

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

**Title:** Thursday, March 2, 2006

**1:30 p.m.**

Date: 06/03/02

[The Speaker in the chair]

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### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon and welcome.

On this day I would ask that all Members of Alberta's Legislative Assembly, all others present here, and those observing these proceedings in their homes join together in a minute of silent and personal prayer as we reflect upon the lives of Canadian police officers and military personnel lost in service to their countrymen.

May their souls rest in eternal peace, and may a nation be eternally grateful. God bless.

Please be seated.

head:

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Prins:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is again my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a group of students from Bluffton school. There are 29 students accompanied by teacher/principal Mr. Mark McWhinnie and by Nolan Krauss, Deneen Evans, Karen Bevans, Judy Lamb. They're seated above me in the members' gallery, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Stevens:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly three very hard-working members of Alberta Justice: Trina Sharp, Gisele Wright, and Dana Purves. These individuals are staff in the department of human resources and are here today to tour the Legislature and to see the political process in action. I would ask them to please rise and receive the very warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Mr. Klein:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm hoping my visitors – they are in the public gallery – have arrived safely because I understand they had a bit of a harrowing trip on the highways. I understand they were dealing with some snowy conditions today on their trip up from Calgary. They're a group of students from a school in my constituency of Calgary-Elbow. Visiting us today are 67 students from l'école Sainte-Marguerite Bourgeoys along with their teacher, Chantal Piché, and nine parents and helpers. They're here to learn about government and the work we do in the Legislature. I'll ask members of the Assembly to join me in offering them the traditional warm welcome, or bienvenue, of the Legislature.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Tougas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. Elmer Jules Half, a First Nations member from Goodfish Lake in the Lac La Biche-St. Paul area. Mr. Half is a correctional services worker with the Solicitor General's department, and he is here to take in the

pageantry and warm good feelings of question period. I'd ask that he please rise and accept the traditional warm greeting of this House.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted today to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Jason Rockwell. Jason is the communications director and organizer for the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, local lodge 99, district 14. Jason recently oversaw the successful resolution of a six-week strike with Finning International. Most recently he was a candidate for the NDP in this past federal election in Edmonton-Spruce Grove. He's seated in the public gallery. I would ask that he rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

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### Ministerial Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security.

#### First Anniversary of Mayerthorpe Tragedy

**Mr. Cernaiko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to honour the memory of four heroes, four brave young men who gave their lives in service to our province. Tomorrow marks the anniversary of one of the darkest days in the history of policing in Alberta and in Canada. It was on March 3, 2005, that RCMP constables Anthony Gordon, Leo Johnston, Brock Myrol, and Peter Schiemann were murdered. The four officers were gunned down while guarding a crime scene near Mayerthorpe. They died upholding the oath they took to protect each and every one of us.

On that tragic day a year ago both myself and the Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne met with the families of these brave officers to offer our government's heartfelt condolences and support. A full year has nearly passed, but the pain and the grief felt by the families and friends of the slain officers and by all Albertans still remain. As Alberta's Solicitor General and as a former police officer I will remember March 3, 2005, as one of the most difficult and trying days of my life.

Time will eventually ease our pain, Mr. Speaker, but we must ensure that it does not erase the memories of these courageous young men who made the ultimate sacrifice. They are heroes, as are those police and peace officers before them who laid down their lives to protect our freedom, our values, and our way of life. We honour them now. We honour them forever.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the House for the moment of silence to honour the Fallen Four.

**The Speaker:** On behalf of the Official Opposition the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Dr. B. Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to pay tribute to the lives of four very brave, very dedicated young men. As the minister said, they are heroes, and as an Albertan I am both grateful and proud that such men lived and worked in this province. March 3, 2005, was indeed a black day for this province and this nation, a day that will be forever remembered as the greatest tragedy in the history of policing in Alberta.

Though we rightly mourn the deaths of these officers, I believe that we should also celebrate their lives and accomplishments. Without question these men had the respect of their peers, the admiration of their communities, and the love of their families and

friends. During their all too brief time on this Earth they inspired their fellow Canadians with their courage, their decency, and their desire to do the right thing.

In life and in death constables Schiemann, Gordon, Johnston, and Myrol upheld their oath to serve Albertans, to defend and protect us whatever the threat. By choosing to wear the uniform, they knew that they were taking a risk, yet they accepted that risk knowing that to do so was necessary and right. These brave young men were not just police officers. They were members of the community of Mayerthorpe. They were sons, husbands, and fathers. They were friends and role models. Let us never forget the people whose lives they touched, the families and friends who have bravely carried on and who have worked to provide a lasting legacy for the Fallen Four through music, memorials, and through their sharing of love and memories.

We are truly touched and inspired by the response of Canadians. Perhaps the best way to honour the memories of these four constables is to do our utmost to make Alberta a safer, more secure province and, furthermore, to always remember and respect all the men and women who wear the uniform, who put their lives on the line every day on our behalf.

**1:40**

Tomorrow let us gain strength and solace by remembering the heroes of Mayerthorpe and by offering our thoughts and prayers for all the police officers who have given their lives to protect our way of life, and let us do the same for those officers who every day dedicate their lives to our protection.

In closing, I offer my condolences to the families, the friends, and colleagues of the four fallen officers. I know that you will always carry the pain of this terrible loss in your hearts, but I hope you can take some comfort in the knowledge that Canadians and especially Albertans will never forget their sacrifice or their courage.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, I'm assuming that you're asking for the support of the House to allow the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona to participate.

**Mr. Martin:** Yes. Unanimous consent for the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in respectful memory of the four fallen law enforcement officers to express our sorrow and regret for the tragic event in Mayerthorpe, Alberta, one year ago. The memory of the tragic killing of the four RCMP officers and the sense of pain and loss will forever live in the hearts and minds of the members of this Assembly, the people of Alberta, and especially the families of Leo Johnston, Anthony Gordon, Peter Schiemann, and Brock Myrol.

On behalf of the New Democrats I offer our sincerest condolences to all those who have been affected by this loss. Our hearts and thoughts are especially with the families and friends of the fallen officers, whose lives have been devastated by the loss of their loved ones. I also express my sympathy for the residents of the Mayerthorpe and Whitecourt areas, who have witnessed up close this terribly tragic event.

Every day, Mr. Speaker, we ask our law enforcement officers to put their lives on the line for our safety. We ask them to put

themselves in harm's way in order to protect us and to uphold the laws of our democracy, and they do so with courage, honour, and integrity. Whenever a police officer loses her or his life in the line of duty, it stands as a reminder of the personal sacrifice that law enforcement officers make in protecting us and our democratic values. The memorial park in Mayerthorpe will be a fitting tribute to the fallen officers and the sacrifice and dedication shown by the men and women who enforce our laws and who by doing so uphold our democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you and the House for this opportunity.

**The Speaker:** Would the Assembly also permit the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner to participate?

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we mark the anniversary of a tragedy, one that has caused us to reflect on our lives and our communities, it is painful to see the loss of life and more so to see the lives of constables Peter Schiemann, Brock Myrol, Anthony Gordon, and Leo Johnston cut short in the line of duty protecting and serving our communities.

It is important that we recognize and remember the great sacrifice of the lives of those who serve us. Peter, Brock, Anthony, and Leo were dedicated to their duty to preserve the peace and keep our communities safe. They were much more than RCMP officers. They were our friends, neighbours, sons, fathers, husbands, and, most important, members of our community in every sense.

If there is one thing we should take away from these times of remembrance, it is that remembering is not enough. The RCMP is one of the most respected police forces in the world. That respect starts with the citizens they serve. The greatest tribute we can show to our fallen officers is to continue to work with and stand by those whose job it is to protect us. Just as these officers gave their lives in fighting crime, we as citizens must not turn a blind eye but aid in every way possible. We can only keep our communities safe by working with and showing respect for our police officers. We enjoy such peace and prosperity today because we respect other people and their property. We respect common law or equality before the law.

We need to cherish our freedoms. Other places in the world live in turmoil because they do not have a just society, where people are equally protected under the law. We need to continue to show our respect for our police officers and the law to our next generation so that we can continue to enjoy a safe community.

May God bless and comfort all the families affected by this tragedy. Thank you.

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### Oral Question Period

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

### Health Care Reform Consultation

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A legitimate public consultation process includes open dialogue and the commitment that differing opinions are heard and respected. An ad hoc, 30-day consultation is not sufficient for an issue as fundamental as health care. This discussion cannot be reduced to one-page memos and 15-second sound bites. My questions are to the Premier. Given that this government has replaced town hall meetings by putting the health care framework in Alberta libraries, that won't even receive the

document for at least another week, will this government extend the consultation until next fall?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, the purpose of health care reform is twofold. One is to improve the accessibility and choice in health care for Albertans, and the second, of course, is to bring health care costs in line with the rate of inflation. I challenged both the Leader of the Official Opposition and the leader of the third party to offer me solutions that would lead to those objectives. [interjection] Well, they can do it on two pages or three. One page would do.

We have introduced a framework that includes ten principles that will act as a guide for government in making positive, innovative changes to health care for the benefit of all Albertans. We said that there will be public consultation. There is. The minister informs us this morning that she has already received over 400 phone calls, e-mails, and letters since Tuesday but none from the opposition. She also informs me that she has received numerous requests from stakeholder groups wanting to meet with her, and she will meet with them. So I'm thrilled to hear that the consultation is taking place, and the government looks forward, of course, to hearing what these individuals have to say. We are moving forward, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader.

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier. We are also receiving many phone calls and letters. Will this government commit to tabling all of the feedback they receive from Albertans on this issue, such as these cards and letters and phone messages and e-mails sent to the Premier's office and the minister's office, and produce a comprehensive report on the results of the consultation process? Will they do that before they act?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, the minister in charge of the process is the Minister of Health and Wellness, and I'll have her respond.

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, one of the things that has been overlooked in the comments of the Leader of the Opposition is that at such time as we have a legislative piece, if we have a legislative piece and, certainly, whatever that constitutes, when it comes forward to this House, there is if you have legislation a process for consulting on regulation. That's another important part of it. This is a policy framework that started way last year. Well, it's been ongoing for some period of time but in earnest on the third way last year, and in July on the web page we put up a 13-point document that identified various ways that people could make a contribution to it. We've been consulting, and we'll continue to consult. I'd be pleased to take any suggestion of groups I should meet with. We've already booked in other parts of the province to make sure that I get an opportunity.

One more thing, Mr. Speaker, when groups . . .

**The Speaker:** I'm sure you'll have greater opportunity for clarification.

The hon. leader.

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: does the Premier genuinely believe that the solutions to the challenges facing Alberta's health care system can be presented on one page?

**Mr. Klein:** I believe that they can if there is a concrete solution to accomplish two things: that is, to improve quality and access and to bring costs in line with the rate of inflation.

Now, there are all kinds of things that can be done. Some of them were suggested in the three-year-old Liberal book that was presented with a new cover the other day. [interjection] No. I think it's a different cover – right? – but it's red.

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

#### 1:50 Health Care Privatization

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has produced a health policy framework that raises some genuinely alarming questions. Taken as a whole, this framework will lead to health care becoming a consumer product with a citizen's right to health care being replaced by a corporation's right to market it. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Given that this framework repeatedly refers to consumer choice for health care, does this government take the position that making a profit should be a factor in clinical decisions concerning patients? Yes or no?

**Ms Evans:** No.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader.

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you. Second question to the same minister: does the minister take the position that the relationship between a doctor and a patient is essentially the same as between a buyer and a seller? Yes or no?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, we could debate the merits of that as a statement for many days and nights. It's an oversimplification of the trust and confidence between a doctor, the Hippocratic oath, and the patient, and I would never suggest such a thing. So, quite frankly, I'm surprised that the suggestion has come on the floor of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader.

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister refers to the Hippocratic oath. Has she reviewed the Hippocratic oath or, in fact, the oath that the Canadian Medical Association actually requires of doctors? Does she know what she's talking about?

**Ms Evans:** Yes.

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

#### Federal Transfer Payments for Health

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Canada Health Act's accessibility principle says that all insured persons must get access "on uniform terms and conditions" without financial barriers, and the consultation document from the government says on page 2 that Albertans support the principles of the Canada Health Act, but the Premier's proposed reforms clearly violate this principle. My questions are to the Premier. Given that you were quoted as saying, and I quote, the last thing we want to do is contravene the Canada Health Act, close quote, will you commit today to abiding by it?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, we have stated, in fact, that we don't want to violate the Canada Health Act, but nothing is carved in stone at this particular time as we move through the public consultation process. I've said time and time again that if the Liberal opposition

have any good ideas to improve accessibility and choice and bring health care costs in line with the rate of inflation, then send them over.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**An Hon. Member:** We did yesterday, and it got thrown away.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member has the floor.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government has only provided \$36 million of the \$250 million to fix long-term care because, and I quote, you can't snap your fingers and expect dollars to fall from the air, how can the Premier justify risking nearly \$2 billion in federal health transfer payments if you violate the Canada Health Act?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, the \$2 billion to which the hon. member alludes is for Canada. It's not for Alberta.

**Ms Evans:** We get about \$1.6 billion.

**Mr. Klein:** Oh, no. I'm thinking – it's about \$40 million. Yes, \$1.6 billion. That represents about 10 per cent of our total budget, Mr. Speaker. I'll have the hon. minister respond.

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, we have a portion of the money that's part of the federal transfer. We have received about another \$52 million for the wait times project and about \$52 million for diagnostics, which ends this year. So we have roughly 1 and a half billion dollars that comes in terms of federal transfers.

Mr. Speaker, in the past when provinces had been illustrated to in any way contradict certain evaluation by the federal government of certain procedures that went in contradiction to their interpretation of the Health Act, the charges that were levelled back to those social union transfers were an equivalent of what was actually deemed to have been spent. We don't have any precedent to identify exactly what, if anything, would be done if there was an evaluation by the federal government that this was out of order.

Mr. Speaker, may I remind you that we have not yet . . .

**The Speaker:** You don't have to remind me of anything. I'll just remind the hon. member of the time factor.

The hon. member.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: why is the Premier so willing to risk losing federal health funding for violations that are neither wanted nor needed?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, that remains to be seen. Right now we're going through the public consultation process. I would remind the hon. member that there is in place now a disputes resolution process that would have to be used before any consideration was made relative to whether or not the proposal – underline proposal – violates the Canada Health Act. The proposal.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

#### Health Care Reform

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Premier plans to spend the next month hiding behind a fig leaf of a phony consulta-

tion process to avoid answering questions about his government's radical plans to privatize health care. On the one hand, the Premier asks us to send over our better ideas to him, and when we do, he throws them back in our face. Clearly, consultation is not the real agenda here. It's avoiding answering questions and avoiding debate. To the Premier: why does the Premier refuse to answer legitimate questions from the opposition and Albertans about his government's plans for a private, two-tier health care system?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, we're not avoiding any questions. We have a proposal – a proposal – that could be tabled sometime in April or perhaps May, and it is a proposal, unless the NDs have a better idea to improve accessibility, provide choice, and bring costs in line with the rate of inflation. I have received absolutely nothing. I did receive from the Liberals – and we have had the document for some time. The minister will respond in detail I believe on Monday to their document; that is, the Liberals' document. I would remind Albertans and the NDs, in particular, that we have received absolutely nothing from them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Then I would ask the Premier if he is aware that the NDP opposition conducted public hearings on health care reform around the province last winter and that we forwarded a copy of our report to his health minister, and she has done nothing about it.

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, no, I wasn't aware. I'm aware of what our caucus does and what the government does in terms of public consultation. I do recall seeing a signboard – now, I don't know whether it was sponsored by the Liberal Party or the NDs – one of those portable signboards calling for a town hall meeting on health care last year, or maybe it was the year before. But, no, I'm not familiar with the details.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, can the Premier tell the House why it is that he's prepared to head down the road of very radical reforms to our health care system if he doesn't know what's going on?

**Mr. Klein:** Mr. Speaker, I don't know what's going on with the NDs. There are four of them, and they were fewer – well, maybe they weren't. [interjection] Last year, was it? Well, okay, there were four of them.

You know, we give them money. They can do what they want, I guess, with the money.

2:00

**Mr. Mason:** You don't give us money.

**Mr. Klein:** Oh, I'm sorry. We don't give you money? Well, then they did it on their own. You know, I commend them for that.

**Mr. Chase:** It's all your money, is it?

**Mr. Klein:** No, no. It's taxpayers' money, Mr. Speaker. But if they did it on their own hook, good on them.

Mr. Speaker, I don't involve myself with their politics. I'm sorry, but I've got so many things on my plate that I can't involve them with my politics.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Education Property Tax

**Mr. Johnston:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the mayor of Calgary issued a glossy annual report in which he says that the province should get out of the education property tax to allow the city to have access to more money. My questions are to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Is the province shortchanging the city of Calgary with respect to provincial funding?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, it's quite the contrary. As a matter of fact, I think the brochure that the member referred to does a very good job of outlining the support that the province has provided to the city of Calgary. I'd like to just point out to the member and to all members that Budget 2005 actually provides for about \$4.14 billion to Calgary and area, which would include \$1.1 billion for basic education, \$1.9 billion in health, and about half a billion dollars in infrastructure. That's in addition to the \$95 million in fuel tax that flows through to the city of Calgary, and of course Calgary, like all municipalities, shares in the \$3 billion in the municipal infrastructure program that the government put in place, which was the first opportunity that the government had to share with municipalities the fiscal situation the government found itself in when the debt began to be paid off. So the first program we instituted was of significant financial support for municipalities.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Johnston:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental to the same minister: has the minister given any thought to taking up the mayor's request that the province get out of the education property tax so that the city can access those tax dollars?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, not only have I given it some thought; I've been quite vocal as a proponent that we should begin to put the groundwork in place for such an event to occur. At the same time, I've also said that it is absolutely essential that we define the roles and responsibilities of both the municipal governments and the provincial government. To that effect, I have recently instituted a minister's council on municipal sustainability, that will do just that. That council consists of the mayors of both Calgary and Edmonton as well as representatives from AUMA and AAMD and C. That council is working very well and is moving that process along quite nicely.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Johnston:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question: if the situation is as rosy as what the minister would like us to believe, why is the mayor constantly sending out these types of brochures?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the mayor has his job to do; this minister has his job to do. We choose, perhaps, different ways of getting the job done, but at the end of the day we're both heading in the same direction, and that direction is recognizing that there are financial pressures on municipalities and identifying and securing long-term, secure, sustainable sources of revenue for municipalities, not only just the city of Calgary but all municipalities.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

### Coal-bed Methane Drilling

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fifty thousand coal-bed methane wells are planned for the next decade in Alberta, including fracturing of coal seams. Growing numbers of Alberta landowners and farmers are expressing fear and anger at the inadequacy of protection for their drinking water. Not only are they concerned for family and animal health; they're also concerned about losing their livelihoods and property values. To the minister of health: given that toxic chemicals are used in these drilling and fracturing episodes and that some individuals have been adversely affected, what is Alberta Health doing to investigate and ensure safe drinking water?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

**Ms Evans:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the Public Health Act and the Regional Health Authorities Act make provision for RHAs to respond to incidents of this nature to protect human health. We have been working with Alberta Environment on issues that have been raised frequently on the floor recently about methane. I think methane alone isn't the problem. It becomes a problem when it's restricted to confined places. The immediate health hazard is in the possibility of explosion and burns. Drinking-water wells can have inexpensive vents added to their well caps to allow this gas to escape. I think it's incumbent upon us to work as regional health authorities with the legislation we have available to pursue the issues that have been identified.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the health minister: will the minister, under the precautionary principle, support the stopping of all new coal-bed methane developments until she is assured, in the Horseshoe Canyon particularly, that water is not being adversely affected?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, we have our public health officials that are working on this with the officials of the David Thompson region, and I believe that when they are prepared to provide me with such report and recommend such action, then that would be in my prerogative to do so. However, having said that, we have had no indication yet that this action is necessary. Our officials continue to pursue and identify what issues should be considered and are doing their due diligence in this matter.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister of agriculture: given your responsibility to protect and support the viability of farmers and landowners, what is the minister doing about the growing complaints of tainted water and its potential to affect the health of animals and agriculture?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a good question. Dissolved gases in well water in this province are not an uncommon occurrence. It has been around for some time. We've been dealing with it as a natural occurrence. In a number of wells around the province natural gas has been there. Having said that, if you go to our website, Ropin' the Web, there's a lot of information there on what farmers should be doing about testing their water on a regular

basis. Certainly, if they feel that their water has been tampered with or contaminated based on energy exploration, whatever kind of energy exploration that is, the first recourse for them is to deal with the energy company. If that fails, through the Farmers' Advocate office there are other avenues of recourse to either bring the well back to where it was in terms of safety or, in fact, in some cases to explore other alternate sources of water for either their livestock or for personal use. There are a number of areas where Agriculture does follow this up.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

### Labour Supply

**Mr. Cao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The strength of the Alberta economy has always been with its workers. Without the skills and the expertise of Albertans our economy and prosperity would not be what it is today. Given that the economy grows and evolves, employment rates are highest in our province, and businesses are clamouring for needed workers, my first question to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment is: what is the government doing to develop Alberta's workforce?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Cardinal:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, as I've mentioned before in this House, we are blessed to be in Alberta. We are expecting over 400,000 new jobs in the next 10 years. Through our 56 employment centres we are of course providing skills upgrading, job search services, career counselling, language training, and other services to our clientele. Human Resources alone will be spending over \$205 million this year to address some of those issues. The government, of course, has committed within the next 10 years to provide at least 60,000 additional training spaces in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Cao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is to the same minister. I know that the government is working on a labour force development strategy. How does this fit in with what this government is doing right now for the Alberta workforce?

2:10

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Cardinal:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, that's a very important question. This 10-year strategy, of course, is a broad and long-range strategy designed to meet Alberta's labour needs now and in the future. It involves working with representatives, of course, from industry, labour groups, education, aboriginal groups, just to name a few. We need to work together to address this issue.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Cao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental question is to the Minister of Advanced Education. Given that the labour strategy highlights a need for better ways of recognizing the credentials of immigrants, what are you doing to ensure that skilled immigrants can quickly get their credentials recognized so that they can contribute fully to Alberta with their skills, experience, and expertise?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an area that does have significant challenges, but of course we want newcomers to Alberta, people that we can attract to Alberta to help build our communities and develop our economy, to be able to very quickly use the skills they bring with them.

We have in the Department of Advanced Education a branch we call IQAS, international qualifications assessment service. Historically we've been prepared to go abroad to help prequalify people who want to come to Alberta, or we'll qualify them when they do come. In other words, what they do is take the credentials that the newcomer brings with them, do an assessment to determine what the equivalent credentials would be in this province, and then give them a certificate so that they can present that certificate to an employer to show that they're qualified to do work.

We're working with our IQAS and with persons in both the professions and occupations and in the immigrant community to make an easier access to that type of process so that we can also look to help them find bridging mechanisms. When people come to the province, many times they might need the language of work, for example. They may need some programs through NorQuest or Bow Valley College or another postsecondary institution to help them get the language of work, and many other ways in which we're helping newcomers to this province participate in our community.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-East.

### Education Achievement Testing

**Mr. Flaherty:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government continues its focus on testing, not teaching, by spending \$4 million on testing last year. Elementary students and teachers are stressed with standardized testing that does nothing to improve learning. The addition of the grade level assessments and computer-assisted assessments leaves us wondering how far this government will go in sacrificing learning for the sake of meaningless rankings. To the Minister of Education: why won't this minister abolish grade level assessments and computer-assisted assessments and replace this effort with meaningful remedial support for children?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I think we should remind the hon. questioner and all members here that we spend about \$4.7 billion per year doing exactly that: helping our children in the kindergarten to grade 12 system to succeed and helping them become better educated and good, contributing citizens. Now, one of the reasons that we have the very best education system in Canada and one of the best in the world is because of things like standardized testing, is because of standardized curriculum that runs province-wide, is because of outstanding teachers and dedicated parents and hard-working school trustees and a government that really cares about the education of these children, and we're going to continue doing that.

**Mr. Flaherty:** Mr. Speaker, there are many, many children falling through the cracks. How come this government won't replace standardized testing with diagnostic testing, which will improve kids' learning in school, Mr. Minister?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, there are a number of projects under way that are helping to improve learning for children. In fact, I would point to a number of AISI projects. Perhaps I could bring them in and read them all to the House one day. We spend tens of

millions of dollars on AISI projects that are designed in large part to do exactly part of what the hon. member is asking about, and that is those children who need some additional help. That's over and above the per capita monies that we provide through the instructional component. In an effort to help them even more, we do have a flexible funding framework review going on right as we speak, and if there are some improvements that are imminent, we will look at making those. In the interim I'm quite satisfied that the diagnostic testing that we have been looking at – and the hon. member will know this – which in fact is replacing the PATs at the grade 4 level, is proceeding.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Flaherty:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the individual program plans are important for high school retention and for the completion of high school, why is the government focusing on standards and not teaching children?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, I don't think 30,000 teachers would appreciate reading that in *Hansard*. I think there's outstanding teaching going on in this province because of outstanding teachers. We recognize that, and it's unfortunate that the critic from the Liberal opposition doesn't recognize it and won't give them credit to that effect.

We do a lot to help our children. We do a lot to help with professional development. We do a lot to help with standards, which have been referred to, and we also are very helpful in terms of outcomes that are expected, in terms of the new accountability pillars that are there, which are all focused on improving education. Mr. Speaker, we will continue to do that to the very, very best of our abilities.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

#### Employment Opportunities for Foreign Students

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. International students make important economic, social, and cultural contributions to Alberta. When they come here to study, they pay higher tuition than domestic students because it's one way to ensure that international students pay a reasonable share of the actual costs of their education. Recently some of my constituents in Calgary-East were asking if there is some way to make it easier for these international students to work off-campus to help pay for their bills. Current rules prevent or restrict foreign students from working off-campus while they are studying. [interjections] Can you listen, please? And the rules make it difficult to join the workforce here in Alberta after they have graduated. My first question is to the hon. Minister of Advanced Education. Can the minister tell this Assembly what the government is doing to make it easier for foreign students to work in this province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. An important question because there are more than 6,000 international students studying in Alberta's postsecondary institutions, or at least there were in 2004. As the hon. member has indicated, international students are very, very important to our postsecondary system. One of the four pillars of our strategic plan is competing in the global marketplace, and if we're going to do that well, we need to build

those international relationships, and we need to build the understanding that we get from studying with people from around the world. So it's important that those students can come here and can study and work to finance those studies.

We've been working with the federal government. The federal government had a pilot project in a number of jurisdictions in the past year to allow foreign students to work. We've been working with them to sign an agreement with respect to that process so that foreign students would be able to work for approximately 20 hours a week while they're going to school. They could work during the breaks between their terms, and they could work for a period of time after graduation or after their term ends. We're hoping that that agreement will be in place shortly and that it will be available to foreign students in Alberta within the near term.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is to the hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment. How does this initiative support Alberta's proposed 10-year labour force supply strategy?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Cardinal:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's a very good question. It is very important that we attract and retain new immigrants to build our workforce in Alberta both short term and long term. Of course, international students are excellent candidates to fill some of these jobs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

#### Teachers' Unfunded Pension Liability

**Mr. R. Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last fall in this Legislature the Minister of Education said that the unfunded teachers' pension liability wasn't even on the government's radar. Today and tomorrow thousands of teachers are meeting down the street at the Greater Edmonton Teachers' Convention, and I can assure the minister that this issue is on their radar. My questions are to the Minister of Education. Why is this minister so slow to sit down with Alberta teachers to work out a better pension deal?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, obviously the member is not in the loop at all. I have sat down with members of the Alberta Teachers' Association. In fact, I've sat down with them a number of times and talked about this very issue. I also addressed that particular assembly of schoolteachers this morning at the Citadel Theatre. We talked about this, and we talked about it at some great length. If the member had read *Hansard* from yesterday, when the hon. Minister of Finance addressed this particular question, she said that the Minister of Education is working on this issue, and I am.

2:20

I think we need to be reminded of two things. Number one, there are a number of unfunded pension liabilities out there, not only the teachers'. So we have to look at that. Secondly, we have to respect the fact that in 1992 a specific agreement had been made during which the government of Alberta said that it would undertake two-thirds of the responsibility and the teachers would undertake one-third.

Now, for a variety of reasons that unfunded liability arose, and we've been doing our best to address that. There was an offer, in fact, that had been put verbally on the table by my predecessor to eliminate this. Unfortunately, it wasn't able to be taken up by the ATA.

**Mr. R. Miller:** It's going to cost Alberta taxpayers \$32 billion.

To the same minister: will the minister commit to attending the unfunded pension plan liability session tomorrow afternoon at the Shaw Conference Centre?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I don't know about that particular session, and I haven't been invited to it. Had I been invited, I might have been able to accommodate it.

I have met with numbers of teachers on this, and I have met with numbers of school boards, and I will continue to have those meetings because I do understand that the unfunded pension liability has the potential to negatively impact teacher retention as well as future teacher recruitment, and I don't want to see that happen. But we're talking about \$6 billion here, Mr. Speaker, \$4 billion of which the government is responsible for, \$2 billion of which teachers are responsible for.

I should end by just reminding the hon. member that a couple of years ago this government, in fact, bought out one entire year of the unfunded pension liability at a cost of \$63 million. So there are optional ways to look at this, and optional considerations that will be part of the mix as we continue talking about it.

**Mr. R. Miller:** Once again, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: why doesn't the minister just admit that the only reason – the only reason – this government isn't sitting down with the teachers to find innovative ways to reform this pension is because the idea tank of this government has run dry?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll say it again. We have had a number of meetings. In fact, very recently I just met with their executive council. I've been to their ARA, and I've met with their executive officers, and I've had a number of meetings with them. I've met with principals. I've met with teachers. We have all kinds of ideas that are floating around this issue, and I've just indicated a couple of ideas that I think need to be considered. So the tank on this side is very, very full. It's just one of those issues that takes some time to negotiate our way around.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

### Health Care Privatization (continued)

**Mr. Martin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's pretty obvious that there are some nervous Nellies in the ranks of the Tory rural caucus, and they have every right to be nervous because they're being sold a bill of goods by the Premier and the health minister. More private, for-profit health care means an even wider gap between big cities like Calgary and sparsely populated rural areas. Just follow the money. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: why is the minister championing a privatized, two-tier health care system that will lead to a further drain of medical specialists from rural areas to the big cities?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, when I look at the benches in this House, this wonderful Legislative Assembly, I see anything but nervous

Nellies. I see very dedicated men and women who want to develop policies that will help us build a better future in Alberta. I see people who want to build a strong public health system, and putting patients first is the first policy in the document of putting health care in proper perspective. We want to build not only for today's generation but for tomorrow's.

Mr. Speaker, in the document on page 13 it identifies strategies for rural Alberta hospitals. I provided those yesterday in this House, and I'll be pleased to reiterate them should the member wish.

**Mr. Martin:** Mr. Speaker, the minister avoided the question. I'll ask it a different way. Given that private health care is all about profit, isn't it inevitable that many medical specialists will move to the cities, where they can make more money through the private clinics?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, in the context of . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister has the floor.

**Ms Evans:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the context of access proposals that could be developed by people, physicians coming forward to take advantage of an opportunity to provide private care, the first principle is to make sure that the capacity of the public health system is not damaged. That would go the same way for Lloydminster; Carbon, Alberta; Barrhead, Alberta; Lethbridge, Alberta; or High Level.

**Mr. Martin:** Mr. Speaker, the point is: how can you stop the damage? If people can make more money in the cities, that's where many of these specialists are going to go.

**The Speaker:** That's very debatable.

**An Hon. Member:** Is that your question?

**Mr. Martin:** That's the question to the minister.

**Ms Evans:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that is purely conjecture at this point. It's a hypothetical case at this point.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

### Support for Olympic Athletes

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Team Canada recently achieved its best ever results at an Olympic Games. Our athletes finished third, with 24 medals and many personal bests, and Albertans were a large part of the success, bringing home numerous medals. With the Olympics returning to Canada in 2010, expectations are high to be even more successful. My question is to the Minister of Community Development. With the high expectations placed on Canadian athletes for 2010 and beyond, how much provincial funding is directed towards our Olympic training program?

**Mr. Mar:** Mr. Speaker, those athletes who compete for Canada at the international level, for example at the Olympics, most recently in Torino, are supported through Sport Canada, which is a federal funding agency. Here in Alberta this province supports the development of provincial level athletes, but we also, of course, do work with partners to provide exceptional training and competition



facilities in our province for international level athletes. So we don't fund international level athletes directly, but we do so indirectly through the provision of support for facilities.

**Mr. Johnson:** To the same minister: then if we don't provide funding directly to athletes, how does the province support their development?

**Mr. Mar:** Well, we know that Olympians certainly aren't born overnight. They're built through a great deal of developmental sport. What we do, Mr. Speaker, is have strong provincial sport programs that allow athletes to compete at regional, provincial, and national levels. We spent in this province \$12.8 million in the last fiscal year on these programs. That includes the sponsorship of programs like the Alberta Winter Games, which commenced last week in Hinton, Alberta; the Arctic Winter Games, where our Arctic winter athletes will be participating in the Kenai Peninsula of Alaska starting this weekend. It also includes the Alberta Summer Games. It would include the Canada Summer Games, last year held in Regina, Saskatchewan.

I should say, Mr. Speaker, for the Alberta Games that some 73,000 young Alberta athletes have taken part since those games were commenced in 1976, and some of the athletes that come out of that program, of course, go on to things like the Western Canada Games or the Canada Games. The result is that athletes like Haley Wickenheiser, like Chandra Crawford, like Jenn Heil all have participated in these provincial level games and have also represented Alberta at places like the Canada Winter Games, but once it comes to international competition, that's where support from Sport Canada comes in.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you. To the same minister: are there any plans to establish satellite Olympic training centres in other parts of the province; that is, other than Calgary?

**Mr. Mar:** None at this time, Mr. Speaker, but I should say that it's been over 20 years since the Olympics took place in Calgary. We have been proud to support the facilities that are there. For example, most recently we did put in \$23 million worth of infrastructure at the Canmore Nordic Centre. The result was that we were able to host a World Cup of cross-country skiing last December. It was the first time in 16 years that such a competition took place in Alberta, and the result is that some 70 million people in 54 countries saw the televised event in Canmore. We've also contributed some \$600,000 to the refurbishing of the Olympic ski jump, and there has been some suggestion that we should look at some of the other Olympic facilities, such as the speed skating oval where, of course, our national team trains. As business cases come forward for the renewal and upgrading of those facilities, we'll certainly be happy to entertain them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

2:30

### Adoption Quotas

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On February 23 in this House the hon. Minister of Children's Services stated that she does not believe for a minute that having adoption quotas is out of line, yet in a letter dated February 7, 2006, the minister states: I do not condone the use of a quota system. My questions are for the

Minister of Children's Services. Given that the minister contradicted herself about her own policies, will the minister clarify today whether she does in fact support a quota system for the adoption of Alberta children?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I'd be pleased to do that. When we had the question in the House, the hon. member asked me about a quota system, and I did talk about a quota system. I think there needs to be some clarification in regard to what I was trying to say. All of our senior managers across this province and many of the ministries have what they call performance measures, and I think that's a good indicator of how they're doing their job, and what they're doing right in their job, and what is being done wrong.

What I will say is that in my business plan we have goals that we would like our workers in this province to make. One of the goals in the business plan is about getting higher adoption rates, and I don't think there's anything wrong with this. I have hundreds and hundreds of children in my care who are looking for homes, who want to be adopted. We put that as a priority in government. We encourage our caseworkers, who do a wonderful job in this province, Mr. Speaker, to find these children a loving home and get them adopted.

**Mrs. Mather:** To the same minister: can the minister please explain how a policy that financially rewards regional CEOs for the number of adoptions they perform relates to the best interests of the child?

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Mr. Speaker, I think I have to again clarify something. There are no financial rewards, for one thing, when we're looking at performance bonuses. Overall they could have 10, 15, 20 things that they have to make on their performance bonus. If they don't reach the quota that we have given them on the adoptions, they're not penalized for that individually. We want to make sure that the children in our province go to loving, caring homes, and if, for example, a senior manager doesn't happen to make that individual personal performance, for example on an adoption, he's not penalized for that.

**Mrs. Mather:** To the same minister: given that the draft report A New Casework Practice Model has been hidden from the public, will the minister summarize for this House what this report states regarding this quota system and the impact that it has on adoption processes in Alberta?

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Well, the report the hon. member is speaking about is a draft report that we have put out to our stakeholders, all of the people that work so hard in this province for Children's Services. We brought forward an act I believe it was a year ago in November called the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act. We wanted to find out from that innovative piece of legislation, that the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo took on, what we were doing right, what we were doing wrong. We asked for input in regard to that particular draft. Once we get the final copy of that – and it is a draft, Mr. Speaker, and I want to repeat that. We have asked people in the field to respond to this particular draft, and once that is finalized, I'd be pleased to table it. But we're not hiding it. We've asked people within the field, that do good work, to give us their input and respond to the draft report.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

### School Infrastructure in Calgary

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The southwest quadrant of Calgary is one of the fastest growing parts of the province. Now, hundreds of new families are moving there every year, and our existing school infrastructure is simply not keeping pace with the demand for more and improved spaces. The needs are becoming intense, so I would like to ask the Minister of Education: what can I tell my constituents about the latest developments in the plan to address the very pressing needs for more educational facilities in Calgary-Lougheed and other rapidly expanding areas of the province?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we have about 60 different types of school infrastructure projects that are under way or will go under way this year, totalling about \$580 million province-wide. Now, a lot of that activity is in Calgary, and quite specifically a lot of it is in south Calgary. Recent numbers would probably add up to about \$50 million worth of school construction of one type or another going on in south Calgary. There are projects, I think about five or six schools, that are under way there right now, and perhaps more will come. We'll wait for the next meeting that I'm going to be having with the board there, and we'll wait for available dollars to fund as many of those pressing needs as we can, not only in south Calgary but wherever we are able to across the province.

**Mr. Rodney:** My only supplemental is to the same minister. I understand that the Calgary public school board is asking for dozens of schools, and the Calgary Catholic school board suggests that they desperately need at least four more schools. I'd like to have the minister, if he would, clarify his department's policy on prioritizing these requests to ensure that the areas that need the schools the more are indeed getting the schools first.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, the process is really quite straightforward. For the benefit of all members, who I know are interested in this because we are all affected one way or another, let's just be reminded that school boards develop a capital plan, submit it to us every year. We review that. We look at the priority needs. We look at things like the health of the students attending the schools, the safety of the students, the issues that might pertain to capacity or crowding or aging infrastructure or whatever. So there's a very thorough review process, which our good friends in Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation have been doing.

Now, as the Department of Education works more closely with infrastructure issues and as that particular part of the portfolio comes over our way, perhaps in the next short while, we will be doing a lot more of our detailed planning with them. But a lot of that, Mr. Speaker, is also an issue of taking a look at where your populations are going to be versus perhaps busing them to where the schools exist, so we're looking at a variety of factors in that way. I'll be meeting with the two board chairs here very shortly. I'm sure we'll be hearing more of their needs, and we'll be doing the best we can to address them along with all the others we have before us.

### Vignettes from the Assembly's History

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, from the throne speech debate held on March 8, 1968, in this Assembly we find these words:

Northern Alberta is the new frontier – the land of tomorrow. I am glad that I had the wonderful privilege and experience to see the virgin lands and forests, streams and parklands, before we commenced to push the frontiers back. The pioneers were young men and women with a spirit of adventure and the will to conquer the

new land, and with a hope to build a future for themselves and their families . . . Their needs were simple, their lives were full, their contributions great.

These words were given by Adolph Fimrite, born on February 15, 1913, in Kingman, Alberta. He was the owner of Fimrite's department store in Wanham, Alberta. Mr. Fimrite served as a Social Credit member for the constituencies of Spirit River and Spirit River-Fairview from 1952 to 1971. He was appointed deputy chair of the Northern Alberta Development Council on April 23, 1963, and oversaw the creation and the building of the Alberta Resources Railway as well as the highway 34 bridge and the highway 2 suspension bridge. He was appointed a minister without portfolio in 1966.

Mr. Fimrite is only one of several MLAs in Alberta's history who received more votes in each of four successive elections, as he did in 1952, 1955, 1959, and 1963. His vote count went down in 1967, and he was defeated in the election of 1971. He died on July 18, 1990, in Kelowna, British Columbia.

In 30 seconds I'll call on the first of several members.

head: 2:40

### Members' Statements

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

#### Red Deer Memorial to Fallen RCMP Officers

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On November 16, 2005, eight months after the murders of four young and brave RCMP officers, the owners and tenants of the Bower mall in Red Deer unveiled a life-size bronze statue of an RCMP officer and his horse in a beautiful ceremony that included the families of the four fallen officers: Peter Schiemann, Brock Myrol, Anthony Gordon, and Leo Johnston.

A limited edition of 50 bronze medallions depicting the statue of the RCMP officer and his horse were created and presented to the families and official representatives from the RCMP and government. Our Premier received a bronze medallion, and I have the honour of presenting one of those very special medallions to the Lieutenant Governor next Thursday. Brock Myrol and Tony Gordon were both from Red Deer, and this tribute to all members who serve and protect is a memorial that their families and friends as well as members of the community will always cherish.

Mr. Speaker, as you enter the south door of the Bower mall in Red Deer, you are confronted by this life-size memorial and reminded of the sacrifices that RCMP and all police officers make every day to protect and serve the people of Alberta and all of Canada. Tomorrow we will commemorate the first anniversary of the four brave young men who gave their lives in the line of duty, and we will remember them. I would like to extend my sincerest thanks and appreciation to the owners of Bower mall, Sterling Vanreal and Centrecorp, to the tenants of the mall, and to the artist, Cameron Watt, for their generosity and vision in creating this magnificent memorial.

I would also like to thank John Van Haastrecht, representative of the owners, and Gary Seher, manager of the Bower mall, for a beautiful unveiling ceremony, that expressed our deepest appreciation to the officers and their families for the supreme sacrifice that was made for us.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

#### Mayerthorpe Memorial to Fallen RCMP Officers

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tomorrow will mark the one-year anniversary of the tragedy at Mayerthorpe in which four

young RCMP constables lost their lives. This senseless act of violence shocked the communities of Mayerthorpe and Whitecourt, our province, and our country. A year ago the RCMP lost four respected brothers, their families lost four loved ones, and the towns of Mayerthorpe and Whitecourt lost four active and well-liked members of these communities. A year has passed, and the time of mourning for these young men continues.

In order to mark this occasion, the Mayerthorpe Fallen Four Memorial Society is holding a dinner and a charity sports auction to coincide with the annual Wranglers old-timers versus RCMP hockey game today and this evening. The funds raised through the various events will be used to support the activities of the Fallen Four Society in commemorating the sacrifice which was made by these four young men. These events will give members of the community the opportunity to come together and share their memories of March 3, 2005. This function is being held this evening as it was agreed that there would be no large events held in Mayerthorpe on March 3 as the members of this community would prefer to spend that day privately with family and friends.

In the face of a great tragedy people near and far have shown compassion and understanding. I'd like to thank my colleagues in this Assembly, Albertans across the province, Canadians, and members of the international community for their expressions of grief and support over the past year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

#### **Mountain of Heroes Foundation**

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to report that I was privileged to bring greetings on behalf of the province to the second annual Mountain of Heroes gala last night. Five people were honoured, and they include Randy Fowler, whose life took a drastic turn 24 years ago. Randy was literally on his way to a career in professional football when he was involved in an accident that left him in a coma, and doctors feared the worst, but today Randy gives inspiring speeches on behalf of the Association for the Rehabilitation of the Brain Injured, which he serves as a board member. He also speaks on the dangers of drinking and driving for the PARTY program, the United Way, and the Cops for Kids program.

Dale Taylor has initiated the sandwich club and the Warm Feet for the Street projects at the Mustard Seed street ministry. She also supports Inn from the Cold, the Sheriff King Home, and the Calgary Foundation through the Taylor legacy fund as well as projects in the West Indies and Central America.

Dr. Morton Doran has taught anatomy courses to medical students at the U of C for the past 15 years and received no fewer than three gold-star awards in each of those years. Dr. Doran has also volunteered with medical missions in Central and South America and has become a hero to those with Tourette's syndrome.

Marie Nicholson has donated countless hours to a plethora of causes as a member of the Stampede City Kinettes, holding every executive position at the club and zone levels for the last two decades and serving at the district level as well.

On November 4, 2002, Karen Venables' 18-year-old son, Devin, took one punch to the temple and died 16 hours later. Since then, Karen has been working on the DEVIN Foundation: Diligently Ending Violence in Neighbourhoods

My wife, Jennifer, and I as cofounders of the Mountain of Heroes Foundation would like to thank the board of directors, the volunteers, and the corporate partners of the event for raising research funds for cystic fibrosis and at the same time recognizing these

Albertan heroes who have truly turned tragedy into triumph.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Building Alberta's Labour Force**

**Rev. Abbott:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has the hottest economy in the country and there are no signs of this slowing down. Help-wanted signs are everywhere, and forecasts show that in 10 years Alberta will face a shortfall of workers that may be as high as 100,000. Now, I know the media and others often comment on the doom and gloom aspect of this challenge, but what's not reported or widely known is all of the government actions under way to address skill and labour shortages. I think this is important to share with Albertans.

For example, the number of apprentices in our province has grown by 103 per cent in the past 10 years.

**An Hon. Member:** How much?

**Rev. Abbott:** A hundred and three per cent, which is a phenomenal number. We are training more apprentices in Alberta than at any other time in our history, and this year government is boosting funding for apprenticeship by \$5.7 million, which will add many new spaces for apprentices.

Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to getting even more certified tradespeople and apprentices working in Alberta. This commitment can be seen in the province's action to increase the number of registered apprenticeship program scholarships from 50 to 500. This will encourage more high school students to continue their apprenticeship programs after graduation. The total funding for RAP is half a million dollars.

Our government also initiated the youth apprenticeship program, a pilot project that helps students in grades 7 through 12 explore career options through integrated learning activities. There are approximately 163 students enrolled in this program in Alberta.

Connecting job seekers with employers is also an important role government plays. In Drayton Valley Alberta Human Resources and Employment is working with our local employment agency, Cardium Employment Services, to connect people looking for employment directly with employers looking for workers. A number of people new to Drayton Valley have come into these offices and walked out a short time later with a list of employers looking for people. These agencies are also working to develop a survey of employers to find who is looking for workers and what kinds of jobs are available.

Mr. Speaker, this government is also working closely with industry and businesses to partner on activities such as career fairs and others.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Municipal Franchise Tax**

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to talk about more financial hardships that Alberta energy consumers continue to face because of deregulation. Specifically, I would like to speak about the municipal franchise tax. It's not a fee; it's a tax that consumers pay on their monthly electricity and heating bills. A recent thorough, province-wide study by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business shows that there is no link between the charges that some consumers pay in this province and the intended

purpose of the tax. This, in my view, is a consumption tax, not a fee like the Progressive Conservative government would like to have consumers believe.

Consumers in some municipalities continue to see their municipal franchise tax fluctuate with the price of natural gas and electricity. Despite the stated purpose of this tax a resident of Calgary may see their charge double, even triple from month to month depending on what the costs of natural gas and electricity are.

In 2004 this tax accounted for nearly 10 per cent of the city of Calgary's total revenues. Calgarians may expect to pay 300 per cent more than the residents of Red Deer in a given year for this arbitrary tax. A small-business owner in Leduc will pay about 425 per cent more than a small-business owner in Hinton. Clearly, there is no logic to the formula that is used by Leduc, Calgary, Beaverlodge, Fort McMurray, Wetaskiwin, and others when calculating the municipal franchise tax.

We need to have a good, close look at what research the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has done and be mindful of some of their recommendations. They recommend among many things that the government of Alberta take the initiative to put in place a common fee calculation that ensures that electricity and natural gas consumers are treated similarly across the province and local governments do not profit from high electricity and natural gas prices. They also say that local governments, especially those that impose high rates, should find ways to lower the fees.

At this time I would like to thank you, Mr. Speaker, and all hon. Members of the Legislative Assembly for this opportunity.

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

## 2:50 Government Reform

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are at an opportune time, a crossroads, and together we can soar into the future. We can raise our society to new heights. Peace, prosperity, and protection are universally held by people around the world. However, few have attained all three at the levels we have. We have achieved such peace and prosperity because of all the people and the choices they have made. We have respect for one another and the law, which protects people's lives and property, which in turn has enabled us to enjoy peace and prosperity.

Prosperity is a two-edged sword. It can destroy the individual as easily as it can the country. Is prosperity going to destroy us or make us stronger? To paraphrase Alexander Tytler: democracy is doomed to fail when the people choose to vote for the government that promises to give the most. The result is a tax-and-spend government that destroys the economy.

We need our three levels of government to work as a team. Each level must accept and recognize where its responsibilities are and how the people will be best served. We have gone through a long period of centralization and the notion that bigger is better. What we need is a government that is smaller, more efficient, and effective. For years the federal government has promised more and more federal programs, everything from early childhood care to seniors' care, cradle to grave. This seemingly free gift is too good to be true. We are tearing apart our families with social engineering, everything from our tax structure to our caring for our loved ones. There is a vicious circle of taxing more for more programs, which in turn creates the need for more taxes. We need to create tax credits for families who choose to care for their loved ones. Why do we think it is better to pay an institution \$3,000 a month instead of a thousand dollars a month tax credit for a family?

With a new government in Ottawa, led by a Prime Minister who understands the need for governments to be responsible for their own areas, we have a golden opportunity to change the tide. We must work with him to reform Canada. Canadians are overtaxed and overgoverned. We must act now to work with the new federal government to reduce the duplication of services, the size of government, the universal programs, and most important: their taxes.

Thank you.

## head: Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) to give notice that on Monday I will move that written questions appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

I'm also giving notice that on Monday I will move that motions for returns appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

## head: Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Community Development.

### Bill 18 Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Amendment Act, 2006

**Mr. Mar:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sir, I request leave to introduce a bill being the Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Amendment Act, 2006.

Thank you, sir.

[Motion carried; Bill 18 read a first time]

### Bill 19 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2006

**Mrs. McClellan:** Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 19, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2006. 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.

[Motion carried; Bill 19 read a first time]

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

### Bill 203 Railway (Alberta) (Heritage Railway) Amendment Act, 2006

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 203, Railway (Alberta) (Heritage Railway) Amendment Act, 2006.

This bill is designed to create another type of railway under the existing act which recognizes the importance of restored and re-created vintage railways operating in our province. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 203 read a first time]

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

**Bill 204**  
**Parental Consent to Medical**  
**Treatment for Minors Act**

**Rev. Abbott:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Parental Consent to Medical Treatment for Minors Act.

Bill 204 will make it necessary for minors age 15 and under to obtain the informed, written consent of at least one parent prior to medical treatment being obtained.

[Motion carried; Bill 204 read a first time]

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

**Bill 205**  
**Continuing Care Standards Act**

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your indulgence just for a moment, if I might. I rise with humility and not without luck and the goodwill of a caucus colleague to introduce my very first bill in this House. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Continuing Care Standards Act.

This act is intended to create a continuing care commissioner's office responsible to this House to ensure that the provincial standards of care for all of those in continuing care, regardless of who delivers the service or where they live, will be monitored for equality, adherence, and the authority to enforce the same.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 205 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table a letter that is similar in tone and content to phone calls and e-mails that I am sure are flooding all of our offices. This one is from Alice Williamson, who's concerned that instead of listening to Albertans and fellow MLAs, he chooses to insult them and bully them. Ms Williamson points out that this behaviour increases voter apathy.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Martin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two documents to table today. Because working families are going to be the hardest hit by the proposed two-tier health reforms, I'd like to table a release from the Alberta Federation of Labour dated February 28 and entitled Government's Third Way Plan: A Love Letter to For-profit Health Care and a release from the Health Sciences Association of Alberta from the same date entitled Government's Third Way Plan Undermines Public System.

Thank you.

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

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got one document to table. It's a news release from Public Interest Alberta entitled Alberta Must Defend . . . Childcare System. PIA, Public Interest Alberta, is urging the Minister of Children's Services to defend the agreement with the federal government that she signed just last year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

head: **Projected Government Business**

**The Speaker:** The Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. R. Miller:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 7(5) I would ask that the Government House Leader please share with the Assembly the projected government business for next week.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday, March 6, at 9 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders for second reading Bill 19, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2006, and thereafter consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's speech.

On Tuesday, March 7, in the afternoon we anticipate messages from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor with respect to interim supply, thereafter to deal with government motions 8 and 9 with respect to the referral of interim supply to committee of supply and the number of days of interim supply, thereafter consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's speech and, time permitting, second readings of Bill 9, Income and Employment Supports Amendment Act, 2006, and Bill 10, Engineering, Geological and Geophysical Professions Amendment Act, 2006. At 8 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's speech, Committee of the Whole on Bill 19, and second reading of Bill 14, Health Professions Statutes Amendment Act, 2006, Bill 16, Peace Officer Act, and Bill 17, Libraries Amendment Act, 2006, and as per the Order Paper.

3:00

On Wednesday, March 8, in the afternoon we would anticipate, presuming that the interim supply has been entered, committee day 1 of interim supply and at 8 p.m. day 2 of interim supply, and, time permitting, third reading of Bill 19, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2006.

On Thursday, March 9, in the afternoon under Government Bills and Orders for second reading Bill 11, Architects Amendment Act, 2006, Bill 12, Land Titles Amendment Act, 2006, Bill 13, Real Estate Amendment Act, 2006, and Bill 15, International Interests in Mobile Aircraft Equipment Act, and Committee of the Whole with respect to any bills that might be available.

head: **Orders of the Day**

head: **Government Bills and Orders**  
**Second Reading**

**Bill 3**  
**Protection Against Family Violence**  
**Amendment Act, 2006**

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill 3, the Protection Against Family Violence Amendment Act, 2006.

Family violence has devastating consequences for children and families, and it plagues communities throughout our province. It means constant fear and despair to many. No one should have to live like this. That's why one of this government's top priorities is to end family violence.

As the MLA for Red Deer-North, where the hon. Premier first

announced the provincial round-table on family violence, I'm extremely pleased to see this process coming full circle. The amendments proposed in this act respond to the issues and concerns Albertans shared with us at the round-table.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

One of the most significant changes is the expansion of the definition of family violence to include stalking. Too often after an individual leaves a violent relationship, they become a victim of stalking, and too often this results in serious injury or even murder. This civil protection legislation will ensure that those who have gathered the courage to leave violent relationships are protected from further family violence. Alberta is only the second jurisdiction in Canada to make this provision.

Bill 3 also includes the addition of a preamble. This will clarify the legislation's objectives and allow for a more consistent interpretation of the act. The preamble confirms the commitment of the people and the Legislature of Alberta to preventing family violence. The proposed amendments also expand the definition of family members to include relatives who don't live together. This means that vulnerable family members, including seniors and people with disabilities, can be protected.

Bill 3 also provides a more comprehensive explanation of family violence and removes the word "intentional" from the definition. This will provide caseworkers, police, and judges with an increased understanding of the dynamics of family violence and help them determine when an emergency protection order should be granted. It also means that emergency protection orders can be granted even if abusers say that they did not mean to hurt the victim. The proposed amendments also extend the review time for these orders by two days to ensure that the court has the best information possible when reviewing an order.

Bill 3 removes the requirement to impose counselling on victims because best practices suggest that positive outcomes for victims of family violence are best achieved through personal choices and voluntary participation. Counselling may still be ordered by the court for the abusers. Research also indicates that the effects of family violence on children need to be addressed in order to prevent long-term social and economic impact. That's why the proposed amendments will remove barriers so that children may receive counselling with the consent of only one parent or guardian.

These proposed amendments will make us more responsive to this issue and will protect even more people affected by family violence. I ask for the support of all members of the Assembly for Bill 3 to help ensure that Albertans are protected from the threat of family violence.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, before I recognize the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, may we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**  
(*reversion*)

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

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Assembly giving me time to introduce. It's at an appropriate time too. I have some very hard-working staff who are in the gallery observing the

debate on the bill, the Protection Against Family Violence Amendment Act, and I would like to acknowledge them if I can, please.

I have Sheryl Fricke, who is the executive director of the prevention of family violence and bullying; Laura Alcock, who is the director of the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, child and family services; Susan Taylor, senior manager from the office of the prevention of family violence and bullying; Sonja Ford, executive assistant, prevention of family violence and bullying; Debbie Malloy, who is my special adviser in the minister's office; and Jeri Romaniuk, who is my special project co-ordinator in my office. I'll ask everybody to give them a warm round. If they could rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**  
**Second Reading**  
**Bill 3**  
**Protection Against Family Violence**  
**Amendment Act, 2006**  
(*continued*)

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we consider Bill 3, Protection Against Family Violence Amendment Act, 2006, I would like to share some thoughts on violence. We talk of violence as a thing, a noun, a subject, or object, but it comes from "violate," a verb, a set of actions and attitudes. That's where I want to start.

What are the actions, the attitudes, the words and thoughts behind them by which we violate another living thing? We violate when we invade another's space or property, when we snoop or eavesdrop on words or sights not intended for us, read private letters or journals. We violate when we intrude on personal space, when we stand too close, talk in someone's face, make intimidating gestures or personal remarks. These can assault as much as a body blow. We can violate by impersonating someone or mimicking them unkindly, grabbing a purse or other personal object, even as a joke. We violate by slander, what we say about them, and by remarks about their relationships, families, friends, and the groups they belong to. All these things stop short of mugging, beating, sexual and other violent assaults.

These more serious offences grow out of an attitude of violation that does not hold sacred one's person and space. A culture that condones brutality in movies, video games, and some professional sports signals that violence may be okay. When we tolerate these assaults in our minds and on our screens on a regular basis, we place the onus on the individual to decide why certain kinds of violence are unacceptable when others are not. We violate not only when we commit acts towards specific people; we are implicated in policies that target groups, another race or gender, or another species.

This Bill 3 intends to protect against family violence, and we must support that effort. Violence against women continues to grow to epidemic proportions through acts of harassment, spousal assault, sexual violence, and the ultimate price to pay, death. In fact, we heard at the World Conference on Prevention of Family Violence, recently held in Banff, that there was a global agreement that domestic violence is a pandemic, and domestic violence should be addressed with the same attention as is given to the avian flu or HIV/AIDS. Abuse must end. When we hear statistics about violence, remember too that each number is more than a statistic. It is someone's life.

I would like to quote from *Standing Together* from the story *Measures*, by Leslie Wraithen, about violence against women:

Imagine cutting yourself off from your family and friends and everything you love. Imagine trying to contain the danger to just yourself.

Picture yourself moving your children in the middle of the night to another shelter because he has found you again.

Try to imagine making life beautiful for your children while you heal from three broken ribs.

Picture yourself thinking you would rather be dead than be hunted. Imagine being more afraid of life than death.

That is what violence does.

### 3:10

Last year Alberta shelters provided a safe haven for nearly 7,000 women and 7,000 children, assisted nearly 56,000 callers on crisis lines, yet they were unable to accommodate nearly 4,400 abused women and 4,000 children because they were full. Know that Alberta leads in many of the sorry statistics, whether it be the number of women who report being stalked, the number of women who report experiencing abuse, or the number of murder suicides. We also have one of the highest rates of women killed by their intimate partners.

Most of us are repelled by the violence that increasingly characterizes our society, but what are we doing about it? Women in Canada make up the vast majority of victims of crimes against the person, including sexual assault and spousal violence: four out of five victims of spousal homicide are female. Criminal harassment or stalking: female victims are overwhelmingly stalked by men. Kidnapping or abduction: violence against women is not random but an act of power and control.

We cannot forget the women who are afraid to ask for help, the child who won't speak, or a death that goes unsolved. So many voices have yet to be heard. We must work for change. This was driven home to us all during the Fekete inquiry last spring into the murder of Betty Fekete and her son Alex by Josif Fekete. The judge, after hearing five days of testimony, still has to recommend in 2005 that police officers should not treat chronic complaints made by a recipient of domestic violence, such as those made by Betty Fekete regarding death threats, as a nuisance and, therefore, unworthy of belief.

We must support the efforts of the shelters and family violence prevention programs here in our own community. I would like to thank the hon. Member for Red Deer-North for bringing this amendment forward to clarify the Protection Against Family Violence Act. The purpose of this bill is to widen the scope of family violence to include stalking as a form of family violence. Furthermore, this bill will make enforcement against family violence easier for law enforcement officials by providing some clear definitions of what constitutes family violence. The bill looks at improving the emergency protection order process by making it easier to apply for such an order.

This bill is a positive step in protecting victims of family violence; however, I find some points requiring more clarity. If this bill is accepted as it is currently drafted, we're going to see a sharp increase in the number of people charged for committing family violence. In particular, this will be the case due to the broad terminology used to define conduct considered to be stalking. Also, removing the previously required intent of a respondent will mean more people being found guilty of family violence.

As I look at the rationale behind this, I realize that according to the 2005 study by Statistics Canada, Alberta does have the highest family violence in Canada. Alberta women are more likely to be physically abused by a family member than other women in Canada. Furthermore, aboriginal people report twice as many cases of stalking as nonaboriginals. One point that should be made regarding

this bill is that it does not mention or address the higher rates of family violence and stalking that are experienced by aboriginal people.

I'm pleased that 4(b)(ii)(C) adds stalking as a form of family violence, that 4(b)(iii) adds a clause that defines stalking, and 4(c) adds a clause that defines conduct considered to be stalking. However, section 1(2)(c) may be problematic. Specifically, the clause is very general and includes terms such as "being present at . . . any place where a family member, or anyone known to the family member, resides, works, carries on business or is . . . likely to be present." This clause seems to be far too wide reaching. Referring to this clause, there are endless innocent situations that may be deemed stalking, especially in a small community, so I am concerned about that.

I notice that 5(b)(iii) adds two clauses which include two new factors to be considered by a judge when issuing an EPO: "whether the respondent is or has been controlling" and "whether the family violence has been repetitive or escalating." The portion of this clause that includes "controlling" may be problematic. How exactly do we define controlling behaviour? At what point does a judge decide that a respondent's behaviour should be classified as controlling?

Section 5(b)(iv) adds two new factors to be considered by a judge when deciding whether to grant an EPO: the vulnerability of elderly claimants and the effects of family violence on a child who is in custody or care of the claimant. In my opinion, this is the most valuable amendment in this bill.

Looking at section 8, there's a new clause, 8(1.1), which states that a claimant's location may be disclosed by the court if an order is made that the respondent be restrained from attending that location. The previous clause stated that the location of the claimant must be kept confidential. From my understanding this clause is intended to allow a judge to order the respondent to stay away from the claimant, but if the location was required to be kept confidential, this would be difficult as the respondent would not know where they could not go. Perhaps we can get some clarity on that point.

Overall, this bill is a positive step in protecting victims of family violence, and I support it. Thank you.

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

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. Member for Red Deer-North for leading this important bill through the legislative process for me. I want to also acknowledge the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, who has spoken very passionately about the issue of family violence. On the questions that she is asking, we will certainly get back to her.

Mr. Speaker, family violence has devastating consequences on individuals, communities, and society as a whole. It can leave scars that last a lifetime. Thousands of Albertans are affected by family violence every year. Helping Albertans understand what family violence is and what can be done to prevent it has been a strong agenda for this government. Making improvements to the Protection Against Family Violence Act will help us meet those goals.

I'd like to remind everyone what this act is about. The act was created because there's no time to cut through red tape, like getting a peace bond or a restraining order, when violence is happening. It's all about immediate, emergency protection for victims. This act helps in situations where one family member is violent against another: punching, slapping, knocking down, or causing physical harm in some way. It is also used when a family member has threatened death or severe violence.

This act is not used to intervene in ordinary family tensions and

disagreements, but it does protect all family members, Mr. Speaker – seniors, women, men, and children – and it helps anyone who has been a victim. The Protection Against Family Violence Act enables police, child intervention workers, and judges to act quickly in order to stop the violence, provide protection from future violence, and provide a breathing space so that family members can put longer term safety measures in place.

The amendments which the hon. Member for Red Deer-North just outlined will make this a more user-friendly piece of legislation, legislation that builds on what we heard at the World Conference on Prevention of Family Violence. During the conference we heard from 1,100 participants from 31 countries, and it served as an excellent reminder that no matter where we are in the world, we all have something in common: we are all touched by family violence, and we all want to do something about it. At the conference the United Arab Emirates made a commitment to establish the first women's shelter in their country, a huge step forward.

The world conference also helped to reinforce the fact that family violence isn't an issue exclusive to spouses and that we need to broaden our thinking and offer protection to other family members who could be vulnerable, such as seniors and the disabled, which is why we're expanding the definition of family members in the Protection Against Family Violence Act to include individuals who do not live together.

3:20

One of the most significant changes to the Protection Against Family Violence Act that I am particularly pleased with is the inclusion of stalking. Mr. Speaker, research indicates that 57 per cent of stalkers are partners or former partners of their victims, and you see it all too often. Someone tries to leave a violent relationship, their abuser attempts to retain their control by stalking, and that person ends up either completely traumatized for life, seriously injured, or dead.

I'd like my colleagues to imagine for a moment what it's like to live in constant fear for your safety and for the safety of your children, afraid to answer the phone or listen to the messages on your answering machine, always looking over your shoulder when you go out, afraid to answer the door, afraid of what that person might be doing to your children.

This change will help protect those who have left violent relationships and their family members. I want to be clear, though, that adding stalking to the definition of family violence under this act is for the sole purpose of protecting victims, not for investigating or laying charges against a stalker. That's what the Criminal Code is for. However, the definition of stalking in Bill 3 is similar to the one used in the Criminal Code, allowing for both pieces of legislation to work hand in hand. With this amendment we will become only the second province in Canada to protect victims from stalking.

Stalking victims are numerous, but they're afraid to speak up because what protection did they have before? With these amendments we're giving victims of stalking, victims of family violence a voice, and, Mr. Speaker, we're shattering the silence of family violence. Adding stalking to the Protection Against Family Violence Act as well as extending protection to seniors and the disabled, granting emergency protection orders more quickly, and helping children who bear witness to family violence receive the counselling they need will make this very good piece of legislation even better.

Before I finish, though, I'd like to share with my colleagues a powerful poem that was shared with me. I think it really puts things into perspective as to why our government is taking such a strong hand against family violence.

I got flowers today.  
It wasn't my birthday or any other special day.  
Last night we had a fight and he hit me.  
But I know he is sorry . . .  
Because I got flowers today.

I got flowers today.  
It wasn't our anniversary or any other special day.  
Last night . . . he threw me against the wall and started to choke me.  
But I know he must be sorry . . .  
Because I got flowers today.

I got flowers today . . .  
and it wasn't Mother's Day or any other special day.  
I was so swollen and bruised  
I was ashamed to answer the door.  
But I know he's sorry . . .  
Because I got flowers today.

If I leave him . . .  
Where will I go?  
What about money?  
What about my kids?  
It's getting worse every time . . .  
But I'm afraid to leave.  
But I know he's sorry.  
Because I got flowers today.

My friends and family filed by to see me . . .  
Asking why I never left him.  
If only I had the strength and courage to . . .  
But I didn't.  
So . . . I got flowers today.

Mr. Speaker, I think this poem says it all, and I ask all members of the Assembly to support Bill 3.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate both the Member for Red Deer-North and the Minister of Children's Services bringing forward Bill 3, strengthening and diversifying the Protection Against Family Violence Act. It certainly is a necessary thing to do. Here in the province of Alberta we have a very unacceptably high rate of family violence, and this can only be stemmed somehow by a combination of changing the laws that can penalize offenders but also combined with a means by which we can educate our population and perhaps the next generation to understand just how destructive the various elements of family violence are to individuals and to our society as a whole.

I, too, was struck by the statistic of the fact that over half of stalkers are, in fact, former partners of individuals, mostly women having this violence perpetrated on them by men. You know, this is indicative of a way by which the pattern of violence is enacted in our society. I just wanted to, if I could, reflect on some of the reasons why, in fact, men are abusive towards their partners or former partners. You know, most of it centres around this issue of control. It's not anything to do with creating a loving family situation. Rather, it's an extension of control turned to violence. A lot of this sort of behaviour stems from a very rigid definition in the perpetrator's mind of what male and female roles are and where the power does lie. Therefore, I do certainly support initiatives such as Bill 3, but the importance of educating our own children, particularly male children, to understand the importance of equality in a family relationship I think is equally as important to stemming the tide of violence.

Also, of course, a very large emerging reason why, in fact, people do perpetrate violence against their spouses or ex-spouses or partners



is that they are continuing a pattern of violence that they themselves were victim of in their earlier life or as children. Once again, we know that if we can break that cycle at any point in time between the generations, then we're likely not to be just benefiting the women and families that are amongst us now but for generations to come.

Certainly, I do, as I said, have mostly positive things to say about this particular bill. As I've been reading it here, I suppose that extending stalking into the act is a good idea, but, you know, the reason that perhaps it was slow to become part of this act previously is that it's a little bit more difficult to define. As a previous speaker, I believe the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, pointed out, there are several places here where I think we need to look at the language more specifically, and perhaps we can do that in the committee stage. Just looking at when a person is defined as being dangerous perhaps to the person, then just how we control a person's movements can be problematic. Certainly, it's not something that's insurmountable for the fine minds that sit and stand around this Chamber to come up with some way to make it work.

Specifically, I would like to just draw your attention very briefly to section 5(b) on page 4. It's adding the need to take into consideration when issuing an emergency protection order "the claimant's need for a safe environment to arrange for longer-term protection from family violence." You know, our own WIN House here in Edmonton, just one of the shelters available to people in difficulties, had to turn away more than a thousand women seeking assistance last year because of lack of funding and space to care for endangered women and children. You know, if we have a lack of proper community and public support for many women and children who choose to remove themselves from difficult situations, then I think this is an important piece of the puzzle that is in fact missing. Not to take away from the importance of this bill, but we have to have other services in concert that can work to reinforce the good intentions of this bill.

3:30

Also, I would suggest that one of the problems that law enforcement officers have with, say, restraining orders and the whole mechanism by which stalking is dealt with now in the law enforcement service is that it's simply very difficult to monitor and to carry forward. I know from the work that we do in my own constituency of Edmonton-Calder that when people do come forward with difficulties associated with family violence, of course the police can advise very admirably and competently what people should do, but in regard to enforcement they're often simply short of staff to be able to follow through and perhaps come when a call is made for someone who is violating a restraining order or something of that nature. So, once again, for us to make sure that we have adequate law enforcement in place at a community level I think is an important part of making this bill effective.

Finally, I just would like to certainly suggest our tentative support of Bill 3. We are interested, however, just to perhaps clarify some of the language contained therein and again reinforce the importance of other elements in our own society that need to be strengthened, including education and police enforcement and shelters, so that we can have an integrated approach to attack this problem of family violence in our province.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Bonko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak on Bill 3 on behalf of my constituents of Edmonton-Decore. I do think this is a good bill, and I do support this. It's a growing concern. It's

been growing for years, and it's finally being addressed here today with this introduction of the Protection Against Family Violence Amendment Act, 2006.

It doesn't surprise me that we lead the country in violence, as quoted from Statistics Canada by my colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods. We also lead the country with privatization of liquor stores. We also have gambling, which leads to addictions. We have these people gambling, which is available all the time. A person can come home after spending their paycheque and become violent after that and take it out on their family. We recognize that that does happen.

There's also the fact that after having the liquor stores being privatized, they're available everywhere, making it more accessible. We need to address that. With the drinking that goes on out there, more counselling is needed. Its availability is becoming alarming. We have increased family violence due just, I think, to the privatization that we've allowed with our liquor stores. There's one on a convenient corner near you, which does concern me as well.

If this bill is accepted in its current form, I think you could see a sharp increase in the number of people charged with family violence. I'm pleased that it includes seniors as well as family members. We know that as we're an aging population and kids now are living at home longer and longer, they may in fact come to their aging parents and want money. We've seen commercials advertising it and how subtle family violence in some cases is. Unfortunately, it's some of the seniors, the aging parents, that are recipients of that.

Family members – some people may not be willing to come forward. I know that in my constituency I don't have that many people coming forward. I think maybe they don't recognize it perhaps because it's subtle in some cases, or in some cases they, in fact, are embarrassed that it's even happening to them and how they allowed themselves to get into this position for this long without leaving. Some fear for what's going to happen to the kids, and that's a big thing as well. The kids are an important fact here that needs to be addressed, and I do believe that this bill will protect the children as well as the spouse, whichever one is in fact under the abuse piece here.

The other portion that I'm concerned about. Mr. Speaker, it is a positive aspect in respecting family violence. I said before that I do believe it's a good bill, but I'm disappointed it doesn't in fact address more cases for aboriginal people living out in the rural areas as well as in the urban areas, too, because it is becoming an alarming rate among the growing population. That is a population that is in fact – you read time and time again in the paper – on the receiving end of violence or murders. It's a growing population that we need to address, and I'm glad again that this does bring it in here as well.

School is an excellent source. If we're going to nip this in the bud, it's got to start with education. I'll give that to the education system. They have that Safe and Caring Schools initiative. Then they have the conflict teams to recognize and tell them already at a young age that this behaviour is not acceptable, that this language is not acceptable. But it's going to take a lot of time to go through this.

I've got a couple of questions with regard to what would be considered stalking. I know that the police sometimes are at a hard point because it's not within the bill. A person has now taken up residence across the street from their spouse, looking across the street from their window, perhaps with binoculars. Is that considered stalking, and can they do anything with regard to that? They said that sometimes, as the member said, as it is, they can't do anything about it. I don't know. Hopefully, this bill can address something like that as well.

What about internal conflicts? This came to my attention during an open house town hall meeting with Chief Boyd taking on crime. He was doing his tour of all the communities. A constituent had

come up with repeated violence that she was in fact the recipient of by her husband, her spouse, but that spouse was a member of the Edmonton Police Service.

Now, they'd like to keep a lid on something like this because they don't want to taint the members or the force with something like this because it doesn't happen in the force. But this lady, in fact, was a recipient of this, but she's being muzzled: can't talk about it, cannot call the police, cannot call the mayor. Does this preclude being investigated by their own? Will it be able to take on services such as the police force when they have investigations on one of their own, or does it allow just the police force to investigate their own? That would be one of the concerns that I would have.

Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Martin:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will not prolong the discussion. The point I want to make is that certainly the intent of the bill is good. Adding stalking I think is important, and I especially like the idea of the disabled and the elderly claimants because we're hearing more about elder abuse all the time. As I say, I think the bill is a good bill. But I think, as my colleague was talking about, it comes down to how you begin to enforce it.

I think we know pretty clearly what stalking is. If you look at the family violence in Canada from Statistics Canada – I'm sure the minister has seen the stalking, criminal harassment. They talk about obscene phone calls most frequently, but they say that "more than one-half of female stalking victims reported that their stalker phoned them repeatedly or made silent or obscene . . . calls" – that was 52 per cent of them – "while one third reported being spied on . . . and/or being intimidated or threatened." That was 34 per cent. "In contrast, more than half of male stalking victims . . . reported being intimidated or threatened." So, generally, I think that when we get into stalking, it shouldn't be just an isolated thing. I think it's a number of repeated phone calls and these sorts of things.

What I'm coming to is that in the same report it's been alluded to that Alberta has the highest rate of stalking for women in the country, 13 per cent; for men, not quite the highest but 7 per cent. My point, to come back to a good part of the bill, 5(b)(iv), is that if we're going to add stalking, as we should, and when we do have the numbers – now, I'm sure that with adding to this bill, there's going to be much more pressure on the courts. There's going to be much more pressure in terms of people needing the help, safe places, shelters, and that sort of thing. That's my concern, not the bill but what happens after in terms of the situation.

I know that the minister is well aware of this. There are shelters that my colleague talked about in Edmonton – but I'm pretty sure it's true throughout Alberta, that the shelters that we have now, with the laws we have now, we're being turned away. Even though we have the laws, if we can't do something about it if it gets clogged, then a good piece of legislation, if we don't have the enforcement, might not be particularly helpful. So I lay that out as a concern, not about the bill, but what happens after is my concern.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:40

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) kicks in. My apologies. I was remiss after the previous speaker. Any questions or comments for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview?

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, did you still want to ask your question to the Member for Edmonton-Decore or speak on the bill?

**Ms Blakeman:** I think I'll just go ahead and speak on the bill. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Go ahead. Thank you.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks. I guess with some regret I thank the Speaker for the opportunity to speak to this bill again today. I really would like to be able to not get up in this House and speak about violence against women, and I would really like to not have to deal with another bill that's trying to protect women because I would really like to see the resolution of this issue. I've now been working on this for probably 30 years. In many ways it seems to be escalating, and none of us that work in this area are able to identify whether, in fact, there are more women and family members that are victims of abuse or whether we're just getting better at getting them to come forward and identify themselves so that we can make note of their numbers and compile the statistics.

I look back to the genesis of this bill with pride. This bill was originally proposed by the Liberal member for then Edmonton-Highlands, Alice Hanson. It was the first time, I think, that an opposition member's sponsored bill ever passed second reading in this Assembly and had support of the Assembly. It was a fairly historic document at that point. It did go through an additional consultation process over the summer and was brought back in Committee of the Whole, at which point there was a parliamentary procedure that was used to have the chairman leave the chair, actually, in Committee of the Whole, and the bill basically disappeared into thin air. I sponsored it the next year, and then it reappeared as a government bill. It was sponsored by the then Member for Calgary-Currie and passed at that time.

I believe this is the first amendment act that we've had to that bill, and that original bill must have passed in about 2000, if I'm remembering things right. So I would say that this is a tribute to Alice Hanson. This bill has stood the test of time. We're really not having to go back and correct it for any mistakes that were made in the original drafting of it; rather, we're dealing with the refinements that we feel we need to be making to the bill to make sure that we are protecting everyone that needs to be able to take advantage of what's being offered in this bill.

It's interesting. I at one time was the executive director of the Advisory Council on Women's Issues, and because of that I was stalked by a member of the public for a period of time. I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I had the full resources of the Edmonton Police Service behind me to help me out, and I got to carry around the phone number of a detective, and they checked on me I don't know how often. I was aware that I was being helped and protected and that people were watching out for me, and I was able to continue to move about my city and through my life with a degree of confidence. At the same time, I knew that the very women that I was working for on behalf of Albertans and on behalf of the advisory council – those women that were being stalked by domestic partners did not have the same protection that I did because I was being stalked by a member of the public. Yes, it was political, but I never understood, and to me it was a great irony that in my position I got that protection and the women that I was working for didn't. That's 15 years ago. So it's taken us 15 years to come to this point.

I understand that the sponsoring member and the minister are saying that we're one of the first two in Canada to recognize that and to offer legislation to protect victims of stalking. What a sad comment. All we seem to have been able to do with the issue of violence against women is to find the layers. I don't think it's gotten more complicated. I think it always was complicated. We slowly

peel back the layers, and now we've reached the layer and the understanding of what stalking does to people's lives.

I always approach this issue from a point of fear, in the same way that one of the tests that we look at in law is harm. Is harm being caused? Who is being harmed by a particular action? I always approach this issue about fear because to me it wasn't enough that you had to appear bloody and beaten. I think that women's lives were and are changed forever by the fear that they could not move about in their city and through their lives as I was able to because they were having to deal with that element of fear and to bring caution into their lives on all parts. This is doubled, tripled, quadrupled with every child that that woman is likely to be responsible for. My colleague the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods was quoting from a book in which a mother was talking about: how do you teach your children that there are beautiful things in life when you are paralyzed and locked inside of your own home for fear that if you go outside, you will be discovered and stalked and worse to follow that?

So I am pleased to see the addition of the stalking amendments. As always, I want this to be Charter proof. I want this to work. So I am wondering: what was the feedback? I'm assuming that this bill was run through the Legal Resource Centre or the Law Reform Institute, which is usually the avenue that the government takes to sort of test new law. I'd like to hear back some assurance that this, in fact, is going to stand the test.

Three other issues I'd like to raise. One is the health connection, and it's something that I talk about a lot now as the opposition critic for health. There are a couple of ways that we can reduce the cost in health care: by reducing some of the demands on the acute care systems and particularly the emergency system that are completely preventable. One of those is motor vehicle accidents, and the other one is domestic violence. This is completely preventable, and if we continue to work hard on it, I'm hoping that the numbers are going to go down. This is a consumer of acute care, high-cost health care dollars, and there's no reason for it. This is not accidental. This is not some act of God that we have no control over. This is a societal problem, and we all have to continue to work on it.

It does cost our society in many ways. It costs us through police services, through hospitals and health care, lost production time, incarceration, penitentiary time. It costs society a great deal to have violence perpetrated, particularly when it's systematic, it's systemic, and it's family-based. The family is the basis of our society, and when we allow people to be in fear in their own homes, it's a challenge to us to try and address that.

I'd also like to talk about the need for cultural education and support for cultural education. There's been a great deal of discussion in Alberta recently about the need for workers and skilled workers and looking at whether we could bring in short-term temporary workers or whether we need to increase immigration. Mr. Speaker, in my constituency of Edmonton-Centre it's both a blessing and a challenge to be able to welcome a significant number of the immigrants and new Canadians that arrive in Edmonton, who tend to come into Edmonton-Centre mostly because of the cheaper housing stock, I think, and because of the availability of some of the social service helping agencies' settlement services that are clustered downtown. But we see a lot of people that are coming here from other countries. They stabilize and then they move off to other neighbourhoods.

3:50

In Edmonton I'm aware that Mill Woods, of course, is also a large cultural centre for people that have come from other places. That's a challenge for us, to continue to work with those communities in a

way to be supportive but to also be firm that in Canada and in Alberta that's not acceptable behaviour, that it does cost all of us, and that we expect society to work together and to help each other to break through that cycle of violence.

That's not done in isolation, and I think that it's important that the ministry recognize and that the government recognize and fund settlement and cultural agencies that are working with distinct groups to try and get programs in place to combat family violence, to educate women and family members that this is a crime and that it is not acceptable behaviour. We just have too many people that don't get out and circulate, and they don't have an opportunity to find out that there is help there for them, that this is not behaviour that we accept. We have to reach out into those communities, and there are some innovative ways to do it.

In Edmonton, and I think now beyond that, we have the multicultural health brokers, which is a coalition of people in the health professions and social service professions who come from various backgrounds and speak various languages. It's very high. It's 30-some languages that I think the group in Edmonton speaks. They're able to get out into those communities. They're approaching people to give them advice about prenatal care and that kind of thing, and as they do that, they're watching for those signs. They're educating women in those communities and helping to draw them out and to give them tools to work with. But they're doing something there that's not specifically paid for under what we would call traditional medicine. That's preventive medicine, and it needs to be funded and supported.

The Mennonite Centre for Newcomers is also in my constituency along with an organization called Changing Together. Both of these organizations work almost exclusively with immigrants and new Canadians who have come from other places, and those are exactly the kinds of programs we are trying to offer.

So we have to remember that as we invite new immigrants to come to our province to augment our labour base, they need a good start here. That includes things like assistance with language training but also assistance with what the Mennonites call settlement services. It's about housing. It's about how you get around the city: how to use a bus, how the shopping and grocery stores work, and all of that kind of thing. It's also what society expects from you and how you get help if things start to go wrong.

I continue to advocate for funding for those groups: reliable, predictable, long-term funding and not piecemeal, where you're getting one grant from this Department of Health and another grant from that Department of Children's Services and a third grant from Human Resources and Employment. It just means that their administrators spend all their time writing grant proposals and not any time actually doing the work that they're supposed to be doing. We need to get out of the silo on that one.

Lastly, I think we need to have the conversation – and maybe we can have it as part of this debate – around incarceration. If we're going to follow through from this bill, which is offering protection, and if someone contravenes that and crosses the legal barriers, then what are we comfortable with as a society? Do we want people locked up, or are people comfortable with some sort of house arrest or electronic bracelets or community service? We haven't really had that conversation, and I think it's a conversation that we need to have.

What value do we place on this? What are we looking for? There's a common phrase about correctional institutions: are you looking to punish, or are you looking to rehabilitate? We need to have that discussion here. I think we're trying to protect people and members of our society. We don't have enough jail space, literally. We've got huge problems in the remand centre. We have to start

having that discussion about what our expectations are, about whether people would be locked up or not. I hope that that's a conversation that flows from this because it's part of this discussion.

So I am pleased to support this bill. I think the government has done a good job in following through on this one. I've been very critical in the past, and I was right to have been very critical in the past. This, I think, is a positive step forward. My colleagues have shared some of the concerns that they have coming from their areas of expertise, and I'm glad I got the opportunity to speak to it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a). The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Bonko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I notice that the member was cut off just short of finishing a sentence. I would have liked to hear what she was going to finish with. Would the member be able to continue on with her conversation, what she was giving?

**The Acting Speaker:** It's a session for questions or comments.

**Ms Blakeman:** Yes. I was talking about the continuum of violence from the identification of the services in the community, the support services that are offered by those agencies in the community, the existence of legislation like this that gives us that framework to work from, and the end point, where I feel the discussion hasn't happened. The one piece that I didn't get into that continuum is the whole court system. In Alberta we have been very good at developing some innovative programs, particularly – and I'm not going to get the right name; I'm sorry – a special department working through Justice that is specially trained Crown prosecutors who deal specifically with family violence caseloads.

My one concern around that is that there seems to be a desire on the behalf of somebody in the Justice department to move the Crown prosecutors around every six months. But for that particular area the whole point was that you developed a specialization, and when you're moving one Crown prosecutor out of there every six months – and it's a fairly small team to begin with – you actually are creating huge upheaval in that department because somebody's on their way, like, every couple of months. So I'm asking as part of the context of this bill for the Minister of Justice to have a look at that.

Thank you for the opportunity for me to get that in there when I wasn't able to get it in earlier.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any other questions?

The hon. Member for Red Deer-North to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a second time]

### Bill 1

#### Alberta Cancer Prevention Legacy Act

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader on behalf of the Premier.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a privilege to rise this afternoon on behalf of our hon. Premier and in tandem with the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness as well to request leave to move at second reading Bill 1, which is the Alberta Cancer Prevention Legacy Act.

The legislation before us today is extremely important for the health and wellness of Albertans now and in the future. Bill 1 will leave a legacy for our children, our grandchildren, and our great-

grandchildren. Most importantly, it will save lives. Cancer, as we all know, is a leading cause of death in Alberta. Today 81,000 Albertans are living with cancer. Without this particular legislation the numbers would otherwise grow to about 200,000 by the year 2025.

Currently almost half of all Alberta men and two out of every five Alberta women are likely to be diagnosed with cancer at some point during their lifetimes. The number of Albertans living with cancer is increasing rapidly due to population growth, an aging population, and patients living longer. The economic burden of cancer is also growing at an astonishing rate, rapidly consuming resources, increasing costs, and eroding economic activity.

4:00

There is good news, however. Research does show that half of all cancers are preventable. As our Premier said when he introduced Bill 1 last week, Alberta is very well positioned to attack cancer at every level, from prevention right through to potential cures. This bill, Bill 1, is very consistent with our priorities for health renewal in Alberta: to take action on wait times and improve both quality of care and regional service integration. The strategic investment that will be facilitated by this legislation will also allow greater collaborative work in the areas of cancer prevention, screening, and research. Increased cancer prevention strategies will involve a combination of research, education, public policy development, and social marketing initiatives. There will be expanded and new cancer screening programs to detect the signs of cancer at an early age. A virtual Alberta cancer research institute will be created to co-ordinate all cancer research in Alberta. Mr. Speaker, the target is to reduce the incidence of cancer by 35 per cent by the year 2025 and to reduce the mortality from cancer by 50 per cent by the same year, 2025.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, Bill 1 will help ensure that Alberta is positioned as a leading centre for cancer expertise in North America. It will help Alberta prepare now for the growing demand for cancer services in our province. The work that is done and the expertise that will be achieved through this legislation will create a cancer-free future for Albertans.

I ask on behalf of our Premier for the support of the House at this important second stage of Bill 1, the Alberta Cancer Prevention Legacy Act, and I'm delighted to move it at second.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in my role as opposition critic for Health and Wellness and speak in support of this bill in second reading, that being Bill 1, the Alberta Cancer Prevention Legacy Act. I think that Alberta is at such a point of opportunity, and this bill is maybe able to take advantage of that position of opportunity. Certainly, Alberta Liberals have looked a lot at how well positioned we are right now and the immense possibilities that are open in front of us.

Seeking a cure for cancer is one of those things that I think we all dream about when we look at things that we would like to accomplish. It's admirable that the Premier wanted to take a first step in achieving this dream. It's a part of a larger dream. I think that if we are successful in implementing what is envisioned in this bill, it moves beyond Alberta to information technologies, methods of treatment, research, and hopefully prevention that can be shared with other parts of Canada.

We're under intense scrutiny in this province right now from others because they see the amount of money we have and encounter

often an attitude from the government – you know, “It’s mine; you can’t have any” – which is difficult for others in Canada to understand when we seem to have so much. Here’s an opportunity for us to invest in something that, in fact, has a much wider ripple effect, that all may benefit from. I hope that this bill, this idea is looked at by the government as part of a continuum. I’d be very disappointed if the government dusts off its hands and goes: “Well, there, we’ve done it. That was it. This bill is all we needed. Let’s go home. Done.” I really believe that we need to look at this as part of a larger context.

I, too, have met with the Alberta Cancer Board. I was very impressed with them and understand what they were seeking. In fact, I see what they were seeking exactly reflected in this bill. So we have the infrastructure side of things, and really what we’re talking about there are the cancer centres in Edmonton and Calgary.

The cancer centre in Edmonton. We’ve identified what needs to happen. We’ve moved on to the stage of design. We know where it’s going to be situated. It’s well on its way, and we have a pretty good idea of how much money it’s going to cost. It’s a little bit more difficult in Calgary. Haven’t looked at exactly what we need the building to do and what would be in it and who would be working there. I think they have identified where it’s going to be. But the design of the building to support the functions that they identify: they’re not at that stage. So we’re less aware of how much money, but I think there’s a ballpark figure that people are working with. So the money that is identified and set aside in this bill is going to get us most of the way there but not quite all of the way there.

The larger part and the more optimistic part and the more exciting part of the bill is the funding that should play out to research, the testing and screening component, and prevention. What I’m trying to urge the government to do is to stop siloing cancer, to stop looking at cancer as something neatly put in a box because I think increasingly what we’re learning is that that is simply not true. If we’re actually going to tackle this one, we have to come at it with a much more holistic approach. That can sound rather tired and a little crunchy granola to some members here, I’m sure, but it’s said with the best intentions. We can research cancer till the cows come home, but if we don’t combine it with the other components that are outlined here, we are not going to move this forward. Again, we can test and screen forever, and we will identify all kinds of cancers, but if we don’t combine it with the research and the prevention modules, it won’t move us forward. We have to combine all three and take those seriously.

I’m always interested in the juxtapositions that I witness in this House, and there are two of them that I’m seeing come with this bill. On the one hand, we have this bill being tabled in the House on one of the same days that we have people here who have come from elsewhere in Alberta because coal-bed methane exploration is resulting in contamination of their well water to the point where they can set it on fire. You juxtapose that kind of toxicity in someone’s life with this grand bill to deal with ending cancer. You’ve got to put those two things together, folks. You’ve got to understand that they’re both existing in Alberta at the same time and start to understand that those two things have to be dealt with at the same time. They’re part of the same thing.

The other juxtaposition, the one that the media and a number of other people picked up on very quickly, is: well, how come we didn’t get a stronger nonsmoking bill out of the government if they really meant this? Why did they allow it to be watered down? Why is it okay to protect people in most workplaces in the province but not to protect people if they’re working or playing, I suppose, in a casino or a bar, where a minor wouldn’t be allowed? Indeed, that’s

an interesting juxtaposition, and I can’t explain that, so I’ll leave it to the government members to explain it.

What we have to look at is that we have to understand and integrate the social determinants of health, and that especially comes into play when we look at the prevention module of what’s being proposed here. Certainly, the Alberta Cancer Board and its affiliates and agencies and supporters and academic institutions are more than capable of dealing with the research side of what’s being proposed here and dealing with the testing and screening side of it. That’s what they do. They’re experts in that. That’s where their capacity is, and it’s not particularly the capacity of government. I mean, we fund those agencies, but they’re the experts at it. We turn to them to do that work. But they do not have the capacity for prevention. They can put out some good brochures or PowerPoints or web pages with some information, but if we’re really going to get at prevention and we’re really going to deal with social determinants of health, the capacity lies with the government.

4:10

I’m asking the government to recognize that and to pick up that piece of what we’re looking at here because that’s where the ball falls. To pretend that it’s nothing to do with them, this bill is not going to be successful. This idea will not live long enough to become a legacy to anyone and certainly not create any kind of legacy for Albertans.

We need to create healthier populations so that they can cope with what either genetics or the environment throws at them. We really are starting to get a pretty good idea of what causes cancer. If we can get well on the road to getting healthier populations so that they can better withstand this, whether it’s coming at them from a genetic basis or whether it’s coming at them from an environmental basis, we need to work towards that. Let me give you a couple of example of things that we could be doing.

Hot lunch programs for kids. We know that if we can set kids up to be successful by age six, their chance becomes equal with any other child in this province to be as successful as they want to be. If we don’t help them get to that point, then we know that they are much more likely to turn up using the resources of the police system, the criminal system, the corrections system, also the health system, social services, and a whole range of other costs that we share as taxpayers. But, frankly, we don’t need to be paying that money out if we could have prevented it in the first place. So it’s programs for kids. It’s things like hot lunch programs.

It’s things like safe, affordable housing. For that, I think the government could be taking more of a leadership role in working with its municipalities to make sure that we have safe, affordable housing, and that we’re also looking to the consumer protection side of things. This government was embroiled – and I think it was just settled recently – in the pine shakes debacle, which started just about the time that I got elected. The government is the only agency that really is capable of gathering the information and doing the unbiased testing and then being able to give that kind of consumer protection advice, and the pine shakes episode is a classic case on how not to do it. But I think we should learn the lessons from that.

When we talk about safe, affordable housing, I’m not only talking about the availability of it and that we try and help cities design neighbourhoods that work well together but also that we’re not recommending or promoting any particular kind of material being used. One of the things that we need to look at is the building materials that are used in houses. We know that many of them contain materials that are known to be carcinogens, but we still continue to promote them because they’re cheaper. But are they really cheaper? If we’re building houses that, when people live in

them, contribute to the likelihood – this is the environmental part of what I was talking about – of their getting cancer at some point, have we really saved ourselves money? I don't think so. I think we've cost ourselves money. This is part of what I'm talking about. You've got to really start to look at this in a holistic way, approach it with that kind of attitude.

Some of the other social determinants of health that we know are really important are access to education, things like wages. The city of Edmonton has committed with the assistance and inspiration, actually, of the Edmonton Community Foundation to a program working with low-income families – it's a study actually, a long-term study – to give families access to different levels of support and, particularly, access to recreation. Again, that's something else that I'm sure some of the colleagues in here would say: "Oh, that's a frill. You should be on your own for that. You should be paying for that yourself." But when we look at it in context, we know that if people start to build up that stress and they have no way of getting rid of it and they have no education that helps them understand that they need to work that out of their system, we do start to see it turn up as a contributing factor.

I think that we also want to look at curriculums in schools. You know, if we're going to be serious about this, let's approach the whole thing. If I may just give a very quick example. I was really impressed when I was in Austin a couple of years ago because they set out as a city to brand themselves as the music capital of North America. You'd go: "Oh, yeah. Ho hum. Big deal. It's a tourism tag line." But they took it seriously. They really went through everything in their city and said: what can we do to promote music and promote ourselves as the music capital of North America in this department, in that department, in the way we do this, that, or the next thing?

Here's some of the stuff they came up with. The music in their airport is not muzak. It is the CDs of local bands that are played through that system. So when you get off the plane and walk through that airport in Austin and you're hearing that music and you're going, "Oh, that's kind of cool" – you know what? – you're listening to local music. So right from the minute you walk into that city, you start to be a part of that atmosphere that they created, that they are a music capital.

In the city hall they have a stage set up and they have a band that comes in once a week – one of the local bands, new band, touring band, whatever – and plays for one set for the city council. It's a free concert, and anybody else can wander into city hall and hear it at the same time.

So they took that kind of integration seriously, and they looked at the traffic patterns and bussing people into the festival sites and how they could move people around to hear more music. They took that seriously and looked at everything. That's why it works, and that's why they were successful. They didn't just limit themselves to tourism brochures. They really took it seriously.

The last part I want to talk about is minimizing the health hazards. I've talked about prevention. I've talked about making people healthier, making you stronger so that as a population you get healthier. If we're going to make those changes, we're not being very successful with us. We're really having a hard time convincing people that are 40 and 50 and 60 that, you know, you've got to change your whole lifestyle; you've got to lose that weight; you've got to change the way you've been eating your whole life. We're not very successful at that.

What do we know works? We know that it works if you start with kids. So really we need to start with the kids now in order to have a change in our population 20 years from now. The curriculum is important, but it's also a range of other things that become really

important. If we want people to be healthy and, you know, think nothing about walking for 20 or 25 minutes to get to an event or something, you've got to start that stuff when they're kids. That's why I'm talking about the recreation part of stuff.

You've got to talk about nutrition and accessibility to good food. Frankly, if you've got a kid growing up in a neighbourhood where Safeway has locked down the only grocery store for 15 years and they can't get another grocery store there – all they get is the gas quick stop stores, you know, which only sell milk and pastries – how are the people that live there supposed to get access to good food? So there are a lot more parts to this than just saying: we're going to throw money into this, and they're going to screen and research, and it'll all be solved.

Back to minimizing the health hazards. I think we need to look at aggressive environmental standards and evidence-based environmental standards. If this government doesn't want to listen to me, then listen to your own friends, listen to the Canada West Foundation, listen to Preston Manning, listen to the TD Bank, who are all telling you that we have to be green. We've got to be conscious of what's in our environment and how we're handling environmental – I'm just going to call them toxins for want of a better word. My apologies if that offends anybody. I'm just trying to get a word that encapsulates that I'm talking about.

Let's look at some of the things that have already become issues in our province that we know put things into the atmosphere, the water, the food, the ground, that we eat, that we consume, that our animals consume, that get into our bodies, that cause us trouble and have links to cancer, things like sour gas flaring, things like coal-bed methane exploration and development, things like intensive livestock operations.

#### 4:20

Thus far, what this government has done is to facilitate business improving all of that, and we've got to take another look at that and go: what are we really enabling here? Is there really a balance from the decisions that the government has made? Are we really going to come out ahead on this one? Not just a couple of smart entrepreneurs that have done a good job in lobbying the government and in running their business efficiently that come out on top, I mean all Albertans coming out on top. I would argue that if you've got a couple of successful entrepreneurs balanced against a high rate of a particular kind of cancer in a given neighbourhood, we haven't done this very well. We've allowed that set of scales to tip in favour, and all Albertans pay that price.

I think we need to look very carefully at really strengthening the citizens' ability to get at and present anecdotal material and support them with research when we're talking about things like applications to the EUB and the other environmental boards that make decisions about exploration that's being allowed in various sectors versus what can get into our water, our air, our ground, our animals, that kind of thing.

So just to close, Mr. Speaker, I think we have a huge opportunity here in Alberta. I encourage the government to proceed with this investment. I'd like to see this benefit Albertans and, further, benefit all Canadians and beyond to the world. I don't want to waste opportunities or to underutilize here. The government has a tendency, in my opinion, to start well and then not follow through, and I think it would be a real shame if we didn't follow through on this one.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to be able to rise to speak to Bill 1, the Alberta Cancer Prevention Legacy Act. I want to indicate how important I view the fight against cancer. It needs to be a priority for not just the government but for all aspects of society in Alberta, and I believe that the act is a good start towards doing that.

Alberta has a strong history in dealing with cancer, and the Alberta Cancer Board, in my view, is an outstanding organization that over a period of many years has made a real contribution to people who are living with cancer and towards eventually eliminating the scourge of cancer. As our population ages and increases in this province, Mr. Speaker, we're going to be faced with a dramatic increase in the number of persons living with cancer and, ultimately, the number of deaths that occur as a result of this terrible disease.

My wife worked for many years at the Cross Cancer Institute, Mr. Speaker, and during that time I had the opportunity to become somewhat familiar with some of the issues and some of the operations of the Cancer Board and of the Cross. I can't say how many people came to me and talked about the wonderful compassion and professionalism of the people that work at the Cross Cancer Institute, and I heard similar things about the Tom Baker cancer centre in Calgary. Those people have done a great deal to save lives, to do research, and to comfort and care for people in their last weeks of life. I can't say enough about the wonderful care and compassion that is provided by those people.

Mr. Speaker, we are looking at a very substantial amount of money going into cancer facilities. As the population ages and as cancer rates rise, there's a need to care for those people, and that means major investments, including major investments in capital. But unless we take very clear and bold and forward-looking steps to deal with prevention and early detection of cancer, we may become overwhelmed by the financial costs of duplicating that investment not just once but many times. So the focus on prevention, in my view, is essential. It's obviously more than a money-saving exercise; it's an exercise in preventing people from getting sick and preventing people from dying premature deaths and all of the things that means for those people and their families.

So I think it's very much a good overall direction. I want to say, though, that I think that there are other things that need to be done, and the government is not being consistent in its stated aim of doing all it can to prevent cancer and to bring down the rates of cancer and ultimately even find a cure for some types of cancer in this province. The most obvious example, Mr. Speaker, is the lack of resolute action on smoking. I heard the Premier say today in his news availability that it's just a matter of some old guys that still smoke and they wouldn't be around forever and eventually we could move toward a totally smoke-free environment.

The fact remains, Mr. Speaker, that 30 per cent of cancers in Alberta are caused by smoking. If you allow smoking in bars, it doesn't matter if the people doing the smoking are old codgers or whatever it is that the Premier said about them; the fact is that the people who have to work in those places, often young people, are exposed to second-hand smoke and thereby exposed to the risk of contracting lung cancer or other serious diseases. The objective is not just focusing on getting smokers to quit, but it's to protect nonsmokers from exposure to second-hand smoke. I think that the government has not done all that it could in that respect, and it needs to have the political courage to go a step farther than it has so far.

The other area where I think we need to look very carefully at what we're doing is with respect to environmental risks for cancer. Particularly because Alberta is the centre of the petrochemical industry in Canada, it has a higher rate of exposure to many cancer-causing chemicals than you might find in other parts of the country.

One of the most common chemicals that arises out of the petrochemical industry is benzene. It's one of the most carcinogenic chemicals that is commonly found in the environment.

I don't think that we are doing enough to protect people from exposure to these kinds of chemicals in the environment. We have, in my view, an EUB that doesn't do enough, that doesn't take into account the legitimate concerns of people around exposure to the petrochemical industry. I would like to see Alberta have the most stringent regulations and the most rigorous enforcement of those standards of any province in the country when it comes to the petrochemical industry and its impact on the environment. We have far from that, Mr. Speaker. We know too well about the exposure to sour gas and to other pollutants in the environment that takes place as a result, and I think that the government needs to put its money where its mouth is with respect to regulation of dangerous chemicals that arise out of our petrochemical industry.

4:30

Similarly, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk a little bit about coal because that also represents environmental risks. The Premier is talking about building the economy on the basis of the development of coal. Whenever we raise the question of burning more coal, he says, well, that's old-fashioned thinking, that we're going to be getting into things like the gasification of coal and the using of coal as a primary source of chemicals that are needed to maintain and extend the chemical industry in this province.

That's fine, Mr. Speaker. Coal gas is a very old concept. It's basically a process of destructively distilling coal to produce carbon monoxide, and that's basically what coal gas is. That's fine if you want to replace the natural gas, which we are pumping out almost as fast as we can find it to the United States, with coal gas. That would be one thing, but the burning of coal in order to provide electricity exports to the United States is, in our view, unacceptable because there is no current use of real clean coal in this province.

Even if new coal plants were built with absolutely the latest technology, there would still be a risk to the environment and pollution that would be faced by Albertans and would certainly have a contribution to rates of illness in this province and death rates, as well, in order to provide energy exports to the United States, something that Albertans as a whole would not benefit from. People that own those coal plants would benefit a great deal, but it wouldn't be something that would be anything but harmful for most Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I think that if the government really wishes to follow through systematically on its stated goal of reducing cancer rates, it's going to have to do a whole lot more than just pass Bill 1. Bill 1 puts some significant money towards the issue on an ongoing basis. That's positive. But the goals that the government has stated for itself are, in our view, completely unachievable with the present regulatory regime in this province with respect to smoking, with respect to the petrochemical industry, and with respect to plans for future coal development. Unless those things are addressed by the government, the goals here remain just nothing but window dressing.

While we will be supporting Bill 1 and strongly supporting the stated goals of Bill 1, we remain very skeptical about the government's actual intention of meeting those goals. I would urge all members, including those opposite, to ask some pretty tough questions about the government as we go through this session and following it and through the budget. I think there are a great number of unanswered questions with respect to the government's capacity to meet the fine goals set out in this legislation.

That concludes my remarks, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Bonko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak on the first bill, the Alberta Cancer Prevention Legacy Act. I do think this bill is a very good piece that's come from this government, and I would wholeheartedly support that along with my opposition colleagues as well. It establishes, as it says, a \$500 million initial investment in the fund.

One of my first questions is: this is a great investment to start with, but how much further will it go? Where is the rest of the money going to be coming from later on to continue with this? We realize that cancer is not going to be a quick fix. It's been around for many, many years. It's just suddenly being recognized with our technology and our ability to diagnose it better. We've got to make sure that we're in this for the long run. This is something that's going to benefit generations to come, children born today as well as generations later on. If we're serious, we've got to make sure that we've got the leadership in place willing to stick with this for the long run.

We realize that cancer in some way, shape, or form has touched everyone, and I can say that for myself, that it's touched my family as well. My father-in-law passed away just a couple of years ago with pancreatic cancer, a terrible disease. You know, one day you go in for a routine biopsy, and all of a sudden you discover there's a shadow or something. It's unfortunate. Well, I would call it an autopsy, unfortunately, because it was just like a death wish there. Unfortunately, no cure for that one. He managed to survive another year, but you could see a man go down slowly, slowly from 200 pounds to maybe a hundred pounds. It was a terrible thing to have to go through. He hadn't even retired. This is a story that a lot of people have to talk about, unfortunately. You know what? People wait for their golden years to be able to start living, and they don't even make it there.

If we're serious about this, as some other members have stated, then I think we have to try and look for the root cause of this. Again, it's going to take millions. It's going to be into the billions of dollars, but this is a long-term investment that this province is committing to to ensure that we have a healthy, prosperous province for the next hundred years. It means slowly figuring out exactly what we are consuming. Is it through the agricultural products that we're eating? Is it in our food? Is it how we cook our food, with our Teflon, or is it with the aluminum? Is it the products that we spray, the pesticides, to keep our fields resistant? I don't know. Is it even in the water? This is something that I think needs to be thoroughly investigated. Again, this is going to be a long-term investment.

I'm not sure, in fact, if we're even going to have the infrastructure. As our population continues to grow, are we going to have the availability to be able to accommodate? It looks like it's an increasing population that have cancer. Are we going to be able to accommodate the need? Are we going to accommodate the workers? Are we going to have enough people in the professions? What are the specific prevention initiatives that they're planning to initiate? These are a number of questions. It's \$500 million, but I'm not sure specifically what the plans are. I'm giving my support to it, hoping that there will be specific plans that will be rolled out in the coming months and coming year. Other than the money, what other specific steps, as I said, is the government taking to bring in training and recruitment and retention of the health care specialists?

Somebody mentioned the fact that the people that work with the patients at the Cross Cancer Institute have a very, very tough job.

They go there knowing that they're working with people in palliative care and the terminally ill. I have to commend the people that are in those particular fields. They, in fact, have taken a calling that a lot of people I don't think could handle because you know that you're going to deal with people who are on their deathbed. Whether it be young or old, you've got to work with these people. Some of these workers get to know them on a personal basis, get to know their stories, knowing that they aren't going to be around for a whole long time. We do have success stories, though, that are coming out of that, but it's an awful treatment that a lot of these people have to go through, with the chemotherapy as well.

It was mentioned that if this government was serious about this, they would toughen up on smoking. We all know that smoking is a leading cause of cancer. The opportunity was before the Legislature just last year, and unfortunately this government took the easy way out and took the softer approach instead of showing true leadership and standing up to one of the root causes. We all talk about the burden on the health care system. Well, that is one specific burden. If they're serious about it, they would bring in tougher rules and regulations governing smoking.

I think I'll just conclude my remarks because I know that maybe the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark would like to speak as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

4:40

**Mr. Dunford:** Mr. Speaker, I want to rise and offer support to Bill 1 and to thank my government for this particular initiative. One of the things that I have noticed during my treatment is that cancer is a very democratic disease. Cancer can strike old and young, rich and poor. When I take my chemo treatments at the Cross Cancer clinic, it's absolutely amazing to me the vast spread of humanity that is there receiving treatments of different kinds, but of course the ones that I particularly see are the ones that are currently involved in chemotherapy. I see some getting better; I see some getting worse. Of course, our hearts go out to all cancer victims that are out there at the present time. I refuse to see myself as a cancer victim. I like to see myself as a cancer survivor, but I'm not there yet.

In many ways the writing of the bill and the providing of the dollars is enabling for the Alberta Cancer Board, and I think that is appropriate. When we look at the record that the Cancer Board has in terms of offering services to residents of Alberta and far beyond our borders, then I think that by any measure they have done a tremendous job and would deserve the support not only of members here in this House but right across Alberta. I realize that I'm getting fairly anecdotal in this particular speech, but it's current in my particular case.

Just to add another little bit of flavour to it, I happen to be part of a clinical study that is examining a new, aggressive treatment for the type of cancer that I happen to have. I want to say that when I was first diagnosed, it was really frightening to hear your name and cancer in the same sentence. I hope that no one else in this room is ever going to have to hear that, but I can't guarantee it. We know what the odds are. Probably over the intervening years, unfortunately, I won't be standing alone.

In any event, when I got home, like most people, I would think, I went onto the Internet as quickly as I could to try to understand what these terms were. Believe me, fellow colleagues, I'm learning more about this stuff than I ever, ever wanted to know and want to know. But I discovered on the Internet that for this particular myeloma Alberta kept popping up: Alberta, Alberta, Alberta. I found then that



there are doctors here in Alberta who are leading the way in the research on my particular cancer.

So I took the time to write a note of thank you to former Premier Lougheed because the funding for the particular clinical study – at least some of it and perhaps all of it, I'm not sure – is from the Heritage Foundation for Medical Research. Here was foresight, you know, 20, 21 years ago. I think it was set up in 1985, if I'm not mistaken, but that would be something that anybody could quickly look up. But I just sent a note of thank you for the foresight that people had in setting up this fund. There's no question that this fund has attracted top-notch researchers, top-notch practitioners to this province.

To remain in the anecdotal stage, I've actually had it said to me that I was lucky. I looked at him: yeah, lucky. He said: "No, no. Actually, you are. The odds were that you were going to get cancer anyway, and the fact that you have cancer, you've got a good cancer to get. It's incurable, but it's treatable." So that's what they're finding.

When I first started into this particular protocol, just to show you how quickly things can happen, at the time they said that we would be able to provide one stem cell transplant. The whole idea is to put it into remission and try to keep it there as long as you can, but it'll come back, and when it does, then we'd probably have to start looking for matches in terms of blood types to have the kind of transplant that is fairly normal and a proven protocol.

Well, that was October, and now the treatment seems to be changing to the point where when they harvest stem cells from me to provide, then, for the stem cell transplant that I'll go through, they're actually going to take enough because they believe now they can do it twice. This is more than just a doubling of the ability to provide treatment because, obviously, in the second transplant one would be older and, perhaps, maybe not as strong as one might be at the first time. The fact that you can get your own blood again and not have to fight off the body as it tries to reject something different that's coming into your body I think is a huge move, and it's happened just this quickly.

I hope that doctors that are involved in the current situation not only will read this act but will maybe read the *Hansard*, read the speeches, read the concern that other members have offered up, and read my little testimony. You know, if I'm wrong in any of the facts, then we need to get them straightened out. But what I'm revealing here today is my understanding of the situation. The reason for doing that above anything else, Mr. Speaker, is that I want to try to remove the fear that we might have in the diagnosis. There are tremendous – tremendous – changes that have happened. There are tremendous changes to come.

This kind of foresight on the part of this government and hopefully the support of all of the colleagues from all of the parties in the House is the kind of thing that people will want to remember Alberta for. Twenty years from now, 30 years from now, whenever it is, they'll look back. They won't remember who were the people particularly sitting in this House. They'll just remember that it was the Alberta government – and everyone in this room is part of that; we're part of the Alberta government – and that they had some foresight. They had some faith in the future to go ahead with this program.

Now, I look at the words of the purpose, and it's primarily in the prevention. Under section 2(b), which is, "support and encourage any other initiatives set out in the regulations," I hope there will be an opportunity to have a look at how the current set-up is organized throughout the province. There are small things that could be done in rural regions that would take tremendous pressure off some people that are suffering cancer like I am.

I happen to be lucky in the sense that I have a second residence here in Edmonton, so I can go to the Cross cancer clinic. I agree with everything that the hon. leader of the third party said about the Cross cancer clinic. I can't say enough about how well we are treated in that institution.

There are people in my part of the province that need radiation, and they have to drive to Calgary for radiation. Now, radiation is going to last five, 10 minutes. It's very quick, but they have to drive and find accommodation or drive every day, I guess, depending on the distance. For very little effort, very little resources, I think, in Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Grande Prairie, Red Deer, Fort McMurray, places like that, these little satellite operations could be set up with the help of this money. It would save the inconvenience, and I can tell you that when you are frightened, inconvenience is a major, major hurdle. I'm now starting to understand just how big the little things can be when you're in the kinds of situations that I find myself in.

I believe that I have an opportunity given my position in this House, given my experience now with this disease – I need to stand up, I need to talk frankly and honestly about this situation and encourage everyone to get behind these kinds of initiatives. [applause]

I forgot a duty. I've been asked – and I'm pleased to respond – to adjourn debate on this bill.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

4:50

## Bill 2 Drug-endangered Children Act

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

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and move second reading of Bill 2, the Drug-endangered Children Act.

Mr. Speaker, I've got two of my staff up in the gallery, who are watching eagerly, who have done an incredible amount of work on this piece of legislation. They are Lisa and Justin. I just want to acknowledge them.

Drug activity is increasing throughout our province, and this is frightening. Even more frightening is that innocent children are being caught in the middle. This is an emerging issue in Alberta, but unfortunately the United States has been dealing with this problem for many years. While I was researching this legislation, I visited the United States with Staff Sergeant Ian Sanderson of the RCMP K Division drug awareness service. We heard so many heart-wrenching stories about drug-endangered children, and I'd like to share one with you.

In Denver two days before Halloween the police were staking out a meth lab and preparing for a drug bust. While they were watching the house, they noticed a small boy dressed in a Halloween costume. He kept looking out the front window as if he was waiting for something. The police later learned that he was worried he would miss his bus to take him to a school Halloween party. He said that he wanted to be ready because his mom was already sleeping and she didn't remember things. Who knows how long he had been waiting. After he had been removed from the house, he had to be decontaminated and examined by a doctor. They even had to burn his Halloween costume because it became toxic.

This kind of life is all too common for too many kids. Research has found that 30 to 35 per cent of meth labs are located in places that children call home, and children were present in 21 per cent of indoor marijuana grow operations. Children who are exposed to such damaging physical and social environments face many dangers.

Their strollers are used as drug couriers. Their bedrooms are hiding places for drugs and chemicals. Their basements are filled with mould and carbon dioxide, and the air they breathe is loaded with toxic fumes. They are at high risk for chronic respiratory problems, neurological damage, and, Mr. Speaker, even cancer.

Putting a child at risk in this way is abuse and requires immediate intervention just like any other kind of abuse. Sadly enough, more than once a week we remove a child from an environment where drugs are being produced or being sold. But this isn't a straightforward or easy process. The Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act does a lot of great things in this province for children and families. It focuses on much-needed rehabilitation and on keeping families together. Unfortunately, some cases are so horrific, like children who are drug-endangered, that a different response is necessary. In addition, the enhancement act doesn't specifically identify who is a drug-endangered child or that such children are at an extreme risk and need intervention.

This means, Mr. Speaker, that if a child is found in a drug house, we can't automatically remove them from that home. This on its own is enough to warrant immediate intervention under the enhancement act. That's where Bill 2, the Drug-endangered Children Act comes in. Bill 2 will allow us to take immediate action to effectively protect children exposed to serious drug-related activities.

This proposed legislation is a first in Canada. Bill 2 specifically defines who is a drug-endangered child and makes it clear that these children are victims of abuse and must be removed from that environment to ensure their safety. When passed, it will allow the police or a caseworker to apprehend a child if the child's life, health, or safety is in danger due to exposure to serious drug activity. If the child can't be returned home within two days, an application for future care and longer term services would be made under the enhancement act. It's another tool to help caseworkers and police rescue these children. Bill 2 clarifies and focuses the action that can be taken to protect children exposed to serious illegal drug activity such as manufacturing and trafficking. As a stand-alone piece of legislation it will be clear, concise, and not buried within a much larger piece of legislation. This means, Mr. Speaker, that it's more likely to be understood and used than an amendment to the enhancement act. It also ensures that Albertans know that any child exposed to drug manufacturing and trafficking is a victim of abuse.

We need this legislation to keep ahead of this emerging social issue. We can't stand by and watch these kids be abused. We have a responsibility to take action, and that is what this proposed legislation will do. I ask all members to support this very important piece of legislation. Your support will mean a safe and promising future for some of Alberta's most vulnerable children.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak today to Bill 2, the Drug-endangered Children Act. When we look at a child, what do we see? It doesn't matter whether hers was a planned or accidental birth, whether he was born naturally or by Caesarean. It doesn't matter whether she is a fourth-generation Canadian or born to newcomers just off the plane. Blood type; skin, hair, and eye colour; and performance on an IQ test don't matter. Obviously, it doesn't matter if his parents are Liberal or Conservative, socialist or fascist because to a child these labels have no significance whatsoever. What does matter is that the child be loved, nurtured, protected whether in sickness or in health – the unconditional words of the traditional wedding service apply here – that she be encouraged, supported, and given every opportunity to face life confidently and to develop and share the unique gifts and strengths he or she brings.

It doesn't matter if these supports are provided by one full-time parent or by two who share the responsibility, by a sympathetic grandparent or by a caring nanny in a publicly funded or privately run daycare centre. What does matter is that there be standards and safeguards to ensure that children receive the love and care to which all are entitled. It may matter if a child is born on the wrong side of the tracks, as we used to say, to a parent on the street or in dire poverty or addiction or with a condition that requires special treatment. In these situations a just and caring society accepts that we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, that we need to be there with the necessary supports for child and parents or to intervene if the parent is unaware of the condition or unable or unwilling to take the necessary measures for the child to receive the special help needed.

Abuse is like the definition of a verb that most of us learned in school: an action or a state of being. Abuse doesn't have to be something that's done to someone. It can be a condition in which they live. It can be something we leave undone. We who stand by without intervening or doing anything share the responsibility with those who commit the acts.

In this bill we are looking at this type of state of being: ongoing abusive situations. What makes a situation abusive is not simply that an illegal substance is being produced where children live. If we were to decriminalize crystal meth or replace it with another noncriminal substance being produced on the premises, it would still be harmful to children and, therefore, still be an abusive situation. What makes the situation abusive is not simply that the substance may be illegal or even that it may be toxic. Unfortunately, we have found over the past half-century that we have raised children in the presence of asbestos and other substances we didn't realize were toxic or carcinogenic at the time. We are still paying the price for our ignorance, including First Nation children without pure drinking water, yet we call this neglect and not abuse.

No, Mr. Speaker, the factor that makes these houses abusive is to be found when we look at the word itself: a-b-u-s-e, "ab" as in abrupt and abnormal in combination with "use." It is the using of children for something less than their own good that constitutes abuse. Using this criterion, we can see that there are many other situations that are abusive to children. There are, of course, the classic stories of children working in mines, mills and factories, and their modern equivalents, in sweat shops and Third World construction sites. These are the children who are sacrificed to violence in war-torn regions and, less dramatically, in other types of conflict.

**5:00**

Whenever children are pawns in a marital or political dispute, whenever they are used as bait in advertising or sales, whenever they are simply statistics to win capital funding for grand programs or paraded for a cause, however well-intentioned, it is an abusive situation.

Drug addiction represents a complex and troubling challenge in our society. There is no easy road to travel in seeking a solution to drug addiction. Still, we must continue to explore methods for deterring our youth from abusing drugs, thus reducing the harms.

Given the traumatic nature of any apprehension, I believe that it would be most beneficial to put these children in an environment that they are familiar with, so I reviewed the matters to be considered in the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act. It states:

If a child is in need of intervention, a Court, an Appeal Panel and all persons who exercise any authority or make any decision under this Act relating to the child must do so in the best interests of the child and must consider the following as well as any other relevant matter:

- (a) the family is the basic unit of society and its well-being should be supported and preserved;

- (b) the importance of stable, permanent and nurturing relationships for the child;
- (c) the intervention services needed by the child should be provided in a manner that ensures the least disruption to the child;
- (d) a child who is capable of forming an opinion is entitled to an opportunity to express that opinion on matters affecting the child, and the child's opinion should be considered by those making decisions that affect the child;
- (e) the family is responsible for the care, supervision and maintenance of its children and every child should have an opportunity to be a wanted and valued member of a family, and to that end
  - (i) if intervention services are necessary to assist the child's family in providing for the care of a child, those services should be provided to the family, insofar as it is reasonably practicable, in a manner that supports the family unit and prevents the need to remove the child from the family.

As I look at this bill and after my discussions with the hon. minister, I believe that the intention is that every effort will be made to work with the family unit. With that understanding I support the intent of this bill to be protective rather than punitive but at the same time strengthen the legal framework to hold parents responsible when they have put their child at risk through involvement in drug activities. This is another action to support the ongoing battle against addictions and illegal drug activity.

I thank the hon. Minister of Children's Services for bringing this forward, and I give my support.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to tell you from a personal standpoint that it really, really warms my heart to know that we have people inside this Chamber bringing forth bills like this one, Bill 2, and the one previous, Bill 1. I want to commend and thank our hon. colleague from Lethbridge-West for sharing something so dear to his heart, and now on Bill 2, the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, the fine Minister of Children's Services, for bringing forward something that I think is crucial if we are to continue to protect our children.

I know that the minister developed Bill 2 with great sincerity and dedication to helping drug-endangered children. The hon. member's commitment has helped to further a wider public debate on how to best meet the needs of young Albertans who suffer physical or physiological harm or neglect. These children may benefit from more intensive intervention such as Bill 2, the Drug-endangered Children Act.

Mr. Speaker, I know that I'm not alone when I say that I share the public's and our colleagues' concerns about the harm and neglect our children are suffering because of exposure to illegal drugs, because of persons under the influence of illegal drugs, and because of exposure to dangerous environments where drugs are being manufactured or where chemicals used to make drugs are accessible. These children are indeed victims of abuse, and they need our protection.

Serving the needs of children in our province is certainly amongst the most important of our callings as government members, and responding to these problems involves more than just dealing with presenting medical and behavioural symptoms. It also requires attention to issues like housing, employment, child rearing, and the development of social supports. A comprehensive and collaborative approach focusing on preventing use, minimizing harm, treating dependency, and reducing the drug supply is required.

The Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission in collaboration with government partners and community groups has responded to the call from Albertans for government leadership in directing these efforts through the Alberta drug strategy.

This strategy lays the groundwork for a co-ordinated and community-based approach to alcohol and other drug issues in this province. The intent of the Alberta drug strategy is to complement efforts such as the Drug-endangered Children Act and guide further collaborative action in this province.

Bill 2 supports a commitment in the strategy to protect children exposed to illegal drugs and remove them from dangerous environments. The Alberta drug strategy increases opportunities for co-ordination and support at all levels and across all sectors. It enables better planning and use of resources and establishes a common frame of reference for action on alcohol and other drug issues.

Although these problems have a pervasive effect on health and well-being, they are amenable to intervention. Early intervention can break the cycle of drug abuse in the home, protecting children, and minimizing the risk of predisposition to drug use and criminal activity in the future.

Use of intervention protocols is one option. However, Albertans require access to the continuum of information, prevention, treatment, and harm reduction services that address critical stages in development and important life transitions and also provide a range of options for dealing with current problems.

With more than 50 years of experience in helping Albertans, AADAC plays a key role in supporting the objectives of health in this province. It provides leadership for the Alberta drug strategy in sustaining an effective response to alcohol and other drug issues, and in this capacity AADAC will continue to work with partners to address alcohol and other drug problems.

Maintaining a comprehensive service system in Alberta is a wise investment. Preventing and treating alcohol and other drug problems benefits individuals and their families, the province's health, education, and social service sectors, and the business community. Albertans will benefit from legal and regulatory responses to these problems that reduce exposure and access to substances by minors, reduce drug-related crime and violence, and reduce substance-related mortality and morbidity.

Mr. Speaker, a number of states have implemented the drug-endangered children protocol. This is meant to be an early intervention tool based on the principles of crime prevention. Police, social services, pediatric health practitioners, and dangerous goods responders all work together as a team to investigate when children are found in clandestine drug labs, marijuana grow ops, or other situations where children are victims of abuse, neglect, or contamination caused by drug activity. Use of this protocol and other options for intervening with drug-endangered children are currently being investigated.

In order to move forward and effectively address alcohol and other drug problems in Alberta, key stakeholders must commit to a collaborative approach. Reducing demand, reducing supply, and reducing harms associated with alcohol and other drug abuse are equally important. Actions must demonstrate shared ownership of problems and solutions, building on lessons learned from the work already under way in the province and across the country.

As chair of AADAC I support legislation and regulations that promote health and well-being and discourage illicit substance use. These measures should be sensitive to changing community needs and values and should not result in more harm to the individual or society than would occur from the actual use of illicit substances. The Drug-endangered Children Act provides us with an opportunity

to consider an additional avenue open to us to help children who are in harm's way. I am very pleased to support Bill 2 because its intent is to act in the best interest of young Albertans, and it's clearly evident.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, effectively responding to the protective needs of drug-endangered children is a priority for the province and is part of the government's commitment and approach to a healthy Alberta. It requires comprehensive, effective action, including the availability and a range of information, prevention, and treatment services. I urge all members to support Bill 2, and I would like to advise them that AADAC will continue to work with key stakeholders such as the Minister of Children's Services, the Solicitor General, and others in meeting the needs of children with respect to this bill.

Thank you for this opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

5:10

**The Acting Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a), any questions or comments? Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, are you rising to ask a question?

**Dr. Pannu:** Correct.

**The Acting Speaker:** Go ahead.

**Dr. Pannu:** Perhaps I should have taken the opportunity to ask a question of the minister, but hopefully the member who just spoke can address some of these questions that I have, one or two.

We know that the incidence of exposure to these drugs that endanger children is increasing, perhaps, but is there any estimate of the number of children in Alberta who might come into this category of children endangered by drug exposure? That's one. AADAC might have some information on it and maybe not, but it would be I think significant for us to know how big the problem is and whether or not we have these numbers over a period of years so that we can know the trend of this problem that's there before us.

The bill clearly is intended to address this serious problem and protect children from this kind of danger. I think that in the House there would be many colleagues interested in knowing what the scope of the problem is.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** A very good question. Sadly, the answers are difficult to find, and when we find certain answers, they are difficult to trust, I might say, because of the clandestine nature of this situation. I'm happy to offer to the member the information that has been gathered after we close here today but in consultation with the ministers of Health, Children's Services, the Solicitor General, and Environment. Perhaps we can find out more when the minister closes debate as well.

**The Acting Speaker:** Unfortunately, Madam Minister, I cannot recognize you because recognizing you would close debate. However, the question has been put on the floor, and there's nothing stopping you from providing a written response.

Any other questions?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Tougas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, if I could go back to the previous debate, I'd just like to thank the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West for sharing his experiences with cancer. I think it's important to put a human face on these debates from time to time, and I appreciate what he had to say. On behalf of everyone on our side of the House I wish you all the best, and I hope you'll be here for a nice long time.

On to Bill 2. We're very supportive of this legislation. Sometimes you have to take extraordinary measures to protect children, particularly when the parents aren't doing it. Predominantly, this is a very good piece of legislation. I have a few problems with some of the wording in it, particularly when we're talking about the definition of children who are endangered. A child whose guardian possesses a chemical with the intent of manufacturing an illegal drug: I think what we need here is perhaps a definition of what these chemicals are. I don't know that much about the production of drugs, never having done it. I assume that it's probably straightforward as to what they are, but I think we really do need to lay out in the rules exactly what we're looking at here so that there's no confusion about, you know, what constitutes the chemicals used for illegal drugs.

We also have a child whose guardian exposes him to a cannabis grow operation. Again, we have the question of what actually is a cannabis grow operation. Is that five plants in the basement of a house? Does that constitute a grow operation? Now, obviously, if the house is filled with plants, that's a grow operation. But we could get to the point where we're wondering, you know, if somebody maybe has a vendetta and says: "Oh, they've got five plants in their house. You've got to remove the child from that house." This is an important question here because we really have to narrow down these things. Everyone seems to know what a grow op is in their head, but we really need specifics on it, I believe.

We also have the provision for a child who has been or is likely to be physically, emotionally, or sexually abused due to its guardian's illegal drug activity. I don't know how you're going to prove that. This is another question. Perhaps, again, it may be obvious, but on the other hand, you know, I think we really have to sort of narrow these things down a little bit before we take the drastic step of removing a child from their home.

So for the most part I think this is a fine piece of legislation, and we support it. I commend the minister for bringing this forward. I think you'll find a lot of support on this side of the House, but I really would like these I think quite important matters to be addressed.

At this point I'd like to adjourn debate on this issue.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Zwodzesky:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, it has been yet another very fast-paced week of debate. That having been noted, I would move that we call it 5:30 and adjourn until Monday at 1:30.

[Motion carried; at 5:16 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]