auditor General on Alberta Social Housing Corporation – Land Sales Systems, October 2005, Auditor General Alberta; and three, allegations involving the Minister of Environment and Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, October 2005, the Ethics Commissioner of Alberta.

On April 13 of this year the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance asked the Auditor General to answer questions regarding the enforcement processes at the Alberta Securities Commission.

On May 31 I and the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview asked the Auditor General to investigate the sale of certain land parcels by the Alberta Social Housing Corporation. On June 7 the Auditor General indicated that he would be looking into the Fort McMurray land deals and that his findings would be included in his annual report in the fall. On June 22 of this year the Minister of Environment wrote to the Ethics Commissioner and requested an investigation into whether that member had breached the Conflicts of Interest Act, which the commissioner agreed to undertake. On September 13 senior Auditor General staff informed the NDP opposition that the Auditor General intended to report on the Fort McMurray land sales in a separate report not included in his annual report.

At the beginning of October we were therefore expecting the release of three reports, two by the Auditor General and a third by the Ethics Commissioner.

The procedure to be followed by officers of the Legislature when tabling reports is very clearly laid out in the relevant legislation. Section 20.1(1) of the Auditor General Act states that

when the Assembly is not sitting and the Auditor General considers it important that a report presented to the chair of the Select Standing Committee under section 17(3), 19(5) or 20(2) be made available to the Members of the Assembly and to the public, the Auditor General may, on 3 days' notice to the Speaker of the Assembly, deliver copies of the report to the Speaker, who shall forthwith distribute the copies to the office of each Member of the Assembly.

Section 20.1(2) of the act specifies that only "after the Speaker has distributed copies of the report" may the Auditor General make the report public. The spirit of these sections was clearly contravened when these reports were made public both prior to the Speaker distributing copies of the report to all MLAs and prior to the official release by the Auditor General.

Similarly, section 25(7) of the Conflicts of Interest Act requires that the Ethics Commissioner report his findings to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. Section 28(2) then requires that the Speaker make copies of the report available to the general public. Section 25(8) allows the commissioner to provide a copy of the report to the member against whom an allegation has been made and to the leader of his party, in this case the Premier, prior to the report going to the Speaker.

On October 13 the *Edmonton Journal* printed a story entitled "Fort Mac land deals handled poorly, report says." The story included an overview of the contents of the Auditor General's report on land sales in the Fort McMurray area based on information provided by "sources familiar with the report." The article acknowledges that the report was not due to be released until the end of October.

On October 18, two days before the scheduled public release of the report by the Ethics Commissioner, our office received a number

of phone calls from the media, who had detailed information respecting the contents of the report.

3:50

About 9 o'clock on Thursday morning, October 20, two hours to the report's public release, the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo and Minister of Environment appeared personally on the 630 CHED QR77 Rutherford Show referencing the report, claiming exoneration, and also demanding an apology from my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. The same morning a column in the *Calgary Herald* by columnist Tom Olsen also referenced the report. Clearly, members of the media had either been provided with copies of the report prior to its release or had been given detailed briefings on its content.

On October 27 the *Edmonton Journal* printed a story entitled "Ill regulator passes Dr. Dunn's checkup. No big trouble at Securities Commission: Auditor General." The story provided an overview of the contents of the Auditor General's report on the Alberta Securities Commission based on information again provided by sources "familiar with the report." The report was not scheduled to be released until October 27.

Mr. Speaker, in each of the instances that I have outlined, it is clear that members of the media had been provided copies of the reports in question or had been thoroughly briefed on their contents. I would note that the Auditor General has undertaken to investigate the source of these releases. Notwithstanding the results of the Auditor General's investigation into the leaked reports, I believe that this House has suffered an affront to its dignity and certainly to its authority. The Ethics Commissioner and the Auditor General are officers of this Legislature. Their investigations are fundamentally important tools that the Legislature uses to evaluate the financial activities of the government and the activities of its own members as they relate to ethics and conflict of interest.

In a press release dated October 25, 2005, the Auditor General stated that

these unauthorized disclosures to the media interfere with the integrity of the audit process thereby treating the Legislative Assembly with disrespect. The long-established legislative requirement that reports of the Auditor General be made available to all MLAs simultaneously and before any public release is designed to protect the integrity of the parliamentary process, including the independence of the legislative auditor.

Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms, sixth edition, in section 33 states:

The most fundamental privilege of the House as a whole is to establish rules of procedure for itself and to enforce them. A few rules are laid down in the Constitution Act, but the vast majority are resolutions of the House which may be added to, amended, or repealed at the discretion of the House.

The Auditor General Act and the Conflicts of Interest Act are literally resolutions of this House. The acts carry no statutory consequences for breaching the provisions regarding tabling, so the ultimate weight they carry is the authority of this Assembly and the respect held for its resolutions.

Maingot says in *Parliamentary Privilege*, second edition:

As in the case of a Superior Court, when by some act or word a person disobeys or is openly disrespectful of the authority of the House of Commons or Senate or of their lawful commands, that person is subject to being held in contempt of the House . . . or Senate as the case may be; therefore it will be seen that the Senate and House of Commons have the power or right to punish actions that, while not appearing to be breaches of any specific privilege, are offences against their authority or dignity. These may include disobedience to their legitimate commands or libels upon them, their

officers, or their Members. Such actions, though often called "breaches of privilege," should more properly be considered "contempts."

I'll skip over some of the other things, Mr. Speaker, but I've referenced them.

I think that there can be no doubt that the leak of these reports was intentional and for political purpose. Not only does this undermine the ability of our officers to provide objective and dispassionate reports; it also undermines our abilities as members of this Assembly to deal with these reports in a proper and constructive way. Given the seriousness of the implications of the breaches that have occurred and the citations noted here, I would urge that you find that a prima facie case exists for breach of privilege.

Mr. Speaker, I think you have already indicated that you believe that there was a breach, but the question was whether or not anyone had been identified, either by the Auditor General or anyone else, to hold to account for the breach. It is my submission that the Minister of Environment, whether or not he released the reports to the media directly, certainly was on the media discussing the contents of the reports prior to their release, and I would submit to you that that is a contempt of the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. My comments with respect to this are similar as to the previous motion as it relates to the Auditor General's reports. They are identical. It seems to me that the situation is that he is investigating them, and we should await that report.

With respect to the second matter, my understanding there is that once again we do not have a source. We don't know. The circumstances surrounding it are unknown. I think it is very difficult for this Assembly to deal with a contempt application where the source is not known. The member opposite has, you know, indicated his opinion of the matter. They expressed their opinion of a matter, which gave rise to the Ethics Commissioner reviewing the matter in the first place.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo in his review with the Ethics Commissioner asked him to conduct an investigation into allegations made against him by members of the New Democratic opposition, and the Ethics Commissioner did that. He said, "As I have not found any breach of the Conflicts of Interest Act, I recommend no sanctions." That was the conclusion of that particular report. They're back at it today indicating that their opinion with respect to the matter falls short of the mark. Once again, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me difficult to deal with a contempt application where there is no one that can be addressed specifically.

I'd also make this observation with respect to findings. It seems to me that this particular Assembly needs circumstances put before it in order to deal with the issue of a prima facie case of contempt, not a matter of contempt per se, and in the end those circumstances may come out if we give an investigation.

With respect to the Ethics Commissioner my understanding is that there is no investigation being conducted at this time, and I'm not aware that there is any intention of an investigation to be done.

Thank you.

The Speaker: It's my common practice on the day of the opening of a session to consult with the Ethics Commissioner and ask a question: is any Member of the Legislative Assembly of the province of Alberta under review? The answer as of 1 o'clock today was: no,

there is no Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta under review by the office of the Ethics Commissioner. That's common practice. I do this all the time just to make sure, in the event that certain things happen in this Assembly, that there's protection provided for all hon. members.

Hon. leader of the third party, the first part of your argument dealt with the reports of the Auditor General. I have reported in the previous point that I did have a consultation with the office of the Auditor General on the same day that the news release was put out, and the quotation in it was shared with me. I was advised as the Speaker that one investigation had started, that there would be another one, and the report would be released as has been outlined on that particular news release.

With respect to the Ethics Commissioner it's my understanding in consultation that I've had as well that late in the afternoon of the previous day – and I shouldn't be speaking on behalf of the Minister of Environment, but I think it's important for complete transparency – the Minister of Environment was provided a draft copy of the Ethics Commissioner's report by the Ethics Commissioner. By the Ethics Commissioner. It's further my understanding that the following morning the Minister of Environment did go on a certain radio show and did reference the report, which he believed was his report to do with as he wanted to do. It was later in the day that the Ethics Commissioner report was provided to my office, and it was released at a certain time.

So I have undertaken some investigation of this matter, and I'm being very, very transparent and open with the House with respect to this.

4:00

I'll provide further comment with respect to this matter. There is one underlying thing. Whatever we find and whether or not it's a prima facie case, the fact of the matter is that this is really a very terrible situation. You've got a situation where you have two officers of the Assembly. They do not report to the government. They don't report to any particular minister. They don't report to the Speaker. They report to the Assembly. They're officers. We have passed legislation in this Assembly to declare these people independent. We have to respect them, and we have to provide them with the resources to do the job that we have passed legislation to provide them for, and we have to provide them with the opportunity to function in an environment without intimidation, without any kinds of pressure points from members, the media, or anyone else.

There's a process, a time-honoured process that has been set up that these people will consult with affected, impacted people when they prepare their reports. That's a time-honoured one, and it's based on trust. So if someone is leaking information, whether or not it's in the office of one of the officers of the Legislative Assembly, which is a possibility, or another office, either way that's not very good, and in some jurisdictions it's very much punishable.

The difficulty standing here today is that I can't do anything more than agree with the tone put forward by the two members that basically say that the only honourable way for all of this is that Members of the Legislative Assembly must all have access to this information. These are officers of the Legislative Assembly, and we have to all deal with trust, and there shouldn't be any of this other stuff happening. I think this is very contemptuous without any doubt at all, and maybe that sums up what both members really wanted to say in a different way. What I fear is that now these officers are going to go off by themselves, never to come back here until the final report, with no consultation with anybody because there will be questions, and the whole process will become less effective and less efficient, and that is the downside of what may have happened.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Government Motions**

Committee Membership Change

24. Mr. Hancock moved:

Be it resolved that the following change to the following committee be approved by the Assembly: on the Select Special Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee that Mr. Elsalhy replace Ms Pastoor.

Mr. Hancock: We are bringing forward this motion to accommodate the wishes of the Liberal opposition, and any explanation for the change I presume would come from them, but I would ask the Assembly to agree to the wishes of the Liberal opposition in this regard.

The Speaker: Opposition House Leader, any comments?

Ms Blakeman: Just my thanks to the Government House Leader for acquiescing to our desire. For various reasons and time constraints we require the switch in membership. We wanted to have as much full participation as possible by the opposition in various committees, and we believe that this will facilitate that.

Thank you.

[Government Motion 24 carried]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I'll call the Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 15

Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005

The Chair: Does anyone wish to participate in the debate? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Webber: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I rise today to discuss Bill 15, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2005. The minister of human resources, the WCB, and I thoroughly considered the various public comments made by the opposition caucuses and by stakeholders. We now have amendments to the bill, and they're being circulated. It is my pleasure to move these amendments.

The Chair: We will refer to this amendment as amendment A1. Would the Member for Calgary-Foothills like to proceed?

Mr. Webber: Again, Mr. Chairman, the members will have received their package of amendments very soon, I hope.

Vesting of these actions with the WCB remains. Subrogation is the wrong legal term given the degree of control the courts say the WCB has. The word "subrogation" has prompted a small segment of the legal profession to challenge the WCB's position in order that those lawyers can charge higher legal fees. The word "vesting" clarifies the intent of section 22 of the Workers' Compensation Act when taken as a whole, even in its preamended form. It removes ambiguity and stops the injured worker from being a pawn when a lawyer wants to charge higher fees than the WCB allows. So vesting remains, Mr. Chairman; however, there have been considerable efforts to reinforce the rights of the worker and to reinforce the

checks and balances that the WCB will be obliged to follow within such a framework.

Firstly, any semblance of even perceived retroactive application of this bill has been removed by significant amendment to section 22(2) of the act. These changes will apply only to accidents that occur after proclamation of this bill.

Also, Mr. Chairman, there was concern that even though the Alberta Court of Appeal upheld the ultimate control and legitimate interest that the WCB has in these third-party actions in the current act, measures needed to be taken to ensure that the WCB treated the injured worker like a partner that would be consulted throughout the process and prior to any settlement. As such, the strong language of “solely” and “sole” have been removed in subsections (3) and (5) respectively.

Additionally, consequences for non co-operation, although an element of that must be retained, have been relaxed and clarified. First, co-operation with the required litigation is standard practice in any sort of insurance law. The employers who fund this system should not bear additional cost when there is money on the table or one party is not co-operative. Bill 15 makes the duty to co-operate clear. It balances the rights of workers and employers. So while the necessity to co-operate does need to be protected, it is now made clear that any suspension of income replacement benefits is temporary and lasts only as long as the period of non co-operation.

What will not be suspended regardless of co-operation is any of the medically related services offered, co-ordinated, or reimbursed by the WCB, such as scheduled surgeries, therapy, or prescription medications. Also, the clause suggesting overpayment recovery has been completely deleted.

4:10

Mr. Chairman, we have introduced a new clause to this bill that sets out in law that the employer of an injured worker cannot put pressure on that worker not to sue. In reality non co-operation is extremely rare. Most workers have wanted to co-operate because it is in their clear financial interest to do so. Under this practice I understand that approximately \$13 million is paid annually to injured workers and their dependants over and above the compensation benefits that they have received.

Also, Mr. Chairman, a clause has been added to the bill – it’ll be 22.1 – that allows for the reverse of vesting. WCB will now have the ability to divest a third-party action. In such an instance the injured worker would own the claim completely but, of course, would also own all the risk that WCB would have otherwise taken.

For example, a young working Albertan was recently injured in an explosion while operating an ice resurfacing machine. He sustained third-degree burns over 85 per cent of his body. The WCB continues to provide him with full benefits in amounts already upwards of \$2 million. With the counsel of his choice legal action was brought against the manufacturer of the ice resurfer. After a month-long trial the judge awarded the worker zero. The worker was found to be at fault, so he gets nothing from the court. The court also ordered this worker to pay the defendant’s costs, some \$750,000. The WCB paid those costs. The WCB also supported this worker in an appeal of that ruling with success, as a new trial has been granted.

While subsection (5) of section 22 of the act sets out the process for the relationship between the injured worker, the WCB, and private legal counsel if there is any, it was decided to have these rules set out in the regulation rather than just in WCB policy.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, this bill ensures that workers get a minimum of 25 per cent of any settlement or court award. It caps the amount that private injury lawyers can charge at 25 per cent. It ensures that employers do not subsidize private insurers, in most

cases automobile insurance companies, through the employer-funded WCB system. It has no element of retroactivity whatsoever. It clarifies and enhances a fundamental principle of insurance law that says that in exchange for us insuring you, you need to help us recover any of our costs if you can. It gives workers on temporary partial disability benefit the same benefit of cost-of-living increases that workers on other WCB benefit streams get. Finally, it gives members of the WCB board of directors the same immunity that virtually all government-mandated board members enjoy.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I’d like at this point to adjourn the debate to give us time to have a look at some of the amendments, and I would ask that the committee rise and report at this point.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 15. 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?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the fact that this is the first day of session and we have little available for discussion, I would ask for unanimous consent of the House to allow us to proceed to second reading of Bill 47 on the same day as first reading.

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**
Second Reading
Bill 47
Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s a pleasure to rise and move second reading to Bill 47 and to open debate on Bill 47, the Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act.

This bill aims to create an Alberta association of former MLAs which would be nonpartisan in nature and would be open to all former MLAs regardless of party allegiance. The creation of the Alberta association of former MLAs can be an important part of the celebration of the centennial of the first sitting of the Alberta Legislature, coming up next March. I’d like to once again recognize the Speaker of the House for his encouragement and support of the concept of an association of former members as an initiative to be

part of the Legislative Assembly's centennial celebrations.

In 2003 the members of this Chamber debated and passed a private member's motion which I had brought forward concerning this association. At that time I stated my intention to bring this idea forward as legislation, which is now Bill 47 before us.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by giving some background information. The impetus for establishing a former members' association comes from a conference I had the opportunity to attend in the fall of 2002. This conference was hosted by the association of former members in Quebec, and it gave me the opportunity to see the activities and initiatives which are being undertaken by other former members' associations which are currently active. At present, British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, and the Parliament in Ottawa have former members' associations. All of these organizations work to strengthen parliamentary democracy, and this is a goal which is worth pursuing here in Alberta I believe.

Mr. Speaker, to that end, the primary goal of this association would be to tap into the knowledge and experience that former members of this Chamber have gained while representing their constituents as MLAs. This experience can be used to help strengthen the system of parliamentary democracy in Alberta and across Canada. In other former members' associations this is being achieved through speaking programs targeted primarily at schools and universities, enabling students to become more aware of the functions and processes of government, which serves all Albertans.

Albertans who have sat and debated issues in this Chamber on behalf of their constituents have a great understanding and knowledge of democracy in the parliamentary system in the province. That knowledge is a resource which can be used to strengthen parliamentary democracy in our province. In addition, the association would be able to serve as a vehicle through which relations with other former members' associations could be strengthened. This could be accomplished through meetings with other former members' associations on both a national and international level.

The United States Association of Former Members of Congress has had a great deal of success with one of their programs, that pairs former Congress members, one from each political party, to speak to university students. The Congress to campus program has been operating since 1976 and has visited over 200 campuses throughout the United States. Attempts to measure the effects of the speaking tour have shown that students react very positively to this program. In their annual report to Congress, May 15, 2003, they presented the following findings:

Those students who have contact with former Members during their Congress to Campus visits have a measurably more favourable view of public servants and of public service as a career option than similar students who do not have the opportunity to interact with the visiting former Members.

Closer to home the House of Commons in Ottawa also has a former members' association. Some of you may remember – I think it was last year or perhaps two years ago – that they had a meeting here in Edmonton, and many of them here visited the Legislature at that time. They, too, are active in educational programs such as sponsoring several academic scholarship programs through their charity, the educational foundation. These scholarships are focused on increasing students' interest in parliamentary democracy.

4:20

In addition to serving the interests of the public and parliamentary democracy, the association would act to foster a spirit of community amongst former MLAs as well as create a means for dialogue between former and current MLAs.

Mr. Speaker, last year I sent out a letter to gauge the receptiveness of former MLAs to a former members' association such as this one.

The majority of replies by far were either positive or very positive. So the support for a former members' association from former members is strong, and it would be appropriate and fitting to initiate the association on the 100th anniversary of the Legislature.

There have been some questions raised regarding this bill which I would like to address. One question is that of funding. Who will fund the association? This association would be funded, similar to other associations, through three avenues: membership fees, probably a subscription fee to a newsletter as is the case in all of the other associations, and finally donations.

Another question which has been asked is: why use legislation to create this association? Why don't former members get together on their own? Well, the truth is that this approach has been tried in other jurisdictions, and it has not worked. Involving government legislation adds a sense of legitimacy to the organization, and it is this legitimacy that has allowed associations in other jurisdictions to be as successful as they have been. Further, it is an expression by the members of this Legislature that a former members' association can be a valuable resource to the people of Alberta in promoting our parliamentary system. It is my belief that the creation of the Alberta association of former MLAs would be a great benefit to Albertans on the whole by heightening understanding of our system of parliamentary democracy.

Mr. Speaker, there is one final point I would like to make regarding the formation of this association, and that is regarding timing. This past year Albertans have been celebrating the centennial anniversary of the formation of our province. In a short few months we will be passing another milestone in our province. March 15, 2006, will mark the centennial of the first sitting of the Alberta Legislature. I feel that having a former members' association in place for that anniversary would be a fitting way of recognizing the contributions of legislators who came before us and who had a hand in making Alberta the great province which it is today. A former members' association is a very fitting centennial project for this Legislature to support.

Once again I would like to thank the Speaker of the House for his continued support and encouragement of this initiative. His help has made it possible for this legislation to be debated before the centennial anniversary of the first sitting of the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to say that by forming this association, we have the opportunity to create an organization which will help to strengthen parliamentary democracy in our province. We have the opportunity to work with former members' associations in other provinces and other countries to strengthen the parliamentary system in Canada. I would ask that all members on both sides of the Chamber please stand with me in support of this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and speak in second reading to Bill 47, which I think was formerly known as private member's Bill 207 as sponsored by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose. I have to admit that my initial reaction was – well, I guess if you looked at this as different times. Given some of the days that I've had in here and the experiences I've had serving in the Assembly, the idea of socializing with other members of this Assembly frankly puzzles me. I can make fun of it now, but I have to make the serious point as well that I think times are different. Times have changed. Certainly, the tone that's in the House today, the level of respect that the two sides have for each other, the extremely adversarial nature of both this process but also our response to it, has not been conducive to friendly repartee. Let me put it that way.

You know, I talked to some members that served in the '80s and early '90s, and they talked about going for coffee with people on the other side. I can't imagine that, frankly. I'll accept that we're dealing with different times here, and this is, I know, a genuine desire and proposal from the Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose to put this together. I guess I sort of say: well, I can see how it would be of use, and certainly there would probably be fairly heavy subscription from people who are already retired, but I'm struggling to see where my place in this organization would be by the time I retire. [interjections] And there we go. There's the typical reaction, with a good deal of heckling: will I please leave now, and, no, they wouldn't want me to be a member of that club.

That's exactly what I'm talking about, Mr. Speaker. I'm being asked to support an association which is essentially an old boys' club, and I'm not old, nor am I a boy. So do I really want to support this? Well, frankly, I'm not sure.

I think to myself: "All right. Well, what are they going to do?" I know with the Retired Teachers' Association they mostly get together for social occasions. They mark special days. They host a tea, I think, for retiring teachers as a sort of special occasion for their comrades and colleagues. Well, there's nothing wrong with that. I don't know why we need to sanction it in this Assembly, but there's certainly nothing wrong with the idea of it.

I know that there's long been a golf tournament that's been organized by retired members. That has existed for some time, so I guess part of this could be golf tournaments.

I'm interested to hear what the Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose is saying that some of the other associations have been involved with. I mean, certainly the idea of a mentorship program: excellent. Or a scholarship program is fine. I mean, this is one of these bills that comes forward in the House and you think: gee, when we only get to sit for 50 days max – I think we're at day 42 or 43 today. If we make it through to day 50, I'll celebrate. Of all the issues that there are out there, good and bad, in Alberta today, I have to admit that I do look at this bill and think: hmm, there are other things that we could be spending our time on here. Then again, why can't this Assembly do some nice things every now and then?

There is a real question. The member has acknowledged that people are saying to him: why on earth does this bill have to go through this Assembly? As best as I can ascertain, what's being sought here is the equivalent of the little gold seal that goes on the jam jars that says, you know: by appointment to the Queen. It indicates that there is some affiliation with a higher power, if you will, or a larger entity that gives it that sort of gold seal, that special bit that connects this organization to this particular Legislative Assembly. [interjections] Given the heckling that I'm hearing from the minister for aboriginal affairs and the minister for infrastructure, I'm sure they'll be commenting later in a full debate, and I look forward to it.

4:30

There's nothing wrong with seeking that gold seal of approval, but it is a little curious because we don't do it for other organizations. Perhaps the member would be able to do the research and come back and say: yes, in fact the Alberta Teachers' Association does have it in their charter that there would be a Retired Teachers' Association that's affiliated. Maybe that's a bit more commonplace, and if that's the case, well, I'm not going to refute it.

I was looking at some of the bios of members who have served in this Assembly, and I'm reminded again, as the Speaker gave brief eulogies and descriptions of former members who've passed away since we were last sitting, that we often hear of the names of the legislative committees that the members were sitting on. In fact, I

managed to get a little bit of information about what those committees are or have been from 1986 to 2005. Mr. Speaker, I'm really struck that at that time there were many more, first of all, legislative committees, which would be all-party committees, and more participation from members of the Official Opposition. So a different time.

I'm mindful of the sponsoring Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose talking about possible activities for this organization being consideration of democratic renewal. Perhaps one of the first things I could suggest to be on their agenda would be encouraging their colleagues on the government side to go back and have another look at the purpose of legislative committees. I believe that in my time we've had – I know, actually, that we've had legislative committees simply struck from the record. The Law and Regulations Committee, to my mind, was always very useful and certainly could play a very useful role in what we do here and cut down on some of the misunderstandings and the miscues and, frankly, some of that adversarial nature that happens here when the two sides simply come to loggerheads without understanding what each is trying to say. Those kinds of issues get worked out in the committee structure.

The Committee on Law and Regulations, for example, was a particular favourite of my former colleague for Calgary-Buffalo. He often talked about referring amendments, for example, to an all-party Committee on Law and Regulations, which would have allowed us to meet in that sort of a setting and go through both regulations and amendments before they came back to the floor, a very useful process, I feel. Interestingly enough, that committee has been completely struck. It doesn't exist anymore. So I guess that when our time comes and others are looking at our bios, they will see how few legislative committees in fact meet and, more to the point, how few times we have members of the opposition involved in these committees.

This government is very fond of finding work for its backbenchers by coming up with road shows for them to do over the summer. Sometimes those are prompted by real need; for example, the response to the Auditor General's report on long-term care facilities. The Minister of Health and Wellness's answer to that was to strike an MLA committee to tour the province. I have to give credit to my colleague the Member for Lethbridge-East for immediately saying: "Excuse me, but I'm a member of the opposition. I have a great deal of expertise in this area, and you should put me on the committee." To give credit to the Minister of Health and Wellness, she did. I think that having a member of the Official Opposition but also someone with a great deal of expertise in that area on the committee really helped that whole process and, I think, gave it credibility. She was also able to get public consultations involved in that where it wouldn't have been before. So there's a very, you know, quick example of the benefits of involving members of the Official Opposition in these committees.

But this government tends to strike – and frankly, I've lost track. There are probably half a dozen of them out there right now that are out and running, with somebody being paid extra money to run them, that report back at some point to the government, and occasionally there are reports from them which rarely get released to the public. I think that that's an issue for democratic renewal and, again, maybe one that we can have this organization look at.

But back to where I was starting with this. As I looked at some of the past members, their bios, and which of the committees they sat on, you know, one of the ones that's most interesting is the Public Affairs Committee, which has never been called in my nine years here, ever. As a matter of fact, I think that it might have been one of the ones that was struck along with the Law and Regulations Committee.

As I looked through this, I noticed that a certain member for Barrhead-Westlock, who is now the Speaker of our Assembly, when he was House leader was instrumental in commencing a number of select special committees on parliamentary reform and, again, involved members of the Official Opposition on that.

So going back to what's being proposed here, do I have a particular problem with a committee being created by an act of legislation? Not particularly. It's a little curious that it's getting such special attention, which I don't think is accorded to retired members of other professions. I'm willing to be corrected on that one if someone can show me or bring up the other charters in which this is commonly done. If that's the case, then you would need an act of the Legislature to create a retired members' society for this particular job, if you want to put it that way.

I'm glad the member answered the question about funding because that's one that we hear as well. There's always a suspicion that somehow this organization is going to have access to grant money or some kind of government funding or operational money that other organizations don't get access to. There's a concept of fairness here that I think sometimes eludes this particular government. It's one that's important, and it's important in this context. The member has made it clear that the funding for the organization is to come from membership fees, newsletter advertising and, I'm assuming, fees to get the newsletter – subscription fees is a better way of putting that – and donations.

I would be interested in hearing from the sponsoring member or others if there are any plans to apply for any other kind of grant program that is currently available either municipally, provincially, or federally. I think that since it's of such interest to people, I'd like to know if that's contemplated or perhaps if it would be specifically prohibited in the charter of the organization.

The last thing that the member talked about was why under the Legislative Assembly, and I've already dealt with that one.

Again, I have no particular problem with this. I just question why we're spending time on it and also wonder how it's actually going to apply in the future. I can see where it may have worked in the past, but I am at a bit of a loss to see how it's going to work for us, given our relationship in this Assembly now, because I think times are different. I don't think that's a good thing, and I have certainly been vocal about my disapproval of the way things operate in here. I think that it is discouraging for some people to even contemplate being elected to this Assembly because of that tone of rough and ready and roll up your sleeves and get ready to slug it out. You know, I'll be interested to see how this all plays out.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the bill in second reading. I'll look forward to maybe getting some responses to my questions. Thank you.

4:40

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

Mr. Shariff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise and join the debate on Bill 47, the Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act. Having heard the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, I hope my remarks will help clarify a few more points for her and earn her support for this bill as well.

When I initially saw this bill idea, the first thought that flashed through my mind was: how much is it going to cost the Alberta taxpayers to institute and fund this association on an annual basis? I was very encouraged to see that there would be no direct funding from the province and that the proposed association's budget will be derived from yearly membership fees.

In my remarks today I will discuss the positive outcomes I

perceive coming from this piece of legislation. As a representative of the constituency of Calgary-McCall one of the regretful aspects of my job is that I have to decline attending functions in my riding simply because of time constraints. Often these time constraints happen when I am in Edmonton attending the business of the Legislative Assembly while a school requests my participation in a mock parliament debate.

Mr. Speaker, there is undoubtedly a thirst for knowledge of parliamentary process in all corners of this great province and around the world. My experiences have led me to believe that Albertans want to learn more about the system that governs them. They are engaged in the issues that affect not only their own lives but the lives of their fellow citizens. Considering our current resources and time restrictions, it is difficult and, quite frankly, impossible to meet the demands placed upon our current MLAs regarding visiting with and explaining to Albertans and other Canadians the intricacies of our parliamentary system. What can happen and what this bill proposes is to have former members of its Legislative Assembly combine their efforts, knowledge, and experiences through the proposed association and have them tour the province and the country in order to bring a broader perspective of how our government operates in a legislative setting.

Spreading the word and promoting the ideals of parliamentary democracy would be something that I am sure many of us would look forward to pursuing once our time in this Legislative Assembly comes to an end. While the majority of former MLAs are involved in a great number of organizations and projects that are continually improving our province and our communities, the main benefit of this type of association is that it will allow former members to pursue these projects with the help of their other former colleagues, thus allowing them to engage in these efforts through a more collaborative approach.

One of the most successful former members' associations, the United States Association of Former Members of Congress, has been able to accomplish a number of amazing feats. A hundred and fifty thousand students have been spoken to across 207 different campuses. The association leads workshops in emerging democracies, and it continually sends congressional study groups abroad to raise awareness and foster the ideals of representative democracy.

Other jurisdictions in Canada have followed the lead by the United States' former members' association and generated similar results. While not as large as the American counterparts, Canadian associations are continually growing and engaging a large number of individuals in democratic discussions through conferences and guest lecture series.

One of the most important aspects of these associations is that they are nonpartisan, which helps create a friendly and relaxed atmosphere, one that isn't compromised by party politics. With this in mind, there will be no hidden agenda for Alberta's former members' association.

Mr. Speaker, the focus of our Alberta former members' association would be based on the parliamentary system that we practise and not on the issues which bring about disengagement and political differences. I believe that all of us can agree that we have a very good system of governance here in Alberta, and I believe that our experiences and our successes should be shared with the rest of our province and the world.

I feel that it's very important Albertans are educated on the system that governs them. I feel strongly that people in communities across the globe who are striving to gain the same freedoms that we sometimes take for granted are able to learn more about how our system operates through the experiences of those who helped it function in a practical setting.

We have an opportunity here to help form an association that will bring together some of the great minds of this province. I sincerely hope that the intentions of this bill are not misconstrued and falsely interpreted as forming some sort of a leisure club for former members. Promoting the ideals of parliamentary democracy is not a partisan process, and the already established former members' associations in other jurisdictions have risen above any party or partisan arguments. Former parliamentary, congressional, and Senate members have already produced great accomplishments by working together to break down barriers between citizens and their elected officials, and I hope that former Alberta legislators will be able to take part in these admirable tasks.

With this in mind, I will be supporting this bill, and I encourage all other members to join me in doing the same. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, up to the next five minutes is available for questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a) if anyone wishes to participate in that part. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question I would have for the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall is simply this. He indicated in his remarks that no direct funding would be sought from the Alberta government. I'm just wondering whether or not he might be then leaving the door open for indirect funding to be sought from the Alberta government.

Mr. Shariff: In my personal opinion, once the act is proclaimed, it will establish the Alberta association of former MLAs as a nonprofit body corporate. Once that's the case – it's a nonprofit body – then that nonprofit body should be able to access any funding that's available to other nonprofit organizations. So let's say, for example, the election that happened in Ukraine required people to go and observe. Former MLAs could access CIDA funding to go and do that work. There's nothing wrong with that. So I would support that form of indirect funding.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone else wish to participate under Standing Order 29(2)(a) in the debate?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Agnihotri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour to rise and speak to Bill 47, formerly Bill 207, Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act. The object of this bill is a nonpartisan, nonprofit association of former MLAs. The primary functions of this association are to promote parliamentary democracy and the interests of former MLAs.

This bill intends to represent a more formal public status or acknowledgement kind of association. It is good to have an association like this one in Alberta. We have one in Ontario and B.C. and the Parliament of Canada, as I heard. But it must be nonpartisan and nonpolitical and nonprofit. We should compare similar associations and check with the other associations' bylaws as well.

I would support this bill with some reservations. I basically commend the idea, but do we really need this bill? Why can't we establish a registered society or association without the interference of the Legislature? Would it fulfill or stick to its mandate? Mr. Speaker, we have unequal distribution of former MLAs in Alberta. The group may have difficulty in engaging in activities or framing their messages in ways that didn't support the status quo. It is unfortunate but not surprising that the government members are

more interested in forming this association. The group's mandate should be changed to expressly include looking at needed reforms. Is its mandate appropriate? No. It certainly needs some further reforms. It must be a politically neutral body. There is mounting evidence that such a forum is required and supported by the public.

4:50

Public educational efforts around parliamentary traditions are the importance of public service. I think it should be added to their mandate. There is very little reason to believe that former MLAs have a unique set of interests that need not be promoted through this group. What other interests they may have could revolve around pay, pension, et cetera. This association should not be entitled to become a lobby group. There is no provision for it being supported by public funds. So if it were to lobby for these interests, at least it would not be doing so with public funds. If they were able to apply, such as nonprofit organizations, for funding from the Alberta government, from an institution like the Wild Rose or the lottery, would this not be considered conflict of interest?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? If not, the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to join debate on Bill 47, the Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act, sponsored by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose. I would like to begin by thanking the hon. member for bringing forward this idea. This is an issue that should be important to all Albertans who value the efficient and democratic function of this House.

The purpose of Bill 47 is to create an alumni association for former members of this Assembly. First and foremost, I believe that the most important aspect of this bill is that it would not require any public money. The association will be entirely self-sufficient and not dependent on taxpayers. No start-up fees, no seed money, nothing, not one thin dime, Mr. Speaker. I think that this point cannot be ignored. The Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians is a model that this proposed action could be based upon. Although they are supported partially by the House of Commons, the bulk of their revenue comes from membership fees.

In the proposed bill there is no requirement that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta provide finances to this organization. If members choose to join the association, then they are free to do so. This alumni association would be nonpartisan and open to all former members of this House. Being a nonpartisan body is important as it will allow the opportunity for members to continue to work for the betterment of parliamentary democracy after they have retired from official public service. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to someday sitting down with the Liberals and the NDs and the member from the Alberta Alliance Party to discuss possible reforms in a friendly, nonpartisan manner.

Now, knowing the ins and outs of a parliamentary system can be a difficult thing to learn. I would argue that both current and former Members of the Legislative Assembly would qualify as experts. The knowledge that MLAs gather during their tenure is valuable to future generations, and creating this association would give a venue for this knowledge to be shared.

The Alberta association of former MLAs could share their knowledge of parliamentary systems not only with Albertans, but they could share this knowledge with Canadians and others around the world. Just because a member ceases to be an MLA does not mean that they no longer have a contribution to make to the betterment of Alberta and our parliamentary democracy. Establish-

ing such an occasion would give former members another meaningful way of continuing their public service, to give back in a voluntary capacity.

Now, as I know most of you can attest to, being a member of this House is a demanding and rewarding job. It takes a lot out of a person to be a member. In exchange for all that being a member takes, there are many benefits that come with the job. Creating an alumni association is a small way that members can pay back Albertans for the opportunities presented to them because they've been members of this House.

Now, often we hear how people have become apathetic about politics. This general belief has been widely supported by the large reductions in voter turnout during elections at all levels. The story goes that a political candidate knocked on the door of a house and asked the occupant what the biggest reason was for low voter turnout. Was it ignorance, or was it apathy? The occupant replied: "I don't know, and I don't care," and they slammed the door shut.

The alumni association is a body that has the potential to re-engage Albertans with our political process. Freed from partisan ties, former members can travel around the province and provide first-hand accounts of what parliamentary democracy is all about. Without partisan ties people's cynicism toward politicians is diminished. I would ask this House: who would be better at rekindling political participation than former members of this House? You see, current members are likely too busy dealing with urgent matters and constituent concerns to undertake comprehensive examinations of the political process. Also, current members may be viewed as being biased towards one position or the other because of their partisan ties. As a nonpartisan body the alumni association would be able to take the time and engage Albertans without worrying about re-election. Former members will have more time to properly discuss democratic renewal initiatives as they have the expertise to conduct such investigations.

Albertans would value having the opportunity to speak to former MLAs about their experiences and learn their thoughts on the functioning of our parliamentary system. I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that former members of this House would welcome the opportunity to educate people on politics with the goal of increasing participation in our system.

Now, there's also the opportunity for former members to share their expertise with emerging democracies around the world. Members of the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians plan to engage in activities such as these, and there's certainly a role for former members of this House in a similar capacity.

Mr. Speaker, the creation of a former members' association is in line with initiatives that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta currently undertakes. Currently this House is part of a number of interparliamentary associations. We work with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to promote parliamentary democracy throughout the Commonwealth and have formed numerous bilateral relations with American Legislatures.

Mr. Speaker, apart from undertaking work to enhance our system, students and charities are also likely to benefit from the creation of this association. This association will contain many influential people and should have no trouble launching a speakers' series that could raise significant amounts of money. These fundraising endeavours could be used to create scholarship funds to promote opportunities for university and high school students to study Parliament both at home and abroad. Such exchanges are currently supported by the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians and would be a natural task for an association of former MLAs to undertake.

Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure most members know, the Legislative

Assembly of Alberta currently runs the School at the Legislature program. Now, an alumni of this House could possibly speak to students involved in this program and share their knowledge directly with students. Additionally, the presence of such an association could allow Alberta schools a significant distance from Edmonton to experience the program with former local members instructing the students. Who better to be a guest speaker to an eager group of students than a person with first-hand knowledge? Furthermore, students involved in the Forum for Young Albertans pay a visit to the Legislature each year. A former members' association could partner with programs such as these to enhance the educational experience students receive in these programs.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 47 is not proposing an idea that is unheard of. In 1970 the United States Association of Former Members of Congress was formed. This association works to enhance the awareness of the role of Congress both domestically and internationally. An association of former Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta could also fulfill a similar function and help to educate the people of Alberta about the role that the Legislative Assembly plays.

Other Canadian provinces have also developed similar organizations. B.C., Ontario, and Quebec have all created such associations. Each of these provinces' associations plays a similar role to the vision for an Alberta alumni association laid out in Bill 47.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would urge all members to support this legislation and remember that there is no cost to taxpayers associated with this legislation. The people of Alberta will not be funding this endeavour, which is an important fact that all members must keep in mind. We have the potential to do great service to the cause of enhancing parliamentary democracy without imposing costs on Albertans.

After a member's term as an elected official expires, there's still much that they can contribute to society. For a person who cares as much about Alberta as an MLA does, their life of public service never really ends. The creation of an association of former Alberta legislators will allow Alberta to create an arena where former MLAs can effectively contribute to the development of parliamentary democracy in this province.

So I would urge all members to support this bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

5:00

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this Bill 47, formerly Bill 207, the Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act, sponsored by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose. While I'm not necessarily opposed to the idea, recognizing that maybe I myself many years from now might be a member of this organization . . .

Mr. R. Miller: Not for a long, long time.

Mr. Elsalhy: I'm talking 12, 15 years maybe.

I may repeat or may clarify some of the concerns that were voiced by some of my colleagues. Again, we're not necessarily against it, but we just need to clarify certain things. Is this just a club, or is it more? Is it a social gathering, or is it the launching pad for a lobbying group?

Mr. R. Miller: It could be the Alberta Senate.

Mr. Elsalhy: It could be the Alberta Senate, absolutely. Are we thinking of the establishment of an upper House?

Really the question is: what will this group's mandate be? Will its work include studying ways to rectify or address the democratic deficit that is identified in this province? Will it promote more access to information? Will it advocate more all-party representation on committees, more dialogue?

I am also concerned that when we're talking about the centennial celebrations and how this is fitting to include former MLAs in an organization that they belong to and they become a member of, I'm aware of the fact that it is the centennial year, but it's also the two years leading up to a leadership race within the governing party. One is noticing certain leadership manoeuvres, and people are trying to align themselves with one candidate or another. My question would be: are we establishing this to impress somebody, or are we trying to curry favour?

People are aware of the exercise that's happening across the floor here. We have three leadership candidates who are cabinet ministers, but then we also have three outside who are no longer members of this government. So what's happening?

I listened with keen interest to the comments made by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, and I, too, would welcome the day when that hon. member and the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford would engage in a friendly game of fencing or kick-boxing perhaps. Who said that it has to stop with golf or chess?

Seriously, though, my question would be: who is going to fund this organization? If we ask questions about its mandate and the scope of its work and the membership, who's going to fund it? Are we talking government grants? Are we talking about, like the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall mentioned, them being a nonprofit organization, and it would raise funds on its own? Would they charge membership fees for people to enter? How is it going to work?

Also, I'm concerned with section 3(1)(e), which talks about protecting and preserving and promoting the interests of former MLAs. Why is this needed, and what are those interests exactly? Again, that leads up to my prior question on them becoming or morphing into a lobbying group.

I was officially appointed today as a member of the Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee, but I sat at most of the meetings. During a discussion with the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow she mentioned that once cabinet ministers leave cabinet, they become nobodies, and I'm quoting her. I disagreed with her because they still have a lot of clout. So let me extend this same discussion and this same rationale to the hon. Premier when he retires in a year or two. He would become a member of this former MLA club, and then he might apply to receive some funding for a project.

I would find it very hard to believe that a former Premier, still fresh in people's minds, would be denied his application or that he would find difficulty in getting his approval. We could extend this to former cabinet ministers, and then, by the same token, to everybody in this House, be it government backbenchers or opposition MLAs or private members. We need a cooling-off period like we have discussed in the Conflicts of Interest Act Review Committee, and maybe we should extend it to this bill as well and to this organization. On that note, I am hoping to deliver an amendment to this act, hopefully tomorrow, and it will speak to that effect. We need a cooling-off period that would prevent people from joining this organization till after one year has elapsed.

Mr. R. Miller: And a lobbyist registry. Register as a lobbyist.

Mr. Elsalhy: And a lobbyist registry because they should register as

a lobbying group, and if they fail to or if they actually have the government's ear and they're not on the books, then we're subject to penalties and we're subject to disciplinary action.

Mr. R. Miller: That means that the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs wouldn't have been a member last year because he would have had to wait a year to join, right?

Mr. Elsalhy: Speaking to that point raised by Edmonton-Rutherford, the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs would have to send back his membership card.

Anyways, my next question is talking about meetings of the board, and maybe I'm early because it's not in committee yet. Section 12(4) talks about "the affirmative votes of the majority of the directors present at a meeting at which a quorum is present" and that being "sufficient to pass a resolution or bylaw of the Association." We know that for the past 34 years the majority of governments in this province were all Conservative, and although we're working to change that, till then the numbers speak for themselves.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre talked about her discomfort because she doesn't think she would be welcomed in that organization, although she's entitled to join it. I am also wary that when we're conducting the affairs of the organization and carrying out the duties of those who choose to join, then maybe the same argument should apply, and we need an extraordinary majority provision that would be useful here in the interest of fairness and in the interest of having all former MLAs from all the different stripes and all the different ideologies represented fairly and equally. With that, tomorrow I am hoping to table that amendment to this Bill 47, and I will invite discussion.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise for the first time in the fall sitting to speak on Bill 47. I find it interesting in some small ways that we are debating this here in the Legislature. Certainly, our caucus doesn't have a great deal of a problem with the proposal to have an Alberta association for former MLAs. I think that ambivalence might characterize our discussions on this particular bill thus far.

There are certain, I think, educational opportunities here with this association to spread the knowledge and understanding of legislative procedure throughout the province, and I would suggest that if this bill does indeed pass and the association is enacted that the focus of such a group would be towards schools and schoolchildren, to teach parliamentary procedure and the various machinations of government and democracy to our young people because, of course, the dearth of sort of interest in voting is perhaps the most pointed amongst young people in this province. You know, it is our duty to ensure that these young people turn out to be productive voting members of our society at some later time. So I think that if this act does in fact get into place, this should perhaps be moved more prominently to the purpose and the reason for this association to exist in the first place.

5:10

I think that the ideology of having some nonpartisan group for ex-MLAs to meet looks good on paper. I guess there is some obvious reservation and limitation there, but we can look past those things, I think, if we are looking at specific goals for this association to be focusing on, and as I said, education certainly is amongst the most

paramount benefits that this association could work on. As well, the act itself does discuss specifically raising money for scholarships and bursaries, and certainly, again, this would be a great philanthropic sort of endeavour for us to do once we become former MLAs. I mean, I don't think I'll ever be in that position for a long, long time, but I'm certain that many people in here at various times will be retiring or will be defeated and be joining this group, so that's great.

I do have some reservation – and I'm not exactly sure, but I did want to express it during this reading – about former members representing the province of Alberta or even the government of Alberta at certain functions. The influence of past MLAs can loom large in certain situations and potentially compromise the authority of sitting MLAs. I've been at a number of events during the course of the summer where very recently defeated MLAs were in fact taking representative roles for sitting MLAs, and I found that to be okay because, of course, I have a sense of largesse and good nature, but there is some potential for misusing this element of the association of former MLAs to perhaps create an imbalance, a democratic imbalance. [interjection] Yes. Well, that's what my fear is indeed.

As I said, if we can focus the association to work on various philanthropic pursuits, including raising money and educating the public, particularly our children, I think that they could do only a benefit and a service to the province, but if we have this sort of thing that's kind of morphing and changing over time, then the potential for abuse is definitely there.

I heard some member stealing my very clever idea that I hoped that this is not forming the nucleus of perhaps a second Chamber of Senators in the province of Alberta, where this former MLA group in fact becomes a place where appointed Senators come from, in some second Chamber. I would certainly not appreciate that, even if I was appointed myself. Our party does not condone that sort of thing. You know, at the end of the day I suppose former NDP MLAs, a growing group, very slowly of course, present company excepted, do want to have a place to perhaps associate with each other. We know that the Conservatives have a defacto ex-MLA place to meet in a club, which is often something that resembles the Petroleum Club in Calgary, or on boards of directorships for various junior oil companies in our province.

The Liberals as well do have some places to go with the various appointments and Senatorial appointments, particularly that their federal counterparts might give them, but the poor NDP doesn't have such an association to go to. We go back to doing charitable work, I suppose, so we would be happy to be participating in some way with the Alberta association of former MLAs. As I said, my caucus has some small reservations, but otherwise we certainly do support the basic idea.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Does anyone wish to have a question or comment under Standing Orders?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure to rise and speak on the Alberta Association of Former MLAs Act. This bill is not about money. It's not about funding health care or rebating money to Albertans. It is to create an organization of former MLAs. Many would ask: why do we need to debate and spend time on such an organization? I would argue that this bill is about more than just making a club for former MLAs. This bill is about strengthening democracy and promoting the public's involvement in the political process, something that seems to be happening less these days.

We hear people talking about apathy of voters, grassroots democracy, democracy deficit, and so on. Mr. Speaker, the association of former MLAs could help increase the interest in politics because members could help to teach about political processes. They can offer their personal experiences, and they could assist the public by showing them how the government could work for them. More importantly, however, an association of former MLAs could work to increase the interest in the democratic process in our province, right here. By going into schools, by speaking to our youth, and by organizing educational events, they will be able to bring democratic involvement to the forefront.

Mr. Speaker, as MLAs we try our best to visit as many events as possible. We connect with our constituents, and we promote democracy, but we all are very busy, and we can only do so much. An association of former MLAs will be able to assist and do more for us. In this regard the association can work well as a complement to the Legislative Assembly or to the government. It can, however, do even more for the province in general because it can work to promote and restore democracy generally, instead of from a certain perspective of a certain party.

To explain exactly what an association like this is able to do for democracy, I have looked at the United States Association of Former Members of Congress, which is essentially the same type of organization this bill is proposing to form. Mr. Speaker, the U.S. Association of Former Members of Congress is involved with numerous programs, has written several books, and has contributed greatly to democracy in America and other countries, such as Cameroon and Ukraine.

One of their most famous and most successful programs is the Congress to campus program. This program was founded by the association in 1976 and reaches a wide audience of students, faculties, and college communities with its unique story about representative democracy and its special call for public service. The members of the association were worried about the poor state of civic literacy among America's youth and the breadth and depth of the electorate in decline. What worried them even more, however, was that with this reduced interest in the democratic process, the source of informed leaders for the future was in some jeopardy. These were the association's motives behind creating the Congress to campus program.

They designed the program to address several aspects of civic learning and engagement deficit among the country's college-age people. The program sends bipartisan pairs of former members of Congress, one Democrat and the other Republican, to visit campuses around the U.S.A. These former members spend two and a half days conducting classes, holding community forums, meeting informally with students and faculty, visiting high schools and civic organizations, and doing interviews and talk-show appearances with local press and media.

This program provides a distinctive and powerful means to educate the next generation about American government, politics, and public affairs. The members provide solid content, discussing how Congress and government really work and relating their experiences as candidates and politicians, all combined with an appeal to public service and an important message about bipartisan co-operation.

5:20

Mr. Speaker, the voter turnout in this past provincial election shows the need for such a program. We need to do more to engage our electorate, and an association of former MLAs could be another way to do this. Former MLAs understand how the Legislature works, understand how policy formation works, and understand the

processes involved in both. Their unique experiences are a truly invaluable resource that we should be utilizing.

Mr. Speaker, the United States Association of Former Members of Congress is also involved in other programs. I would like to explain some of these programs as an association of Alberta MLAs would be able to create programs similar to these if the bill is passed. One program, called the international legislative and democracy training program, is a collaborative effort of the association, U.S. government agencies, private foundations, and other organizations. Together this group focuses on legislative training and democracy-building activities around the world. To achieve this with more efficiency and accuracy, the association created a data bank of members' interests and areas of expertise to facilitate matching members with specific requests for assistance. This program has been very, very successful. The association also has arranged 49 foreign policy seminars in nine countries involving more than 1,500 participants to discuss critical issues affecting their nations and the world.

Although the provincial legislators may not be experienced with foreign policy, such seminars could prove to be extremely helpful on the interprovincial level. Such seminars could also be set up between Alberta and the United States to discuss important trading issues that affect both jurisdictions. Although these efforts would not necessarily lead to new policy, ideas would come out as a result of the magnitude of experience within the association that would be very useful to the government. Furthermore, by creating an association through legislation, this will create a higher level of legitimacy for the association.

The purpose of this bill is not to create a feel-good organization for former MLAs to get together to overcome their boredom. The purpose is to create an association of people who have invaluable experience and specific knowledge of the unique world of provincial politics. The purpose for these people is to be able to spread this knowledge and spread the democratic message.

I trust that our elected members have the higher calling of improving our local and global society beyond our low-level political partisan manoeuvring and positioning. When they retire from politics, I trust that their higher calling continues. I believe that these are the members who would join the association and help to promote a higher calling locally and globally.

For the reasons I have provided above and for the purpose of promoting democracy, I urge all of you to join me in voting in favour of this bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will be very brief. Obviously, the time will ensure that I am very brief. I probably will

speak to this again because I do believe there are a number of points.

Certainly, I'm at sixes and sevens with this whole proposition. It really does sort of smack of the old boys' club, and I think that using the word "boys" is in everyone's fantasy as they will obviously go into this group at an older age. Having said that, I don't want to be referred to as the old girl, so I'm sort of putting the House on notice that I would prefer to be referred to as the grand old lady of the Leg. should this pass.

One of the things that does concern me – I'm going to save that for the second time I talk to it, but I will speak to something that actually is in the bill as it's presented that I truly have a problem with, and that is number 10. It says that the honorary president is the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. That would be the honorary president of the association. As I turn the page to 16(1), it also says that "within 3 months of the coming into force of this Act, the Speaker must appoint 7 former MLAs, who [will] constitute the Board." My main problem with this is that I honestly believe that should this pass and you do form this association, it should not have that tight an association with this House. That is a problem that I've picked up through this bill. I believe that it should be, should it pass, a stand-alone organization and not be connected.

The other thing that sort of made me have to think twice was when I heard it was suggested that old MLAs would substitute for sitting members in the particular riding. I could see where that could well be a problem when we actually have ridings change hands. Now, granted that is not a huge thing that happens in this province, but it has been known to happen, and I would suspect that it may happen in the future . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, the background noise is getting too loud to hear the speaker. I know you're very enthusiastic to get back together here and enjoy each other's company, but we have business to conduct.

So, Member, if you would like to continue.

Ms Pastoor: Okay. I'll close debate, and I'll add my further comments in committee.

Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate lost]

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose wish to close?

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we heard a good debate, and I would move that we call for the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 47 read a second time]

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:30 p.m.]

