

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

**Title: Thursday, April 5, 2007**

**1:00 p.m.**

Date: 07/04/05

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

As we pray, let us also commemorate the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge on April 9, 1917. We give thanks for the lives of the faithful men and women in our military who have defended and continue to defend the freedoms and values we cherish. Life is precious. When it is lost, all of us are impacted. 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 to reflect upon the lives of Canadian 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 Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in the Speaker's gallery there are six officers and other ranks from the Canadian army reserves. These men are here to represent the famous four regiments of the province of Alberta. In order of seniority the regiments are the South Alberta Light Horse, the King's Own Calgary Regiment, the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, and the Calgary Highlanders.

These four regiments were at Vimy Ridge on the Easter weekend of 1917. From across the province men of the 31st, the 10th, the 49th, and the 50th battalions, as part of a Canadian Corps, gained a victory at great cost. The plan and its execution was a very model of calculated Canadian ingenuity, audacity, fortitude, and bravery. I would invite each of our visitors to rise as I introduce them: from the South Alberta Light Horse, Captain Shawn Thirlwell and Corporal Kirk Routledge; from the King's Own Calgary Regiment, Warrant Officer Ronald Senior; from the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, Honorary Colonel Sandy Mactaggart and Corporal Ashley Van Leeuwen; and from the Calgary Highlanders, Lieutenant Colonel Tom Manley, commander.

On Easter Monday in Ottawa and in each of our nation's provincial and territorial capitals and on Vimy Ridge in France ceremonies will mark the 90th anniversary of a pivotal event in the development of Canada. Please join me in welcoming our visitors. In so doing, we seek to give just and proper recognition to what their forebears did in the service of their sovereign nation 90 years ago.

The hon. Minister of Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Merci, M. le Président. Aujourd'hui j'ai le privilège de présenter en votre nom, à vous et à l'Assemblée, des invités spéciaux qui sont d'origine française et qui vivent en Alberta. Ils sont assis dans la galerie pour célébrer avec nous le 90e anniversaire de la bataille de la crête de Vimy. La célébration officielle se déroulera en France le 9 avril prochain et sera marquée par la présentation du monument canadien de Vimy, qui a subi une importante restauration pour l'occasion.

Je suis heureux de vous présenter M. Gilbert Delplanque, qui est originaire de Valenciennes, un petit village à quelques kilomètres de Vimy; M. Eugène Trottier, un homme bien connu dans la communauté française d'Edmonton qui a passé la majeure partie de sa vie adulte en Alberta et qui a contribué immensément au développement de notre communauté franco-albertaine.

Aussi avec le groupe sont des membres de l'Union des Français

de l'étranger. Ils sont Mme Germaine Lehodey et M. Michel Lehodey, président honoraire de l'union; M. Florian Rijavec et Mme Yvonne Rijavec, présidente honoraire de l'union; M. Patrick Balthazard, secrétaire; Mme Isabelle Vallée, trésorière; Mme Corinne Arabeyre, vice-présidente et aussi présidente de l'Alliance française d'Edmonton.

Accompagnant ces personnes pour cette journée spéciale à la Législature est M. Alain Bertrand de Patrimoine canadien du gouvernement du Canada. Je leur demanderais de se lever et d'être reconnus par l'Assemblée.

Je vous invite à vous joindre à moi pour leur souhaiter une bienvenue chaleureuse.

Merci, M. le Président.

[Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the privilege of introducing to you and through you to the Assembly a number of guests of French origin who are living right here in Alberta. They are seated in the members' gallery and are here to celebrate with us the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. For this event, which will take place officially on April 9 in France, the Canadian Vimy Ridge Monument has been undergoing extensive restoration and its presentation will be at the centre of the ceremony.

I am pleased to introduce Mr. Gilbert Delplanque, a gentleman who originates from Valenciennes, a small town a few kilometres from Vimy; Mr. Eugène Trottier, a prominent member of the French community who spent most of his adult life in Alberta and contributed greatly to the development of our Franco-Albertan community.

Also part of the group are members of the UFE, l'Union des Français à l'Étranger. They are Mrs Germaine Lehodey and Mr. Michel Lehodey, honorary president of the Union; Mr. Florian Rijavec and Mrs. Yvonne Rijavec, honorary president of the Union; Mr. Patrick Balthazard, secretary; Mrs. Isabelle Vallée, treasurer; Mrs. Corinne Arabeyre, vice-president and also the president of l'Alliance française d'Edmonton. Joining them on this special day at the Legislature is Mr. Alain Bertrand, with Canadian Heritage, federal government.

I would ask them to stand up and be recognized by the Assembly. I would invite the members of the Assembly to join me in extending them a warm welcome.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [As submitted]

head:

### Introduction of Guests

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

**Mr. Stelmach:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I have two introductions. First of all, I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature at least 32 students from Fort Saskatchewan's Win Ferguson school. They are accompanied, of course, today: their teachers, Joanne Simpson and Shannon Webb; also parent helpers Chris Temple, Cindie Hughes, Shireen Meehan, Diana Mossing. I had a very enjoyable visit with these fine students, and I would ask everyone in this Assembly to please show our appreciation for their visit. Thank you so much, and Happy Easter.

Mr. Speaker, my second introduction. It is my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through to all members of this Assembly an individual that is seated in the members' gallery, Mr. Brian Heninger. Brian is an experienced and accomplished businessman with significant accomplishments in business, sharing a strong work ethic, personal integrity, and also a commitment to Alberta values. He's been married for 38 years with five children, 10 grandchildren – an impressive community worker in Calgary. I want to introduce him as our Progressive Conservative candidate for the by-election in

Calgary-Elbow. I would ask Brian to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of International, Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Relations.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to introduce in the members' gallery representatives from Transfield asset management. We have today David Videroni, the vice-president of operations, and Rohan May, the general manager. They're going to be of course working in Fort McMurray at the Suncor project, an important project for Alberta and Canada. Also joining them is Mike Buffham, who is president of Buffham consulting and also provides leadership in local 92, many of whose workers work in Fort McMurray as well. I would ask them to all rise and receive the very warm welcome of the Alberta Legislature.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you someone who has been a volunteer and a member of my board in Calgary-West but, more importantly, as the past president of the Dental Hygienists' Association of Alberta. Now she's decided to accept another challenge and seek the PC nomination in her constituency, and if successful in that nomination, I look forward, as should all hon. members, to having her join us in this Assembly as the Member for Calgary-Currie. I would ask Patti Wickstrom to stand and be represented.

**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 and to all members of this Assembly a delegation of supporters and employees from the Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society in Edmonton's west end. I'd ask that they please rise as I call out their names. They are Brad Seneca, Gregg McPhee, John Morgan, Marion Morgan, Melanie Redshaw, Linda McPhee, Brian McNichol, Marie Kristy, Lovette Ferguson, Cheryl Whiskeyjack, Shalene Jobin, Sherry Fowler, Crystal Arcand, Margo Boyd, Jessie Powder, Dorothy Scanie, Kyra Brown, Francis Bald Eagle, Dave La Swiss, Andrea Watchmaker, Florence Shone, Julie Porter-Anderson, Corey Jewitt, Patsy Conroy, and Christie De Leon. I ask that you please give them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:10

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise and introduce to you and through you to members of the House someone who had a very, very busy fall. I know that because I met her on a number of occasions through that process. She works with Servus Credit Union here in the capital, and I also know that she does sell flowers as well because I've had occasion to buy flowers for my wife from her. I'm of course referring to Lynette Stelmach, the daughter of our Premier, who is here today, obviously, to make sure that he's on the job for Albertans. I'd ask her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** I hope the hon. minister knows that he's set every male in this Assembly back 10 years by admitting publicly that he buys flowers for his wife.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, but I buy flowers for my wife.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Joan Harvey. She's a member of UFCW local 401 and has now been on the picket line at the Palace Casino for 209 days. Joan is a widowed senior who is raising two of her grandchildren. She went to work at the Palace Casino four years ago. She's travelled all over the world while her husband served our country in the Royal Canadian Air Force. Joan is seated in the public gallery, and I would now ask that she rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Statement by the Speaker**  
**The Battle of Vimy Ridge**

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the House will not sit on Easter Monday. On that day 90 years ago this country launched what was to be a singular and defining expression of courage, character, and of national will.

On Easter Monday, the 9th of April, 1917, the entire Canadian Corps comprising the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th divisions rose as one for the first time in the first Great War. The day's opening weather, a combination of driving snow and sleet, was not unwelcome on the Allied side. Beginning in the predawn hours 49 battalions of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, numbering over 100,000 men, joined the battle. From Alberta the 10th, the 31st, the 49th, and the 50th battalions were in the thick of the action.

To see Vimy Ridge and to have read the history of the first Great War is to begin to understand the cold enormity of the challenge that faced the Canadian Corps. The ridge's brooding dominance over the plains of Douai and the intractable nature of the allied campaign to that stage pointed to a prospect of dismal failure. How did the battle go? Let me read from the diary kept, contrary to the King's Regulations of the day, by the late Private Adelbert Franklin Brayman of the 50th (Calgary) battalion Canadian Expeditionary Force. He is a great-uncle-in-law to Diane Brayman, our acting head of Visitor Services.

Just as dawn broke clear we were well over Vimy Ridge and digging in for protection. At 9:45 a.m. we had dug in ready for a counter attack which we expected. As we looked back up that ridge in the early dawn we witnessed a scene never to be forgotten. The entire face of the hill was covered with German green and Canadian khaki. Men lay out there in their blood soaked field, some dead some dying. A horrible sight but one quite necessary. All day we seemed dazed and sore and the strain was beginning to show but we were supposed to hold and we held. Vimy Ridge belongs to Canada.

Brayman had captured the essence of the moment and the national achievement. Canadians had gained more ground, took more guns, and captured more prisoners than had any previous British offensive in World War I.

In 1936 France forever deeded Vimy Ridge to Canada. A superb and fitting monument was unveiled. There King Edward VIII gave an address to the thousands of Canadian war veterans who had made in the height of the depression a lengthy and difficult pilgrimage that evoked and stirred deep, plaintive emotion. In the company of the President of France, and having spoken in French, the King said:

All the world over there are battlefields, the names of which are written indelibly on the pages of our troubled human story. It is one of the consolations which time brings that the deeds of valour done on those battlefields long survive the quarrels which drove the opposing hosts to conflict. Vimy will be one such name . . . Around us here today there is peace, and rebuilding, and hope . . . In dedicating this memorial to our fallen comrades, our thoughts turn rather to the splendour of their sacrifice, and to our consecration

of our love for them, than to the cannonade, which beat upon this ridge.

Hon. members, we know what the contribution of Canadian blood at Vimy Ridge meant to Canada. His Excellency Daniel Jouanneau, the ambassador of France to Canada, has conveyed a letter to us and the people of Alberta telling us what Vimy Ridge means to France. I would like to read the contents of his letter into our *Hansard* so that all Albertans forever will know. The letter is dated March 26, 2007.

Honourable Mr. Speaker,

On April 5th, the Legislative Assembly of Alberta will celebrate the 90th anniversary of the battle of Vimy ridge.

I know how important Vimy is to Canada. On April 9<sup>th</sup> 1917, four Canadian divisions, who were fighting for the first time as an independent corps, showed the rest of the world the great fortitude and military ability of Canadians, in a very carefully planned, and brilliantly executed attack. Two years, and many feats of arms later, this commitment gave Canada the right to sign the Versailles Treaty on its own behalf, and the right to become one of the founding members of the League of Nations.

Vimy was a defining moment for Canada, but it was also one of the most important events of our 400-year common history and friendship. France will never forget these young men, all volunteers, who crossed the Atlantic to fight for the core values of our two countries: democracy, the rule of law, human rights and international solidarity. 3598 young Canadians lost their lives at Vimy, and 7,100 were badly wounded, to help us free our soil. We will always remember their sacrifice, as a token of Canadian immense generosity.

We remember also that Vimy was fought in the context of a large allied attack, with the French focusing on the deadly "Chemin des Dames" a few days after the victory of their Canadian brothers in arms. The French people will always be grateful to Canada, and particularly to Alberta, for its support during one of the most difficult times of our history.

Please convey my warm regards and my respect to all the Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Yours very sincerely,

Daniel Jouanneau

Ambassador of France to Canada.

On Monday, April 9, on Canadian soil in France, at Vimy, our sovereign, Queen Elizabeth II, our Prime Minister, the Prime Minister of France, and tens of thousands of modern-day Canadian pilgrims, including our Sergeant-at-Arms, will rise as one. They will mark the 90th anniversary of the battle, and the rededication of the newly restored Canadian National Vimy Memorial.

We cannot be there, but today let us give thanks for the lives of those who lie there and for what they and their comrades so freely gave to this great dominion 90 years ago. The blood of our very best earned Canada the right to take its place among the nations of the world.

head: **Ministerial Statements**

**The Speaker:** Mr. Premier.

### **The Battle of Vimy Ridge**

**Mr. Stelmach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday in ceremonies taking place across Canada and in France, Canadians will celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. I say celebrate because in a war noted for senseless loss of life, Vimy Ridge was a rare example of professionalism and success. It also holds special significance for Canadians. Fighting as one unit for the first time, the Canadian corps succeeded where our Allies had failed.

1:20

It is often said that Canada became a nation on April 9, 1917, at

Vimy Ridge. There is much truth in that. Vimy was a Canadian operation and a Canadian victory, and it was recognized as such in London, Paris, and New York. For Canada's soldiers Vimy established a reputation for competence, organization, and outstanding bravery. As a result, in the famous final 100 days of that terrible war Canada's troops led the Allies to victory with great valour and at terrible cost.

Among them were many Albertans. Almost 50,000 Albertans served in what was then known as the Great War. John Pattison worked for the Calgary Gas Company before he enlisted in the army in 1916 and became a member of the Alberta Regiment. At Vimy Ridge he covered 30 yards under intense fire to destroy a heavily fortified enemy position and was awarded the Victoria Cross. Sadly, this brave Albertan was killed just two months later and is buried at La Chaudière Military Cemetery, a short distance from Vimy.

On Monday another Albertan, Herbert Peterson of Berry Creek, will finally be buried in that same cemetery. A member of the 49th Battalion, later to become the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, Peterson died just a week after John Pattison, but his remains lay undiscovered and unidentified until 2003. On Monday he will be finally laid to rest with full military honours and with several members of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment in attendance. May all their memories live from generation to generation.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. members to join me on the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge to remember and to honour these two gallant Albertans and the many other Canadians who served in the Great War.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Premier for his heartfelt tribute. Just a few days from now, on April 9, Her Majesty the Queen, the Prime Ministers of Canada and France, and thousands of Canadian students will travel to France to witness the reopening of the Canadian National Vimy Memorial at Vimy Ridge. The memorial has been under renovation in preparation for a momentous anniversary: 90 years since Canadian soldiers proved a nation's valour and achieved what people at the time thought would be an impossible victory. But with extensive planning, innovative strategy, brilliantly executed tactics, and the bottomless courage of individual troops, the Canadians seized the ridge and created a moment in history that has helped shape the course of our nation's destiny.

According to some historians the taking of Vimy Ridge was not in itself a hugely significant factor in the overall direction of the war, but others point out that seizing the ridge proved that the long stalemate of trench warfare could be broken, protected the French city of Arras from attack, and had a tremendous impact on Allied morale.

To Canadians the greatest impact of the Battle of Vimy Ridge is upon our collective national conscience. Vimy Ridge is part of the Canadian story now. It can be seen as the day we grew up as a nation to fight our own battles, to prove ourselves on the national stage, but we should never forget that this moment in history was bought at the cost of thousands of precious, irreplaceable lives.

In 1994 my wife, Jeanette, our sons Jordan and Spencer, and I travelled to France to visit the memorial at Vimy. We were greeted there by Parks Canada staff since the French, out of gratitude, donated some of the land at the battle site to Canada after the war. It was a little piece of home, a small, in many ways unassuming patch of hills, one ridge looking much like another, including the famous one where so many lives were lost. Jordan and Spencer explored the Allied and German trenches, which were so close

together that the boys had no problem calling out to each other. That's how close those soldiers were, nearly close enough to look one another in the eye. That's how close death loomed for the young men on both sides of the front line. The fear they felt must have been immense, yet when called upon to do their duty to take their ridge, Canadian troops used their hard-won training and experience to do what some had called impossible, and in doing so, they helped both win a war and forge a nation's identity.

So on this 90th anniversary let us all salute those gallant soldiers. Let us honour their memories, give thanks for their sacrifice, and pledge ourselves to continue defending the nation they loved so dearly.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party. I'm sure unanimous consent will be provided.

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Ninety years ago the Battle of Vimy Ridge was fought with Canadian troops leading a successful attack. As with every battle in war we should remember that this victory was achieved at a terrible cost on both sides. Ten thousand Allies, mostly Canadians, and 20,000 Germans were casualties, all for a few kilometres of ground. With ceremonies across the country honouring the courageous soldiers who fought in the Battle of Vimy Ridge, we must strive to remember the lessons learned from this battle and others so that the sacrifices of our soldiers are not in vain.

The lessons of history should inform our actions today by guiding us as we face the challenges of the future. Ours is not a nation forged in war but in the peaceful development of democratic institutions. Mr. Speaker, the greatest tribute we can pay to our veterans is to build a better world, a world where the words "never again" are not rhetorical but are a solemn vow to pursue peace and deny those who recklessly take up arms.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I'm sure, hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, that unanimous consent will be provided as well.

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The greatest act of love is laying down one's life for another. Ninety years ago over 3,500 Canadian soldiers did just that at Vimy Ridge. Why? For freedom. Freedom against oppression, discrimination, pillage, and plunder. They treasured freedom more than life itself, and they treasured it for us and for future generations.

We all have defining moments in our lives: our first step, first word, first day of school. But what defines our great nation is our independence, our freedom. We need to remember our great history in this defining moment. More importantly, our next generations need to know and remember the great sacrifices so that they will avoid a repeat of this tragedy and our families, our communities, and our country will continue to be places of peace and freedom.

But it takes more than remembering. To paraphrase Albert Einstein, the world is a dangerous place to live not because of the people who are evil but because of the people who fail to do anything about it. We must speak out and protect the freedom of those around us. Our defining moments are often remembered as turning points in a big game or in this case the Great War. We must remember and realize that it is the final result or the outcome of planning, preparing, and practising that is really the enabler to great defining moments, those moments of success or failure.

The veterans of Vimy Ridge and all those who fought in this Great War are our heroes, and we are forever indebted to them. May we always honour them by protecting their gift to us: our freedom. We

can do this by following the words of Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor, who swore "never to be silent whenever [and] wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must [always remember to] take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the [tormented]."

We in this Assembly thank the veterans of Vimy Ridge and all other veterans for their actions and their sacrifices. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

head: 1:30

### Oral Question Period

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

### Community Initiatives Program

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mismanagement by this government has become so common that I don't think they even know the difference. Not only do they spend more per capita than any other province, they deliver less. It's no wonder, from stag parties in Vegas, the fiasco at AADAC, untendered contracts galore, hundreds of thousands of dollars to friends for verbal advice, and now lottery grants. To the Premier, a simple question, should be a simple answer: is the Premier prepared to defend the practice of handing out millions of taxpayer dollars through the community initiatives program in violation of the rules?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, if it does mean looking at the very special application from the Western Guide and Assistance Dog Society, that was given dollars above what they could raise themselves so that they can have some support from community initiatives program, yes, I would.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The request didn't even go to that fund. The Premier should do his homework better.

To the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture: why does this department expect volunteers across this province to follow strict CIP guidelines when the department itself is ignoring its own rules?

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

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. Certainly, when I talked to my department staff, they assured me that no rules have been broken. The guidelines allow the minister to use discretion in certain cases, as our Premier has just identified; for instance, the Western Guide and Assistance Dog Society from Edmonton-Meadowlark that we supported. Had we not had discretion, that particular organization would have had to close its doors. So we want to use discretion in those cases.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. This minister can't seem to keep his story straight. First his department's published documents say, in black and white, \$10,000 limit to unmatched CIP grants. Then the minister describes the same rule in his own words as: a strong guideline we use. Then he gets even more creative and says, quote, well, there's a lot of flexibility that's given to the approval of grants. End quote. Which is it, Mr. Minister: a rule, a strong guideline, or something the minister thinks he has the flexibility to ignore?

**Mr. Goudreau:** Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly, as I indicated, we want to use a certain amount of flexibility to show a certain level of compassion to those groups that come to us where they indicate a strong need for additional support over and above the \$10,000.

Mr. Speaker, I need to say that since 2002 we've approved over 4,000 CIP applications. Certainly, the question is on the 43 that were over the \$10,000, and we're going to review those. We're going to see if there's any breach anywhere, and we'll follow up on them.

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

#### Other Initiatives Program

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, this government has another multimillion dollar lottery fund that it has kept as far from public sight as it can. The program has the suspiciously vague title the other initiatives program. It doesn't turn up in Alberta lottery's list of programs on its website. There's no note of it on Alberta lottery's news and events listing. There's no process for the public to apply. One of our members wrote a letter to seek funds from this program, and the request was quietly diverted elsewhere. To the Premier: how does this government justify keeping a program that has handed out over \$40 million in three years so far hidden from public sight?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, always in the interests of openness and transparency this government, of course, posts all cheques, payments made to any organization, any Albertan. They're there for the public review. They're there to be open and transparent so that people can question what dollars have been paid to various organizations. There's nothing wrong with that. I think it's just part and parcel of being open and transparent.

**Dr. Taft:** Nobody knows the rules around that program. The Auditor General's report says that the department has not established eligibility criteria for the other initiatives program and goes on to say that the minister "receives requests for funding either directly or through another Member of the Legislative Assembly." It sounds like there's lots of room for political manoeuvring. Yesterday the Premier claimed in this Assembly, "We've always followed [the Auditor General's] recommendations in all the years that I've served in this government." That is pure nonsense, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: why has this government failed to comply with the Auditor General's recommendation for the other initiatives program?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, he said something like: in all the years he has served in this government. I don't think you serve in any government.

The other thing is that if there's any minister that doesn't pay attention to the Auditor General's recommendations for a good reason, then I'll have a chat. But I can assure you that we follow the recommendations of the Auditor General.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, a chat isn't exactly leadership, is it, Mr. Speaker?

These are the kinds of funds that get governments into all kinds of trouble: no public accountability, the minister setting the rules, access by government MLAs, the Auditor General raising concerns that are ignored. To the Premier: is the Premier confident that every dollar of this program was spent in a manner that would withstand public scrutiny, and if he is, will he table the complete details of all the grants given under this program in the last four years?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, in terms of openness and transparency all grants are listed; they're public.

**Dr. Taft:** They're not.

**Mr. Stelmach:** He's chatting across and said they're not. Well, then, if he knows of something, tell me which one isn't there so that we can find out why they're not reported. Again, Mr. Speaker, this is following up on a comment that this member made the other day. He said that he has a secret agreement with the Alberta horse racing association. It's now three weeks, and he still hasn't brought it forward. Now he's making another allegation. When is this going to stop?

**The Speaker:** The third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

#### Community Initiatives Program Grant

**Mr. Tougas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday during question period the minister of tourism, parks and recreation was asked to explain why the government broke its own rules in regard to the community initiatives program. I was surprised to hear that the minister tabled a letter I wrote in support of a project. The minister said, after referring to my letter, that the government did "break our rules" in response to my letter. My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture. Is he suggesting that I somehow broke the rules or that I even suggested that the gaming minister break any rules in regard to funding for this project?

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

**Mr. Goudreau:** Well, thank you. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, my department staff has assured me that no rules were broken. In addition to that, all of our grants are made public, and they're posted. For the sake of the opposition members I will quote our address. It's [www.albertalotteryfund.ca](http://www.albertalotteryfund.ca), and all of our grants are posted there. Everything is out in the open.

**Mr. Tougas:** Mr. Speaker, as the minister clearly knew, the association I was trying to help was the Western Guide and Assistance Dog Society, which trains guide dogs for the blind. It wasn't a request for fancy furniture for some frat house. I also suggested that the funding come from the other initiatives program, which is a fund of lottery dollars whose distribution was entirely at the discretion of the minister. So why did the minister link this entirely legitimate and above board request as an example of the government breaking its own rules on lottery funding?

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, the dollars that were assigned to the Western Guide and Assistance Dog Society were community initiatives dollars.

**Mr. Tougas:** That wasn't what I asked for at all.

Mr. Speaker, clearly this was a deliberate drive-by slur in an attempt to discredit the Official Opposition and myself. I am offended that the minister would attempt to link my perfectly legitimate, worthwhile, above board, by-the-rules request with the government's sloppy and questionable abuse of an entirely different program. This is a new low for this government. Again, to the same minister: will the minister apologize for his actions?

1:40

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, this particular organization, like any other organization, which includes all of our volunteer organizations

that apply, goes through a very serious process of due diligence. You know, we have a lot of checks and balances in place. We make sure that the regulations are followed. Certainly, you know, we want to support our volunteer groups, and this particular group, like all the other groups, goes through the same process.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party, followed by the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

### Homelessness

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Working people come to this province for employment, cannot find affordable housing, and end up turned away from overflowing shelters. Some welcome. The Calgary Homeless Foundation last May counted 3,400 homeless people in their city, half of whom had jobs. Some MLAs were probably born in towns that have smaller populations than that. Calgary's homeless shelters are overflowing, and a couple have been closed. The temperature is forecast to drop to minus 8 tonight, and Calgary will be scrambling again . . .

**The Speaker:** You know, hon. member, we have a problem now. You made your statement, but I don't know . . . [interjections] No, no. You signed on to the 45-second rule, remember. It's over. I don't know what we're doing with that first one, but go on to your second one.

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. So the question, then, to the Premier is: given that these shelters in Calgary have been closed and that there is no capacity for the homeless in that city, what is he going to do about it?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, clearly, one of the major priorities of the government, of course, is to address the critical housing shortage, and the critical housing shortage is in many different areas. It's in those of the homeless, homeless because of some health issue perhaps. Then there are also the others in terms of low-income wage earners looking for housing and, of course, families looking for homes. That is why we had an all-party committee meet. We put together recommendations with their help. Help will be coming forward in terms of the report and followed up with announcements.

But with this particular Calgary situation my minister was there; he spoke to Calgary. Calgary said: look, we've got a plan in place to deal while we're closing this particular house. He may respond.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the Premier knows that the all-party committee has given the report some time ago, and his government, despite its claim to be transparent, is keeping the report secret until the government figures out what it's going to do. In the meantime there are more homeless almost everyday on the streets of Calgary and other cities. What are you going to do for them, Mr. Premier, tonight, tomorrow night, and the night after that? Talk won't help.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, this government moved very quickly. We've provided considerable millions of dollars in help to the homeless across the province of Alberta, to various municipalities. We, of course, worked in partnership with the federal government. We'll continue to do that. This is a serious situation. I know that many people moved to this province in spite of the fact that, you know, we've got a critical housing shortage. They insist on moving

here because there are some jobs available, and really they want to move here because they have some hope and opportunity.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

### Provincial Tax Regime

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are burdened with excessive taxes. They're being levied by municipalities, the provincial and federal governments. Alberta families are having a difficult time making ends meet, and it's up to this government to reduce taxes on families. To the Premier: is it the policy of this government to reduce or raise taxes in its coming budget?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Of course, the budget will be delivered April 19, shortly after our Easter holiday. We know that the province of Alberta enjoys the largest tax exemption for families. Perhaps there's even more we can do, but I would ask the hon. member to wait till April 19 so that we don't violate our own rules.

**Mr. Hinman:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this government is awash with cash, but Alberta families are not. Alberta families are asking for a reduction in their taxes. The question, again, is: will this government adopt a policy that it will return a portion of the surplus dollars to the Alberta taxpayers?

**Mr. Stelmach:** The Minister of Finance will be bringing forward a budget. It would be looking to find balance amongst all the competing interests in the province. I look forward to the budget being delivered and will have some answers to the questions. Unfortunately, I can't give those today.

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

**Mr. Hinman:** Yes. Municipalities are having a very difficult time meeting the infrastructure needs of their people. A recent minister's report is looking at levying new taxes or allowing municipalities to levy new taxes. Will this government do the right thing and assure municipalities that they will not ask them to put a new tax in place but will return proper funding to those municipalities from the current taxes that this government collects?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, that's why this government moved very quickly on the commitment of a new fund of \$1.4 billion to be allocated to municipalities. We know that they're facing growth pressures in every corner of the province, and the two associations and the two mayors are working on an allocation formula on how best to allocate that formula to municipalities, which will take some of the pressure off.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by the hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

### Internet Gaming

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Internet gambling is an issue that is staring the provincial government square in the eye, and so far there hasn't been much movement to confront this issue. The Alexander First Nation, for example, has openly stated that they're going to get into the Internet gambling scene whether or not the province approves. The Solicitor General has stated that online casinos are contrary to the Criminal Code, and he will enforce that, but the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission is fooling Alber-

tans, floating the idea of online casinos, and have stated that they're proceeding slow and steady. So what exactly is this government's position? To the Solicitor General: can the minister confirm or deny whether, in fact, his department is considering entering or allowing others to enter the Internet gambling business?

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

**Mr. Lindsay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a good question as it's quite prevalent in the news today. I want to assure the hon. member that this government is not considering Internet gambling in any form at this particular time. However, we are obviously reviewing it in other jurisdictions to see what's happening in that particular area, but we have no intentions of pursuing that at this particular time.

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

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First Nations groups have stated that they're sovereign entities and that the province has no authority over them. They're using the Kahnawake example in Quebec to state their ability to operate such a venture under the authority of their own gambling commission. In Quebec their Attorney General has stated that these activities are illegal, but he chose to look the other way, and no charges were ever laid. Legal opinion is divided. The activities are contrary to the Criminal Code on the one hand, but there appear to be legal loopholes around the law. The issue is: how will this government react? To the Attorney General: if groups in this province forge ahead with plans to establish online gambling sites, will the minister declare the activity illegal, or will he tolerate the operation and allow it to continue?

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

**Mr. Stevens:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, the Criminal Code that determines legality relative to this matter has nothing to do with the rulings of the Attorney General in this province or anywhere else. I can tell you that our opinion is and has been for a considerable period of time that First Nation Internet gaming, wherever it might take place in Canada, would be contrary to the Criminal Code.

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

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the reasons First Nations groups in Alberta are resorting to such measures is to create economic opportunities for themselves. It is no secret that they have some serious problems, and they see these gambling ventures as a way to make positive changes for their people. The real shame is that in this province, awash in cash, none of this money seems to be going directly to help First Nations people improve their quality of life or realize their potential. They have to fend for themselves. So they would go as far as openly contravening the Criminal Code if it meant opening doors, creating jobs, and improving quality of life on reserves. To the Minister of International, Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Relations: what opportunities is this government prepared to provide to First Nations people in Alberta so that they don't have to get into Internet gambling?

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

1:50

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and Happy Easter to everyone. I think that what is most important is this. We are

working very closely with our aboriginal peoples, as we have in the past and as we will today and into the future. I might add that the largest employer of aboriginals in all of Canada, of course, is Syncrude Canada Ltd., very prominent in my own constituency. But let me just say that we will continue to work with aboriginal leaders in terms of tremendous economic stories that are out there. They are role models for young people in terms of what is happening today and well into the future. I do believe that we're on the right track in terms of growing the economic pie, where everyone in Alberta plays an important part in that success.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

#### Agricultural Income Stabilization Program

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Drought, grasshoppers, BSE, and rising input costs have created hardships for Alberta producers over the last five years. Recently Alberta Agriculture and Food announced a \$70 million addition, and it would be available to help producers through the Alberta reference margin initiative for the 2006 CAIS program year. This sounds like a good thing. However, some of my constituents in Whitecourt-Ste. Anne have expressed concerns that the ones that will benefit the most on this initiative are packers and large feedlots. All my questions are to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Are packers and large feedlot operators going to get the bulk of the money from this initiative?

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

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Quite simply, meat packers are not eligible under this program and will not be getting any money under the reference margin initiative. Only farmers and agriculture producers will benefit from this. Feedlot operators are eligible, but our data show that only a small portion of the funds will go to them. This is really an extension of a pilot project that we've offered in the past three years. We've done our due diligence. We've found that the money is going to the sectors that need it most in a given year. Not everyone gets a cheque. This is about individual needs.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you for that answer. Again to the same minister, Mr. Speaker. CAIS applications are at times confusing, and producers complain that high-priced accountants are needed to get through the red tape. How can producers be assured that they receive potential benefits as quickly as possible from this program?

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Mr. Speaker, I would be the first person to agree that CAIS could be simpler, but there are some things that can be done, however. Producers can get benefits sooner if they file their taxes early and if they submit their CAIS forms well ahead of the deadline of September 30, 2007. About 55 per cent of the applications arrived within 60 days of the deadline, and this certainly causes a lot of delays. Turnaround times are also better if all the information on the form is accurate and complete.

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

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

### Community Initiatives Program

(continued)

**Mr. Agnihotri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government says that they want flexibility, the flexibility to break the CIP rules. The groups who do such good work don't get the same flexibility. Most work hard to play by the rules, and they want fairness, and they want accountability. To the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture. The grants above the \$10,000 rule average \$50,000. Will this minister admit that this is not flexibility? This is mismanagement.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, I need to say that, you know, applications for CIP and CFEP grants are reviewed by our grants officers and our technical analysts to make sure that they meet the eligibility criteria and to make sure that the applications are fully completed. When they do that particular review, the recommendation comes back. Sometimes a recommendation comes back to give that organization more money, and other times it comes back to give them less money. Certainly, we review that. We use our flexibility to accommodate those that need additional financial help.

**Mr. Agnihotri:** To the same minister: what is the purpose of having CIP guidelines if you don't follow them?

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, we've approved over 4,000 CIP applications in the last few years. We're talking about 43, and I've committed to review those. I want to review the information on the 43, and if there are issues with those 43, then I will address them.

**Mr. Agnihotri:** To the same minister. We have asked this question many times but get no answers, so I ask once again. Will this minister table the details, all the details of the other CIP grants that broke the rules? If you have one, table it.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, all of our grants are posted on the website, and all of the information is there. I've asked my staff to pull the 43 that he's talking about. It will take a few days. It takes time to isolate those individuals from all the rest of the grant applications. We'll review them, and we'll see where it comes.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

### Mosquito Larviciding Program

**Mr. Mitzel:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Residents of Alberta, primarily in southern Alberta, are concerned that the government is no longer funding the West Nile mosquito larviciding program. Twenty per cent of people infected with the West Nile virus develop symptoms that adversely affect their quality of life, and 5 per cent develop severe diseases up to and including paralysis. My question is to the Minister of Alberta Health and Wellness. What is the province doing to protect Albertans against the West Nile virus seeing as even the medical officer of health for Palliser and a registered nurse there have contracted West Nile in southern Alberta?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we did advise the municipalities in the regions that were affected that the funding for the larviciding program was not going to be continued this year, and we did it because there's no evidence that that was an effective use of

resources in this particular circumstance. However, human and adult mosquito surveillance programs continue to alert our department and health regions to changes in the risk level of the West Nile virus so we can advise the public accordingly. Those surveillance programs have been conducted in southern Alberta since 2002. Predictably, every year when mosquitoes start to appear, of course, people start to get concerned. It's important to remember that the species of mosquito that carries the West Nile . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. member, please.

**Mr. Mitzel:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first and only supplemental. I received letters from the municipalities in southern Alberta expressing regret at the decision not to fund the program this year. Dr. Mark Loeb, a researcher from McMaster University, is doing a study of the West Nile virus and has written that 87 per cent of the mosquito pools were positive for the West Nile virus from August 6 to 20, 2006, from the Palliser health region and the Chinook health region. My question again is to the minister. Why is Alberta Health and Wellness no longer considering funding the larvicidal program?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we still, of course, are very interested in making sure that there's proper surveillance, and people are encouraged to take the proper protective procedures with respect to the virus, and that is the most important place that we can put the emphasis.

With respect to the program itself 25 per cent of the municipalities in the high- and medium-risk zones opted out of the grant program in 2006; 79 of 104 eligible municipalities participated with a budget of about \$800,000. Approximately \$230,000 of that will be returned. The administrative costs of that program are very high. So, in short, we basically determined that that wasn't the most effective use of the resources. The municipalities now have the equipment and training to do larviciding, and we will provide the other information.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat?

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

### Private Registry Service Fees

**Mr. R. Miller:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Albertans who choose to pay their traffic fines electronically through the Service Alberta website are often surprised to learn that this government charges them the same \$9 service fee that private registries charge when paying a fee in person, yet the government of Saskatchewan doesn't charge its citizens a service fee for online fine payments, nor does ICBC in British Columbia charge a fee for payments made over the telephone. My questions are for the minister responsible for Service Alberta. How does this minister justify this \$9 fee when other jurisdictions charge nothing for the same service?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, we have made a long and successful tradition of not patterning our financial responsibilities after Saskatchewan or British Columbia.

2:00

**Mr. R. Miller:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to guess that Alberta taxpayers are looking for a better answer than that.

A private registry may charge this fee as a means of generating revenue or for recovering the cost associated with the transaction itself. One would reasonably expect that the cost associated with an electronic transaction, a direct payment to the government, should



be significantly less in terms of staffing and processing. Can the minister please outline how this \$9 service fee is justified when a payment is submitted by a taxpayer directly to the government?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, that's a fair comment. The fees and charges are reviewed on an ongoing basis by the government, and we not only try not to; we are not allowed to charge in excess of what the reasonable cost of recovery is. So if the hon. member is suggesting that we review the \$9 fee as if that may be excessive, I'll attempt to do so; however, I think Albertans expect a reasonable cost for services that they get.

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

**Mr. R. Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. A recent Supreme Court case, King Street Investments versus New Brunswick, determined that the government-imposed user fees which are not tailored to the cost of service itself do in fact constitute an unlawful tax. Will the minister table in this House documents indicating that this \$9 service fee is in fact tailored to the cost of the service, or if not, will he admit that we're unfairly taxing Albertans?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, we also don't pattern our stuff after New Brunswick; however, we do show in this House all of the budget, which will be debated here in due course in a few weeks. At that time we'll be happy to debate the entire budget of Service Alberta, and you can explain then what you think we should cut.

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

#### Affordable Housing

**Mr. Martin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that Alberta has a housing crisis. My constituency office is being inundated by calls about rent increases. People are being absolutely gouged, and it's happening not only in Edmonton; it's happening across the province. People are being forced to pay 50 per cent, 60 per cent of their income on housing. Tara Kuchar called my office when her rent jumped \$375 in five months. Sherry Inglis's rent increased by 30 per cent. My question to the minister of housing is simply this: what is his advice to these people with these calls when they're getting these exorbitant rent increases? What does the minister say to them?

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

**Mr. Danyluk:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member from the third party knows, as he was on the committee of the housing task force that reported on March 19, that we are looking at that report presently, and we are running the recommendations of that report through the process so we can deal with some of the issues and concerns of people such as the individuals that wrote to you.

**Mr. Martin:** Mr. Speaker, the report hasn't been released even. That's not going to help these people right now. They're facing these rent increases right now. Another example: Mrs. Arlene Henderson received a rent subsidy, and the landlord took up most of the subsidy right there, so she's no better off. My question simply to the minister, then: because we're in a crisis situation, would the minister as a temporary measure take action to enact legislation to immediately limit rent increases to, say, the consumer price index?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Mr. Speaker, as mentioned before, the government is looking through the recommendations. The recommendations from that report have a lot of different implications that we think are beneficial and also have challenges to renters, and we are looking at that at the present time.

**Mr. Martin:** Mr. Speaker, these people can't wait while you're looking. They're one rent increase away from being homeless. I'd add: you can still do the report, and you could bring in temporary measures for rent guidelines in the short run. Why don't we do that right now to help these people?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned: why don't we release the report? It is not going to help to release the report. We are looking at responses to the recommendations and the concerns that citizens of Alberta have put in that report, and we're dealing with that right now.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-MacLeod, and then, hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, you're ceding your spot to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

#### Wind Power Generation

**Mr. Coutts:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The wind power industry in Alberta has developed in the province over the last 15 years, providing green power choice for consumers. Our industry is one of the largest in Canada, and most of the production is in my constituency of Livingstone-MacLeod. But wind power generation is being limited in Alberta for two main reasons: first, there's a current cap on the amount of wind power that is allowed into the grid, and second, there are issues related to the process around transmission infrastructure. My question to the Minister of Energy: if we are in a free market system, why is the generation of wind power being capped at 900 megawatts?

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

**Mr. Knight:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Most certainly, we realize that wind power in the province of Alberta plays a very major role and will continue to play a major role in Alberta's integrated energy strategy. This generation forms a major piece of our plan to build a stronger Alberta. The amount of power that is supplied to the grid at any time needs to remain in balance, and the AESO have determined that to maintain that balance, we need to cap the amount of wind power that we put onto the grid at this point in time at 900 megawatts.

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

**Mr. Coutts:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. Delays in constructing transmission lines to access the grid are actually holding up investment in rural Alberta and particularly my constituency. Can the minister advise the current status of the routing and the timelines for completing this much-needed link in southwest Alberta?

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, again, this government has a plan to manage growth pressures in the province of Alberta, and transmission is the backbone to our electricity system. The member is referring to a 240-kV line from Pincher Creek to Lethbridge. It's needed, and we agreed to bring additional wind power onto the grid. The proponent of this particular piece of infrastructure is working to

address concerns with affected landowners, and we expect steps to be taken with the EUB in the very near future.

**Mr. Coutts:** Thank you, Mr. Minister. My last question is: since wind power generation offers a viable economic offset for gas emissions, can the minister commit to more wind power generation to assist climate change in Alberta?

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, as the member has indicated, wind power in the province of Alberta is a success story. We work with the proponents to address some of the issues that have been mentioned by the hon. member. The province supports a major wind study that's being done with proponents, with the Canadian Wind Energy Association, and the study will help us to forecast wind trends and address issues of reliability. We will then have the groundwork for an expanded capacity to put wind on the grid in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Peace River.

#### Blood-borne and Sexually Transmitted Diseases

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Blood-borne infections like hepatitis C, HIV, and hepatitis B have serious, potentially fatal outcomes, and rates of these infections continue to rise in Alberta. There has been a 40 per cent increase in syphilis rates in Alberta over the past year. My questions are to the minister of health. When questioned last spring about why the blood-borne pathogen and sexually transmitted infections strategy has been delayed, it was the then minister's opinion that the ad campaigns about risky sexual behaviour weren't in line with Albertans' morals and values. My question is: is this health minister going to continue this attitude, or will this strategy finally be released?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I haven't seen the advertising strategy, so I'm not sure I could make a judgment call on that, but I can tell the hon. member that it's absolutely important that we make Albertans aware of the problems that we're facing with respect to the increase in outbreaks of syphilis. I made that statement in the House a number of weeks ago. It's important that we communicate that to Albertans and important that we make sure that Albertans are aware of the necessity to be careful with respect to unprotected sex. I'm not shy about saying that.

2:10

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. All right. Again to the same minister. This government has been sitting on this strategy that would deal specifically with this problem for nearly four years while Alberta's rates of sexually transmitted infections are rising at a greater rate than the national average. Will the minister concede that this government's failure to release the report in a timely manner has allowed more and more Albertans to be put at risk?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, no, Mr. Speaker, I can't concede that because I haven't examined it to determine whether that's what's put Albertans at risk or whether it's unprotected sex that's put Albertans at risk. I would presume it was the latter, but I will certainly be interested in looking at the strategy and seeing if that strategy or some additional strategy could help us make Albertans more aware of the risks and what protections they take for them.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. Again to the same minister. We have been waiting since at least 2003 for the blood-borne pathogen and sexually transmitted infection strategy. Can the minister tell us if there's anything in this strategy about equipment sterilization that could have improved procedures and reduced risk of infections in Vegreville and Lloydminster? Where is the strategy?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, the specific strategy that the hon. member is referring to is not something that I'm completely conversant with at the moment. I will have a look at it to see if there's anything in there that would deal with the issue that she's raised, but the fact of the matter is that we have talked to Albertans. We have tried to raise the awareness level with Albertans, particularly in light of the recent information available with respect to syphilis but also the other blood-borne pathogens. It is very important that we deal with these issues, and I will undertake to the member to review the strategy that she's talking about and see whether it could have efficacy today.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

#### Flood Preparedness

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every spring the spectre of floods raises fears across Alberta, most certainly in my constituency. To the Minister of Environment: can he inform this House how his ministry ensures that residents of affected communities are protected from potential floods?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, Alberta Environment's flood forecasting river engineering team is constantly monitoring river levels around the clock and also works in very close contact with Environment Canada, monitoring weather services. The staff will issue advisories and warnings if they expect conditions will have an impact on streams and rivers. We also work very closely with municipalities to ensure that they have sufficient notification so that they'll be aware of possible potential increases in river levels. When flooding does occur, Albertans are advised directly by their municipality as to what precautions or actions they should take.

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

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given the serious flooding in southern Alberta in 2005 I'm wondering if the minister could inform this House if we've learned any lessons that would help us to better prepare and thereby mitigate or avoid flood damage?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, that's an excellent observation, and in fact since the floods of 2005 Alberta Environment has taken a number of steps to ensure that communities across the province have improved flood mapping in high-risk areas. This mapping helps us to much better understand the possible impact of flooding on these communities. Our existing infrastructure performed extremely well in 2005 to mitigate the impact of flooding. I'll use an example of the slow release of water from the Dickson dam, which prevented flooding in Red Deer, Drumheller, and other communities in between. So we will constantly ensure that we can do everything within our means to minimize the loss.

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

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister. I'm particularly concerned within my constituency and within northern Alberta at heavy snowpack levels in the headwaters of many of the streams and rivers that drain into the northern plains and lowlands of northern Alberta. We're at serious risk of flooding. I'm wondering if the minister could inform us which communities are particularly at risk this spring?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, Alberta Environment issued just yesterday a routine water supply outlook. That outlook indicated that given the amount of snow that we have in certain areas, depending upon the rate of melt there could be issues related to flooding. That's what we continue to monitor. These include the communities of Peace River, Grande Prairie, High Prairie, Edson, Slave Lake, Cold Lake, and Lloydminster, but I have to emphasize: this is not an advisory; this is simply an observation that should melting occur at a rapid rate, these areas could be affected. We will be sure and provide adequate notice should that be the case.

**The Speaker:** The hon Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

#### E-mail from a Government Computer

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Agriculture and Food committed to an internal investigation into the vicious, hate-promoting e-mail that a government employee sent from a government computer to the Save My CWB website in Manitoba. This e-mail was vicious, it was vulgar, and it was completely unacceptable. My first question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Now that the investigation is complete, the results have not been made public, unfortunately. However, will the minister personally post an apology on the Save My CWB website on behalf of the government and the citizens of this province and the civil servants?

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Mr. Speaker, we took this very seriously. We did have a breach of the code of conduct by one of our employees in the department. I asked my deputy and the department to look into it. They did. They've dealt with it; they've taken the appropriate action. We followed the process as agreed upon by the union's collective agreement. There's been due diligence and fairness in this matter, and it's been dealt with.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: has any apology on behalf of the department been sent to the folks at the Save My CWB website who were slurred?

Thank you.

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Mr. Speaker, yes, there has. Obviously, he hasn't been reading the website like he probably should be. The staff member apologized for using the government computer. We respect that people have their own personal opinions and views on things even if they are different from this government. I'm quite satisfied. I don't know if the member opposite is looking for blood or what, but we've dealt with the matter.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: would the minister now apologize on behalf of this

government, our fine province, and all of the civil servants for allowing this to happen? Why are you making the employee apologize when you should show leadership and apologize on behalf of the entire government?

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Mr. Speaker, the matter has been dealt with. It's been dealt with properly. End of the story.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

#### Trade, Investment, and Labour Mobility Agreement

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recently received a letter from a constituent concerned about the Alberta/B.C. trade, investment, and labour mobility agreement, or TILMA. Among the concerns expressed to me is that this agreement will hamstring municipal and provincial governments by limiting their ability to pass laws and regulations. My first question is to the Minister of International, Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Relations. How will the TILMA affect the ability of governments to do their job to enact laws and regulations?

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

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to say to the hon. member that our Premier and Canadian Premiers clearly have indicated that this is to assist our citizens in terms of reducing costs and reducing red tape. It will have no impact at all on municipalities relative to their law-making ability and what they do in serving citizens just like we in this Legislature serve citizens, to the best of our ability in helping them as opposed to hurting them.

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you. To the same minister. In his letter my constituent says that no one is being consulted about the TILMA. Can the minister please explain what consultation, if any, has been carried out on this agreement?

**Mr. Boutilier:** Mr. Speaker, in my 45 seconds, we have and are continuing to consult. Let me give you a small example: the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, the Assessors' Association, for those who go to get drugs the Pharmacists Association, for those who want to get their eyes checked the Association of Optometrists, the land surveyors, the Alberta Building Trades Council. We even met with their union people in terms of the importance because this is serving all citizens no matter what political stripe they wear. This is a great deal, and I know this Legislature will support it.

2:20

**Mrs. Jablonski:** To the same minister: can the minister advise the House what has been done to publicize this agreement, the TILMA?

**Mr. Boutilier:** Well, Mr. Speaker, clearly I am part of that publication and will continue to be. I might add that from April 1, when the agreement came into effect, over the next two years municipalities, school boards, and others will continue to be key stakeholders as we in fact look, from 2007 to 2009, at that point, then, what impacts it will have, if any, on municipalities. So from 2007 to 2009 will be an important process of dealing with our municipalities. [interjections] I'm glad to see that some of the Liberals are even getting some of the French emotion that goes on in this House.

**The Speaker:** That was 91 questions and answers today.

head:

### Members' Statements

#### The Battle of Vimy Ridge

**Dr. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, far away in northern France there is a forested ridge which looks over the green farmlands of the Douai plain. From a distance it might seem a rather ordinary place, but for all of us as Canadians this ridge is hallowed ground, for there in France is a part of Canada, surrounded by a pair of magnificent white marble towers.

On April 9, 1917, 90 years ago this coming Monday, something remarkable happened on that piece of ground called Vimy Ridge. That day marked the start of a battle which, over a period of four days, saw over 3,500 Canadian men lose their lives and 7,000 more wounded. The Canadians attacked where so many previous assaults had tried and had failed and captured what many thought was an impossible objective. The brilliant military victory was the result of meticulous preparation and training, of resourceful and innovative leadership, and of unbelievable bravery, fighting spirit, and devotion to duty of the Canadian soldier.

Yet Vimy Ridge means more than a brilliant military victory in the bloody conflict of War World I. For the first time Canadians from all parts of our young nation fought as one unit, side by side under Canadian command. Vimy won for Canada respect and status as a signatory nation to the Treaty of Versailles. It won from Canadians at home pride in the courage of their soldiers and a feeling of nationhood. Vimy reminds us that Canadians from all walks of life were prepared to serve their country and make the ultimate sacrifice for their nation and for the causes they believed in.

Between those soaring white towers at Vimy stands the figure of a soldier passing his burning torch to compatriots. This soldier, called The Spirit of Sacrifice, commemorates the immortal words of Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae:

To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders Fields.

**The Speaker:** There'll be five additional members. I just want to keep the theme of Vimy Ridge together in the same unit. We'll go with Calgary-Hays, Lethbridge-East, Edmonton-Manning, and Calgary-Bow.

#### The Battle of Vimy Ridge

**Mr. Johnston:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to rise today to speak to Canada's most memorable wartime triumph. Easter Monday will be the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Although this event happened almost a century ago, Canadians are still learning about the effects the battle had on Canada. As is tradition, thousands of Canadians, young and old, will travel long distances to the fields of Vimy Ridge, where the remains of brave and dedicated soldiers lie. There they will pay tribute to the 11,000 soldiers who gave their lives for the freedom of people all around the world. The visiting Canadians will stand by an overwhelming memorial that marks the soldiers' experience. This monument is Canada's largest piece of installation art outside the country.

Mr. Speaker, the Battle of Vimy Ridge was one of the opening battles of the campaign. It is also considered a major event in our history. To Canadians the name Vimy Ridge has been historically meaningful. It was the first time in our nation's history that a corps-sized formation fought as a unit. The success of the attack, resulting

from detailed planning and a variety of innovative tactics, was in stark contrast to what had happened at the Somme only months before. This event sealed the reputations of the Canadians as among the finest troops on the Western Front. The capture of the ridge by the Canadian corps was a turning point for the Allied force. The success of the Canadian forces here and at Passchendaele and Canada's Hundred Days helped earn Canada a place at the Versailles peace negotiations.

Mr. Speaker, some suggest that Canadian unity was fostered. All nine provinces were represented in this battle. But as Pierre Berton pointed out in his seminal work *Vimy*, the taking of the ridge achieved legendary status very quickly.

In 1917 this event had a tremendous impact on Canadians as a whole. Today this battle still has a large impact on Canadians. All across Canada young students have been united by learning about the battle. They have learned that the young individuals who went to war were much like the young Canadians of today. A little older than them they had families and friends much like they do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### The Battle of Vimy Ridge

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today humble and grateful for the freedom that I have to speak my mind without fear of reprisals, a freedom won with the lives of the Canadian men and women who died in the First World War in the battle at Vimy Ridge in France 90 years ago. Forces from each province joined together and did what Allied forces could not do. They stormed the ridge and conquered a long-held German stronghold, that changed the course of the war. This battle created a true sense of unity and became the birth of our nation as a nation.

Mr. Speaker, 3,600 high school students from across Canada will be going to Vimy Ridge for the rededication of the war memorial. Forty-one of these are from Winston Churchill and Lethbridge Collegiate Institute in Lethbridge. Mr. David Fletcher, a teacher at Winston, was the lead on this project, but the students, parents, and the whole community helped to raise the money necessary for this trip.

They will all wear First World War uniforms, and what is fascinating is that the buttons will be exact replicas as they were cast from the original die that is kept in the Ottawa archives. These students will represent one of our fallen who lie in the graves of France. Each student researched the story of that soldier. The research turned into a labour of love, and many managed to track family members still living.

A wonderful story out of Lethbridge is that one of the students managed to make contact with the 96-year-old sister of the soldier represented. She was found living in Calgary and was thrilled for the recognition of her brother after all these many years. The family was tracked in Scotland, and medals that had never been presented for heroism will now be given to the family. A true lifetime memory for these students.

Mr. Speaker: lest we forget. These young people will ensure we must not forget the horrors of war and the love for peace that are shared by the Canadian people.

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

#### The Battle of Vimy Ridge

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am humbled and honoured to stand here today and speak to the memory of the men and women

who won the great Battle of Vimy Ridge 90 years ago. There were those who cried for peace. There were the warriors and the healers. They were all our citizen soldiers. They were there, stood strong together, and went into battle that day. It was the first time that the Canadian army attacked together. Les soldats canadiens du Québec et d'Acadie, proud Canadian soldiers from Quebec and Acadia were there. Ontarians, Atlantic Canadians, and our boys from the west were all there and ready.

At 5:30 a.m. on the 9th of April, 1917, four Canadian divisions, the first 15,000 infantry, backed up by their artillery, stormed the ridge with intense fortitude and courage. Imagine thousands of rounds of hot fire searing the air around you and not turning back. Imagine charging with your bayonet into a machine gun nest and not turning back. Imagine the air turning black as artillery shells blasted craters around you. Imagine your friends, your brothers around you having their legs and arms and heads blown off and not turning back. Our boys did not turn back, and they won the day. It was an incredible sacrifice: 3,598 Canadians were killed; 7,100 were wounded. Brigadier-General A.E. Ross said, "In those few minutes I witnessed the birth of a nation." Albertans were there from Edmonton, Calgary, High River, Lacombe, Morinville, Lac La Biche, Atikameg, and Wabasca, from all over Alberta. Many memorials stand in testimony to the sacrifices made. I salute all those and their families who suffered. We must thank them all forever.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

2:30

### Tartan Day

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There were very strong values that were fought for at Vimy Ridge.

I rise today to recognize that tomorrow is a significant day for the people of Scottish descent. It is Tartan Day, an opportunity for people in Alberta, in Scotland, and around the world to celebrate the many achievements of the Scottish people. We celebrate Tartan Day on April 6 because it marks the anniversary of the Declaration of Arbroath, which was signed in Scotland on April 6, 1320. Its most significant claim was that the country was ruled at the prerogative of the people and that the King could be replaced if he did anything to threaten Scottish independence. This highly significant but little known document was one of the first in the modern world to stipulate that government is ruled by the people.

Here in Canada the Scottish influence on our democracy is clear. Alberta was settled by pioneer Scots like the North West Mounted Police's Colonel Macleod and Colonel Irvine. Our Prime Minister John A. Macdonald was a Scot as was Alberta's first Premier, Alexander Rutherford. The first mayors of both Calgary and Edmonton were also of Scottish descent. And it was their comrades, the Calgary Highlanders regiment, fighting for democracy at Vimy Ridge.

I hope all our members will join me in celebrating Tartan Day tomorrow. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Shauna Seneca

**Mr. Tougas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On December 14 of last year the city of Edmonton and its aboriginal community lost a true champion with the unexpected passing of Shauna Seneca. Shauna was only 49 years old, but in her short time on this earth she touched the lives of thousands of people. In December 1993 Shauna and her

husband, Brad, created a youth-focused program called Bent Arrow, that provided services to 16- to 24-year-old aboriginal youths who wanted to find a job, return to school, or were looking for a new direction in their lives.

In 1994 the couple established a nonprofit charitable organization and called it Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, basing it on traditional teachings and values. The name of the society perfectly illustrated Shauna's vision and belief in the essential goodness of people. Traditionally, aboriginal people took great care to make sure that an arrow was straight, in the belief that good energy made them fly straight and true. Shauna believed that children in difficult situations were bent arrows, not broken, and that with love and faith they would fly straighter.

Bent Arrow has helped countless aboriginal children, youth, and families. The society operates 14 programs from its offices on Stony Plain Road, employing 83 people. Last year I visited Bent Arrow on what was just a typical weekday. The office hummed with activity, and there was a palpable feeling of goodwill and hope. Bent Arrow is not a mere drop-in centre where people while away the hours but a place where things get done and people help people.

Bent Arrow offers nutrition programs for expectant mothers, help for survivors of residential schools, programs for healthy families, care for pregnant teens, transitional housing, a Head Start program: the list goes on and on. The mission statement of Bent Arrow states that the society

is committed to building on the strengths of Aboriginal children, youth and their families to enable them to develop spiritually, emotionally, physically and mentally so they can walk proudly in both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.

Sadly, Bent Arrow will have to carry on that mission without their guiding light, but there is no doubt that the spirit of Shauna Seneca will continue to watch over Bent Arrow. Shauna may be gone, but her legacy – and what a wonderful legacy it is – will last for years to come.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we're allowed under our rules to have only a certain number of members provide their members' statements today. One hon. member has conveyed to me a very moving story. With your permission, I'd like him to share with you. Can we have consent to do it?

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of International, Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Relations.

### The Battle of Vimy Ridge

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was sharing with the Speaker that about 20 years ago, when I was in my young 20s, I travelled to France where, in fact, my grandfather's 18-year-old brother was killed at Vimy Ridge on this day. My grandfather said that as a namesake, I was big on flags and I was big on emulating his traits. As a teenager I flew to France to visit Vimy Ridge – I was the only one in my family to ever do that – and I placed an ensign flag, the old Canadian flag, by his gravesite. My grandfather was still living, and I took a photo of where his brother was buried and took it back to him. I just want to say what a smile it put on my grandfather's face to see where his 18-year-old brother who had left many, many years earlier was buried and lies today.

I sincerely say that the respect that French people show for Canadians is truly something I'll never forget.

Thank you.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung first, then Edmonton-Decore.

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have eight petitions today. The first one is signed by 476 people, and it says:

We, the undersigned residents of the Edmonton-Castle Downs constituency, hereby urge the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to urge the Government of Alberta to reconsider the location of the new Edmonton Remand Centre and work with the federal government to relocate the new site closer to the Edmonton Maximum Security prison.

The second one is signed by 33 people, and it says:

Whereas the ongoing rent affordability crisis is contributing to Alberta's worsening homelessness situation, we, the undersigned residents of Alberta, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to take immediate, meaningful measures to help low-income and fixed-income Albertans, Albertans with disabilities and those who are hard-to-house maintain their places of residence and cope with the escalating and frequent increases in their monthly rental costs.

The third one, Mr. Speaker, is signed by 35 concerned Albertans, and it reads:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to:

1. Ensure that the remuneration paid to employees working with people with disabilities is standardized across the sector, regardless of whether these workers are employed by government or by community-based or private providers;
2. Ensure these employees are fairly compensated and that their wages remain competitive . . . to reflect the valuable and crucial service they provide;
3. Improve employees' access to professional development opportunities . . . and
4. Introduce province-wide service and outcomes-focused level-of-care standards.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Bonko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling today 1,080 signatures, and it reads:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government to add the drug Elaprase to the Drug Benefit List approved by Alberta Health and Wellness in order to ensure that those suffering from Hunter's Syndrome, including Jordan Miranda, Riley Miranda and Tyler Chauhan, get the care they need to reduce their suffering and live full lives.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

**Mr. Martin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a letter that was sent to my office on behalf of my constituent Arlene Henderson. Ms Henderson recently began receiving a subsidy to offset her rental cost; however, shortly after she began receiving the subsidy, her rent increased again. Basically, her situation demonstrates that subsidies are important, but they must be accompanied by short-term rent increase guidelines.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I have more copies

of the letters which were received by my office urging the government to provide funding for the cancer-fighting drug Avastin. In doing so, I would like to reiterate that people who require this treatment can pay up to \$1,750 every two weeks. I would also mention that according to the people signing these letters, Members of Parliament, federal employees, members of the RCMP, and federal judges are covered for this treatment. Today the letters are from Nancy Niederhaus, Allison White, Ron McIntyre, Debbie McMunn, Andrew Gniazdowsky, Elsie Thompson, Doug Friend, Pat Stevenson, and Linda Verenka.

Mr. Speaker, I also have a letter from a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers who is living in Fort McMurray. Mr. Bluett is extremely frustrated because in the last two years he has faced three rental increases and moved twice to lower his rental costs. To make matters worse, he often finds himself unemployed while temporary foreign labour is used to replace unionized Alberta workers.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

2:40

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

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise to present a couple of letters and the number of copies necessary from volunteers for the Unity Centre of Northeast Edmonton, Geraldine Sutton and Dale Thimer, regarding some personal stories about problems with affordable housing.

Thank you.

head: **Projected Government Business**

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much. If I could ask the government to please provide us with information on their projected government business for the week commencing Tuesday, the 9th of April.

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As all members are aware, the House will not sit on Monday, April 9.

On April 10 we should have second reading of bills 12 and 15 and Committee of the Whole on bills 3, 21, 16, 12, 10, and 5.

On Wednesday we will have Bill 3, Climate Change and Emissions Management Amendment Act, 2007; Committee of the Whole on bills 21, 22, 16, 15; and second reading on bills 17, 18, and 19.

On Thursday, the 12th, we'll be into third reading on bills 21, 22, 16, 12, 15, and as per progress on the Order Paper.

Mr. Speaker, I need to point out that this will be obviously subject to change depending upon the progress that is achieved throughout the week, so we'll work as best we can to keep the members of the opposition advised.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, when we return on Tuesday – and I did send a memo to all hon. members – we will have gavel-to-gavel coverage on our website, on the Internet, of the proceedings of this Legislative Assembly, so from about 1 until 6. We're also prepared to provide such coverage if we sit in the evening providing we have notice to make sure that the technical people are in place. But effective Tuesday, 1 o'clock to 6 o'clock, everything will be on the Internet, available to the world, the performance in this Assembly: a first.

head: **Orders of the Day**

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

**Bill 14**

**Pandemic Response Statutes Amendment Act, 2007**

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An influenza pandemic occurs when a new strain of influenza virus emerges with an ability to spread quickly and cause significant sickness and mortality. Currently, global experts are suggesting that a pandemic will occur in the next one to three years. Although the impact of pandemic influenza is unpredictable in timing and severity in the age group affected, we do know that it's likely to come in waves of six to eight weeks, result in significant absenteeism across the sectors, and put tremendous stress on the health care system. Furthermore, because a pandemic is likely to be widespread, the ability of neighbouring communities and jurisdictions to offer assistance will be limited.

As a result, the government of Alberta has developed and will continue to revise response plans. The government is developing their response plans in co-ordination with regional health authorities, municipalities, industry, and other key stakeholders. As a result of planning activities, amendments to four statutes have been identified that will strengthen the province's ability to respond effectively to both pandemics and public health emergencies in general.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

An amendment to the Disaster Services Act will enable the Lieutenant Governor in Council to declare a state of emergency due to a pandemic that would last up to 90 days instead of the 14-day declaration which is currently provided for. The declaration would lapse after 90 days unless it was continued by resolution of the Legislative Assembly.

In addition to amendments that serve to clarify the intent and to update the language used in the Public Health Act, there are five sets of key amendments to this act. The first key amendments would enable the Lieutenant Governor in Council to declare a public health emergency due to a pandemic that would last up to 90 days instead of the 30-day declaration which is currently provided for. The declaration would lapse after 90 days unless it was continued by a resolution in the Legislative Assembly.

The amendments to increase the duration of an emergency declaration under both the Public Health Act and the Disaster Services Act are only for emergencies related to a pandemic. These extended declarations reflect the fact that a pandemic will come in waves and will require a prolonged response.

The second set of key amendments will allow the minister responsible for an enactment or in their absence the minister of health to suspend or modify the application of legislation by a ministerial order in order to facilitate an effective pandemic preparation or response. For example, under the Health Professions Act if a complaint is dismissed, the complainant only has 30 days to appeal this decision. This time limit could be suspended or modified during a pandemic.

The third set of key amendments will improve the enforcement mechanisms in the act by providing for quick access to the courts for medical officers of health. These amendments will ensure compliance with orders that have been issued.

The fourth set of key amendments will broaden the liability protection provision to ensure that all individuals who have been

directed to respond to a public health emergency cannot be liable for actions carried out in good faith. Currently the Public Health Act prohibits the termination of an employee because they have been conscripted during an emergency.

The fifth set of key amendments will expand this protection to include anyone complying with an order or certificate during a public health emergency. During a pandemic this protection could also be provided to people who are ill with influenza or to persons caring for sick family members. The amendment to the Employment Standards Code will ensure that recourse is available to people who have been wrongly terminated in contravention of these provisions.

Finally, an amendment to the Government Organization Act will enable the Minister of Health and Wellness to authorize individuals or groups of individuals to perform restricted activities subject to specific terms and conditions. During a public health emergency health resources will be strained, and skilled people may be called upon to apply their skills outside of their normal scope of practice. An example might be paramedics, who are trained to give injections but are not authorized to provide immunization. During a pandemic they could be authorized to vaccinate people.

Ensuring that Alberta is able to respond to a pandemic of influenza supports the Premier's plan to provide safe and secure communities. The amendments to the pandemic response statutes will do just that.

I ask support of the House and move second reading of Bill 14 and adjourn debate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

**Bill 3**

**Climate Change and Emissions Management  
Amendment Act, 2007**

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to first of all thank the hon. members for approving of Bill 3 and getting it to this the committee stage. I'd like to take just a few moments of the Assembly's time to address some of the issues that were raised during debate at second reading, and then I look forward to further discussion at committee.

**2:50**

Mr. Chairman, I've got a compilation of the debate that occurred at second reading, and without making specific reference to each of the speakers, I'd just like to point out that these remarks I'm about to make refer to comments and questions raised by Edmonton-Calder, Edmonton-McClung, Calgary-Mountain View, and Edmonton-Gold Bar. I think that's it.

So if I could deal with a number of the issues first of all that were raised by Edmonton-Calder. Much of what Edmonton-Calder was referring to had to deal with whether or not carbon sequestration was valid science. The member was questioning why the government would be promoting something such as carbon sequestration and talked about costs that are involved in carbon sequestration. I have

to assure the member that while carbon sequestration is a valid and viable option to pursue, it is not specifically part of this bill. As a matter of fact, the task force that was recently named by the federal government is going through a process of reviewing the economics and the viability of sequestration. We look forward to that report.

But I must point out that whether sequestration is done on a very large scale, à la pipelines, CO<sub>2</sub> pipelines, it really isn't a matter of if carbon sequestration could work in Alberta but how. That's very much the question. At the end of the day, though, the management of carbon in one form or another is very much an issue and part of this bill because what this bill is attempting to do is send a clear message to industry that it's the intention of this government and of Albertans that they need to do what is within their power to reduce the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> and greenhouse gases that they emit into the atmosphere.

We also had issues raised with respect to the discussion of whether intensity or absolute targets should be the focus of this legislation, and I want to spend just a little bit of time talking about both of those. This bill, as you know, Mr. Chairman, contemplates bringing forward intensity-based targets. The approach works for Alberta because it reflects greenhouse gas performance improvements independent of growth or decline in the economy. This approach recognizes the huge capital investment that Alberta has made in the past in a number of sectors like forestry, electricity, oil sands, petrochemicals, and so on, and we need to give these companies time to recoup their investment while at the same time ensuring that they take future action to reduce greenhouse gases. In a growing economy like Alberta's absolute reductions in emissions can be achieved, but it's important that the right policies and programs are in place to allow the economy to adjust.

A combination of both approaches could be used so that emissions intensity targets are used in the short term and absolute targets are a much longer term objective. The result of this would be immediate action on emissions, a lesser impact on the economy, and a time for researchers to develop innovative solutions. This is, in essence, Alberta's existing policy, and we've chosen to transition from intensity-based targets to absolute targets by investing in technology.

We had further comments suggesting that this bill, Alberta's Bill 3, may be obsolete given that the federal government is also contemplating passing similar legislation. I'd like to just point out to members that it's certainly not the intention of the government of Alberta to pass legislation that would duplicate legislation at the federal level. It would be ludicrous for us to think that we would put in legislation that would require Alberta industry to contribute to meeting our compliance mechanisms at the same time that as Canadian corporations they would also be required to meet any compliance mechanisms that might be imposed by Ottawa.

But there's something that needs to be noted. While it is our intention to work with the federal government and work with Canada to where possible harmonize and achieve similar outcomes, I'd like to point out two things to members. First of all, the discussion that the federal government is having at this point with respect to climate change legislation is just that. They're mired in a minority government situation. The legislation that they contemplate has not seen broad-based approval in the Commons, and frankly, Mr. Chairman, I'm not so sure that there's reasonable expectation that that legislation will actually come to pass. The alternative that the federal government has is to bring forward regulations under their existing legislation. That being the case, there are very rigid and strict requirements of public notification once the government even establishes and announces its targets. So that all comes down to the reality that any action taken by the federal government is a minimum of 12 to 18 months and more likely 24 months away.

The government of Alberta feels very strongly that we need to act and we need to act now. So if the federal government comes forward with legislation, (a) we will work with them to harmonize our legislation, and (b) in the meantime we will have taken strong action in Alberta and, actually, I would also like to say, perhaps even learned some lessons in the process so that we can assist Ottawa in the implementation of any legislation that they bring forward.

The other important factor, I think, that I want to put on the record, Mr. Chairman, is that Alberta has a strong record of regulating air emissions. We have been involved in regulating our own industry in particulate emissions for some time now. The climate change legislation that this bill, in fact, amends has been in place since 2002. We're simply amending existing legislation that had mandatory reporting, putting intensity targets and the compliance mechanisms in place.

So, clearly, we want Ottawa to recognize that as we have worked together very successfully in the past in joint management of air quality, we see no reason why we shouldn't be able to continue to operate in close co-operation with Ottawa in the future. So there's no need for members of this House to arbitrarily hold up passage of this legislation in anticipation of what Ottawa may do because they're a ways away from doing what it is that they're going to do, and at the end of the day we can continue to work with Ottawa, as we always have, to co-operate as best we possibly can.

Others raised issues regarding the fact that only about 70 per cent of Alberta's industrial emissions are represented under this legislation, and what are we going to do about the other 30 per cent? Well, that, Mr. Chairman, is exactly the process that we've been engaged in for the past week and will continue to be engaged in over the next two or three weeks as we have been holding a number of community consultation meetings throughout the province to engage Albertans in that very discussion.

Where do we go from here? We've closed the loop on climate change legislation. We've introduced the intensity-based targets for large industrial emitters. But where do we go from here? I'm very pleased to report that Albertans are not only actively engaged in attending and participating in those community consultations but are very actively involved in providing input through our website. So I encourage not only members of the public but perhaps even members of this Assembly to be involved in this consultation process. We have a number of community meetings that are yet to be held. Last night we were in Lethbridge, the night before in Medicine Hat, and we'll be in Calgary next Tuesday. So I encourage members to participate in that process, and I think that they'll see that there is active discussion and good, quality suggestions being made by Albertans, and we look forward to that.

3:00

We also had questions regarding the issue of the compliance mechanisms and asking for some clarification on the different levels of compliance. I'd point out that this legislation operates under the same principles as the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, and its regulations provide for a number of offences that can be prosecuted. There are significant maximum penalties under conviction, but there are also penalties that can be brought forward in the form of administrative penalties. They represent a compliance ladder for steps that would be taken based on any offences under the programs. You start at first on the ladder, and if that doesn't result in compliance, you can constantly move up, and that's exactly the way this legislation is designed to operate as well.

Finally, I wanted to address the issue of industrial emissions. Edmonton-Gold Bar was asking why industrial emissions are excluded and, in fact, asking what industrial emissions are. I'd like



to point out that industrial emissions are the types of emissions where there is really no technology fix that's economically viable or efficiency adjustment that could be made to reduce them in the short term. They are part of a set of chemical industrial processes, as opposed to the result of combustion. When you burn something and you send smoke up the chimney, that CO<sub>2</sub> that comes out is the result of combustion. When you, for example, manufacture fertilizer, you have a chemical reaction. One of the by-products of that chemical reaction is CO<sub>2</sub>. That CO<sub>2</sub> is captured. It doesn't go up the stack, so to speak; it's already captured. That's the kind of activity that can be much more easily dealt with. We've already got it in a bag, so to speak. We can find ways of managing that type of CO<sub>2</sub> much more easily.

It's also a recognition that as a result of a manufacturing process there already has been a significant reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> on the combustible side since the late '90s and the turn of the century simply from an economic perspective because natural gas is a feedstock for these types of industries. They have made significant reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> simply because of the economies involved. This will allow us to work with the manufacturing sector, recognizing that they have some unique circumstances there, and allow us to deal with that in a reasonable way.

Finally, I want to deal with the issue in section 8 that talks about the question: why is this section being substituted? I can assure the member that the reason is purely administrative. It's an amendment to ensure the consistency of the ministerial order outlined in section 10 of the Government Organization Act. The original wording unintentionally restricted the authority. The intent remains unchanged: co-operation among other jurisdictions needs to be in the shared interest of Albertans as reflected in the expectations under this legislation. This will help us to ensure that a single set of rules applies to Alberta industry.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I think I have covered at least most of the issues that were raised by hon. members at second reading, and I look forward to further discussion at committee stage.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the hon. minister's answers to many of the questions that we've posed about what the bill will do, and I guess I'm going to be focusing more on what it doesn't do.

This bill is intended to amend the original 2003 bill, Climate Change and Emissions Management Act. The main changes are in the regulation, the specified gas emitters regulation, which has set out some new emission intensity targets and three options to achieve them for the largest industrial emitters. However, the target of reaching 50 per cent emission intensity reduction by 2020 remains the same in this bill.

It is reliance on emissions intensity that makes these changes more for show than anything else. There will be no reductions in absolute emissions, and in fact by 2020 they could double. That alone tells us that this bill and the accompanying regulations are more a reaction to public pressure and concern than a government that's prepared to show leadership on this issue of climate change that has been scientifically proven and accepted by the international community. You know, it's been validated by scientists for decades now, but the communication over the last few decades has been a problem, in that politicians and media have given it a spin that makes it confusing.

So it's not realistic for us to support this bill at this point because it continues to rely on intensity emissions rather than moving towards hard caps on emissions. This plan has some flaws that make

it less effective in reducing emissions in an absolute sense. The reliance on emissions intensity as our measure of reduction instead of focusing on moving aggressively to absolute reductions to make this bill and the accompanying regulations effective are exactly making it ineffective.

Absolute emission is the term used to describe the total volume of emissions from a particular source, whether it is an exhaust system of a vehicle or a stack from an industrial facility. Emission intensity is the amount of greenhouse gases released measured against another factor such as GDP or a barrel of oil. A more fuel efficient car will have a lower emission intensity than a less efficient model, but the two cars may still have the same absolute emissions if the more efficient one is driven further.

Although the hon. member also mentioned the goal to harmonize and to look at the national plan and, hopefully, some global responsibility, there are some questions about how what we're doing here in Bill 3 would actually work with Kyoto commitments. Will it jeopardize our ability and Canada's ability to meet those commitments? Will it jeopardize Canada's commitments to achieve much deeper emission reduction targets for post-2012 commitment periods, that will become more necessary given the ultimate objectives of the United Nations framework?

The outcome is that industry will be faced with the prospect of trying to achieve two different sets of regulations, and I do believe that industry wants to be responsible here. They want some clear leadership. They want some clarity. I think that the fact that they're now looking at two different sets of regulations is going to make this even more confusing.

Finally, I want to again emphasize that this bill is not integrating with any other aspects of our land use planning, our agriculture, forests, and, in particular, water use and urban development.

I mentioned before when I spoke on this bill that it's disappointing, again, that this bill is dealing with intensity targets rather than caps on emissions. Many members on this side of the House have spoken with knowledge and passion about the need for fixed targets.

Now, I'm also wondering again about the global and ethical responsibility that we have for our planet. We are interconnected. We must be trustees of our planet, and we have the potential to be world leaders. The basic principle of carbon causing greenhouse emissions has been validated, as I said, by the scientific community. The role of government is to do the right thing. We are supposed to be stewards of our land and our resources. The right thing to do is to reduce incentives for fossil fuels and increase incentives for clean, renewable energy. It is disappointing that these essential steps are not addressed in this bill.

Albertans are increasingly aware of the tremendous business opportunities in conservation as well as the value of carbon enhancing agriculture, capturing methane, solar wind, and geothermal power for our world. It's time to give these options, along with distributed electrical generation, true consideration and to give them the same incentives that fossil fuels have received for decades in this province. We are not doing that. We're falling far short of it, so this is a very small step and certainly not adequate.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Again, I welcome this opportunity to participate in committee on Bill 3. I appreciate some of the answers that have been provided by the hon. Minister of Environment regarding my questions from second reading. However, I'm going to have to go over *Hansard* and have a look because I don't think all of my questions were answered. Certainly, when we look at Bill 3 and we look at the definitions and

the intensity targets, I don't think the hon. minister was complete with his remarks. However, we'll have a look, as I said.

**3:10**

Now, some people think this is not enough of a start on climate change. Others think it's too much. It's a significant change, Mr. Chairman, for this government. There are still the people that consider climate change to be a hoax. I can't believe that, but there are still people who think that climate change is a hoax. Even last night I was watching the news, and I was looking at how the Australians are having to deal with climate change, and climate change is a reality. Perhaps some people in this province, since we're so far above sea level, are not as worried, but they should be. Every major urban centre in this province relies on water from the melting snowpack in the Rocky Mountains for water. So we have to be wise stewards of our environment, and this bill, I think, if we give it a chance, could be – could be – a good start.

There's no doubt in my mind that this is the first carbon tax in Canada. I was surprised, as I said, to attend the news conference at Government House on March 8, but my surprise was centred around the fact that we talked about the regulation, not the actual bill here. The gas emitters regulation that was enclosed in the package that was provided to the reporters was quite interesting. Again, the actual emissions intensity is what we have to centre on here, Mr. Chairman. What exactly is that going to mean on a per tonne basis? If you can't meet your targets and you pay the money, I think we we're looking at \$175 million annually that could be realized. What we do with this money: that's another question.

I, for one, am not nearly as concerned about CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration as other hon. members of this House. I've heard from some members that it won't work; it can't work; it's a temporary measure. Certainly, in Norway, Mr. Chairman, they have been using CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration for a number of years, 10 years to be exact. It seems to be working. We look at the dramatic increase in CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration projects in North America. We look at some in the western Canadian sedimentary basin. We've talked about this before. It's a technology that works. It's made a significant difference, much more than I thought, with EnCana's project in Estevan, Saskatchewan. In fact, the Alberta Research Council is involved in that. The University of Alberta is involved in that, the University of Calgary, the Saskatchewan government. The taxpayers are funding part of that. Hopefully, with this sort of commission that's been set up, all the data will be presented, and perhaps some of the skeptics will give CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration a second chance.

Now, the cost of this supposed pure CO<sub>2</sub> pipeline that is being considered for construction between Fort McMurray and some of the mature oil fields and gas fields around Edmonton of \$1.4 billion: I'm a little suspicious of that. Certainly, I have seen costs that are three and four years old, in all fairness, but they're significantly less than that. Significantly less than that. We're talking about a 20-inch pipeline, a fairly big pipeline, and we're talking about, I think, a 2,000 psi operating pressure. So whether it will cost \$500 million, a billion dollars, or \$1.5 billion, if the \$15 per tonne tax was to be used for this purpose, I think it would be a good purpose. It would be suitable.

Certainly, I think the cost of this has to be covered by industry, but we would all benefit from this, Mr. Chairman. It's worth noting that the cost of CO<sub>2</sub> reduction measures with oil sands projects can be reduced from their royalty payments. It surprises me that we haven't done more already, but I'm pleased that finally something is being done. We have to start somewhere. Bill 3 here may not be perfect, but whenever we consider that its main purpose is to ensure that there is a consistency with other major pieces of environmental

legislation, specifically the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, I think we have to give this serious consideration.

Now, when we're talking about the options that the government is going to have, options so that they can work with industry for achieving environmental outcomes, in this case specific reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, I think we're going to have to look, Mr. Chairman, at eventually having absolute targets. This is a first step, and whether we like it or not, we're going to have absolute targets. I think we can have absolute targets and still remain viable economically. In fact, I think whenever the technology is developed, we will be exporting this technology to other portions of the oil patch around the world. I see this as a natural progression of the industry. We cannot continue with our current practices of significant amounts of CO<sub>2</sub> released into the environment. We all know the consequences of that. Every rational person realizes that we have to change our ways.

When we look at industries, specifically the energy industry which is concentrated in Alberta, we've got to also look at other economic sectors, the transportation sector. I don't think we can pin all the blame on the energy sector. I drive a car. People in other parts of North America where we don't have this concentration of energy production drive cars. If we go to a store, a truck probably brought the goods that we are buying from somewhere else to that store. The transportation sector: we have to look also at changing our habits there to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. We just can't dump all our problems on the energy sector. There are many people. The packaging industry is another example of how we can change our ways.

**3:20**

So if we're going to change our ways and reduce our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the energy industry, then the same also applies for the transportation sector and other economic areas. We've got to work at this together, and this is where I think the co-operation has to be encouraged by this government. The government can certainly show leadership with this, and I think they are. I think this may be a small step, but it's a good step. It's the right step.

When we analyze some of the criticism of this, when we look at what other people are saying, they're right. But this is a start, and to think that three years ago this government wouldn't even acknowledge the Kyoto protocol. This is a big step for them. The money that we get on the surcharge, on the carbon tax: let's use it wisely to enhance our environment.

As I look further at this bill, Mr. Chairman, I am most anxious to participate in further debate. Again, it's not perfect – there's a lot that is needed here – but it is a start.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thanks, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on Bill 3 in committee stage. I found it quite interesting to listen to the minister's comments in regard to our debate during the second reading of this bill. Certainly, he provided some illuminating and, I think, quite revealing information in regard to where he would like to go with this bill and, indeed, where he would like to go in regard to regulating and monitoring the carbon dioxide output of the energy industry in Alberta in general. For that, I am certainly grateful to the minister. He is very forthright and takes the time to explain himself in a fairly clear way, which is a good thing.

I just wanted to respond to a couple of comments that he made, particularly in regard to carbon sequestration, and I think the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar was just mentioning this same issue as well. Please understand from the outset, Mr. Chair, that I

am providing on behalf of our party a constructive criticism of this process, and truly a constructive criticism is in order for this juncture in regard to carbon sequestration because this technology is very much in its infancy, in its experimental stages. We need to be sure that we are not just hitching our wagon to something that isn't even quite there yet in regard to solving carbon dioxide storage problems. Certainly, we're not as a party opposed to using carbon injection for enhanced oil recovery either because, of course, this would be limiting the amount of fresh water that is currently employed to go through this same process. So it has some merit for that as well.

I've been fighting for months and months now to not mix those two messages together and somehow imply to the public that, in fact, carbon injection for enhanced oil recovery can equate to carbon storage where that carbon dioxide is, in fact, now stored under the ground forever. Those two cannot be mixed together because there are two different purposes, number one. Number two, to expect that the carbon dioxide would in fact stay under the ground is somewhat dubious if you're using it for that enhanced oil recovery purpose. So I suspect that I will be repeating that message many times over the coming weeks and months as well because it seems like a convenient merging of these two ideas together.

You know, the public wants to have some peace of mind on this issue, so if someone tells them that there is a magical cure somehow that will both enrich the province by enhancing our oil recovery from depleted wells and store the carbon dioxide that we've otherwise been producing from our coal-fired electricity plants and our tar sands bitumen upgraders and whatnot, then it sounds like that miraculous thing that will solve all the problems. People do like to want to believe those things, but I think it's incumbent upon the members of this Legislature and responsible government to in fact tell the whole truth on this issue. So that's what I'm looking to be doing as a constructive critic of carbon sequestration.

You know, just to end that particular part of my discussion here, I've been looking at carbon sequestration as many governments and agencies around the world have been doing as well, and certainly, you know, there are some interesting baseline things that we need to consider before we enter into any carbon sequestration projects wherever it happens to be in the world. Number one is to make sure we set up a system in place that will monitor the carbon dioxide that has been injected under the ground to ensure that it stays under the ground. I believe that in Norway they have been experimenting with this process and actually putting some small radioactive isotopes into the carbon dioxide that they inject under the ground and then monitoring by satellite the sites where the injection has taken place to watch if those radioactive isotopes actually leak back out into the atmosphere. I mean, that is, I guess, the experimental version of best practices for carbon dioxide sequestration at this juncture, Mr. Chair, and certainly I hope that we might be entering this possibility with the same degree of seriousness as that experiment seems to be doing.

The second issue that we have to look at very carefully in regard to carbon sequestration is the overall energy that is required to capture the carbon dioxide at the point of combustion and the amount of energy to transport that carbon dioxide: process it first, concentrate it, and then transport it to a safe underground site. You know, I've been looking, Mr. Chair, at some of the percentage figures at experimental sites that are doing the math on a given coal-fired electricity plant. It takes between 20 and 30 per cent of the total energy that's being produced by that generating facility just to capture the carbon. As you can imagine, you're having to build 30 per cent more plants, or for every four plants you have to build a fourth plant, just to produce enough electricity to generate the carbon capture process.

So you see my point: you're entering into some very kind of

dodgy ground here in terms of real saving or real value when you are including those costs when you build a carbon capture mechanism in conjunction with a coal-fired electricity plant. These are only a couple of things that I have been reading about in the last few days in regard to this, and I think that each member here should consider these issues very, very carefully.

Another issue that I wanted to bring up is in regard to debating this bill and applying the emerging research and technology that is taking place on carbon capture and sequestration and on setting up carbon tax or carbon credits and all of the things that Bill 3 implies. Really, I would like – and I think it would be an excellent reflection of the new mood, as the Speaker had mentioned before, in the Legislature here – to actually move this bill over to one of the new all-party committees that are going to be struck here in the next short while. That way, Mr. Chair, we would have the opportunity to evaluate this bill – and, certainly, we're not rejecting it out of hand – with an expanded capacity to bring in witnesses, to evaluate new information and research that's being put forward in regard to carbon capture and carbon tax and carbon credits and all of these things.

3:30

If I could think of one scientific area of advancement right now in the world, I think this whole issue of carbon dioxide and climate change has to be the most pressing and perhaps the most active. Certainly, taking this bill wouldn't preclude the possibility of its survival; in fact, with some amendments we would be happy to do so. But take this bill to the all-party committee and evaluate it with this whole broader spectrum of things that we might be able to put in place in the all-party committee to make it work, to make it float, to make it a good bill that actually does lead us down the path of carbon reduction here in the province of Alberta.

As I've said before – and I certainly say it completely respectfully but most stringently – this bill as it reads will not reduce carbon dioxide emissions and climate change that it implies here in the province of Alberta but will serve to increase it and even justify it. Neither of those things are in the best interest, I believe, of the environment or of the people of Alberta, and I think that we certainly could do better. As we move through this bill, the passage of the bill, I certainly have lots of research and ideas to put forward to perhaps serve to amend and make the bill function better.

So with that, Mr. Chair, I do in fact have an amendment that I would like to put forward here this afternoon, and we can check it out and see what you think and away we go.

**The Chair:** Do you have an amendment?

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes, I do have an amendment.

**The Chair:** Just submit it to the page, and they'll distribute them. I need a copy here before you speak to the amendment. We'll just wait till they're distributed.

**Mr. Eggen:** Okay. Thank you, sir.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, you may proceed.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. If people would like to follow along, my amendment reads that Bill 3, Climate Change and Emissions Management Amendment Act, 2007, be amended in section 3 in the proposed section 2.1(1)(a) by striking out "and" at

the end of subclause (i), adding “and” at the end of subclause (ii), and adding the following after subclause (ii): “(iii) the measures necessary to effect a reduction in the total specified gas emissions in the province.”

This bill is actually a little bit tricky to amend because, of course, it’s working with previous legislation, Mr. Chair, that was in place. I found this to be a particularly useful area to make this amendment, though.

In general, first of all, a problem with Bill 3 as it stands is that it doesn’t set specified targets over a longer period of time. It sort of puts a benchmark in place in regard to intensity emissions and tries to impose that upon individual large emitters, and then that’s kind of it. When any large or medium or small industrial emitter would like to plan for the future and seek a direction of where these carbon dioxide emission reductions are going, I think it’s incumbent upon us as legislators to send a clear message and to set longer term expectations.

Certainly, when you speak to certain large industrial emitters, they know that the writing is on the wall in regard to having to have absolute reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and indeed many large emitters here in the province of Alberta have been purchasing offsets to face the inevitability of the necessity to in fact have climate change legislation and tough climate change legislation enacted in the province of Alberta. With Bill 3, one of my big problems is that it doesn’t set targets that say that we’re going down the road to absolute reductions eventually. My amendment here, in fact, does assist with that and I think is quite illuminating for the purposes of clarification in regard to where the targets are going to go over time.

The central problem with the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act, the current amending legislation, and the proposed regulations that are in place is that they only require reductions in the emission intensity. This position is somewhat, I believe, misleading or irresponsible in a global context, where other jurisdictions are taking more significant steps towards enacting absolute reductions in their emissions.

This Conservative government seems to be only recently choosing to acknowledge even the science of climate change. It’s as though we are somehow stuck back in time with this pace of acknowledgment and then actually doing something. Somewhere between ideology and adherence to the markets, to be able to solve all of the problems that everything seems to come across, I think we lose the practical, pragmatic way to actually deal with absolute reductions, to get over the hump of intensity reductions, so I am putting forward this amendment.

This amendment adds a subclause to proposed section 2.1(1)(a), which appears on the second page of the bill if you want to follow along. The section creates an advisory committee which is tasked to examine certain issues, which is all well and good. I do have some degree of skepticism about what sort of experts might be assigned to this committee. Would we find a range of experts on climate change and environmentalists along with industry, which is fine, perhaps members of the Sierra Club, the Pembina Institute, the Parkland Institute, industry people included as well, or will we see, as we have in the past, a tendency towards industry insiders who have a foregone conclusion about, of course, what they would like?

This amendment is intended to provide some further direction to the committee, specifically to move them past certain ideas of intensity into a policy direction that will address more directly the problem of climate change. So I put it forth to the members of the Legislature here this afternoon for their edification. I hope that it might find some support there amongst everybody.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, did you want to speak on the amendment?

**Ms Blakeman:** Yes, please.

**The Deputy Chair:** You may proceed.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. I’m rising to speak in favour of the amendment that has been proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder. There are two images that come to mind as I read through the bill and the notes and the background and listen to what the Member for Edmonton-Calder is saying. One is a climate change panel that was sponsored by the Member for Edmonton-Riverview shortly after he was elected; I’m thinking in 2002 or 2003, somewhere in there. It was a pretty impressive panel that was struck. It had some long-time members from the environmental movement, some experts from the university – Dr. David Schindler was there – and some others.

Really, I came away from that panel having come to understand a couple of things. One, even back then the energy companies were signalling that they knew that restrictions would be coming on the way they had been operating, and they were prepared to deal with that. Some of them had started to put stuff in place. But it’s a business. No businessperson is going to set themselves out there to be the first one that’s going to incur cost. They could experience a reduction in their profits as they put some of this in place. None of them are going to put themselves at a disadvantage by being first in this case.

3:40

I came away from that panel knowing that energy companies were well aware of the situation, had been working on contingency plans for some time, were prepared to go there and would go as needed to establish more stringent ways of doing business that would conform to environmental concerns, but they also wanted clear timelines because they felt that they all needed to start into this at the same time so that it was not a business disadvantage for them and that it had to be very clear what they were trying to achieve.

The second image that came to mind as I was listening to all of this is a parade. You hear parades and politics talked about a lot. You know, we want to be leading the parade, the idea of the politician out there with a great idea, like the parade marshal with the big baton and the high hat and all of that, leading the citizens behind him and forging new paths and new ideas. “Leading the parade” or “in front of the parade” are clichés that we often hear.

The image that I’m getting on this whole issue of climate change and environmental protection laws is that the parade has passed by. It’s that image you get when you arrive too late, or maybe you’re on your way back to the car after the summer parade in your local municipality and you can see where the parade has passed by. There’s nobody left anymore. A few people are folding up their chairs, maybe, and chatting a bit. There’s a bit of rubbish, you know, wafting down the street from a little breeze. There might be some fellow that’s coming along with a litter picker upper, and maybe somebody’s out there with a shovel cleaning up after the horses. But, basically, the parade has passed by.

That’s what I’m seeing with this legislation. This government had an opportunity to lead the parade, to get out in front of the public, to lead them along in what, clearly, needed to happen and what the scientists have been telling us for decades now. Once again, the government is choosing to come behind the parade. Let’s face it, Mr. Chair, the parade that I’m talking about here is essentially the public: the public will to have these measures put in place, the public

interest to have them put in place. We have the public, who are actually ahead of the government at this point. They are the parade, and they are far ahead of where the politicians are on this one.

So I'm willing to support this amendment because it does offer some clarity in the legislation. It makes it clear that we are looking for an absolute reduction in emissions in the province, that that's where we're going. I think that's what business wants to hear from this government. If I was a businessperson, I would have been very frustrated with the prevarication, with the obfuscation that's been taking place around this issue. It's a little bit of a strange dance, can't quite be categorized in any of our familiar ballroom definitions. It's sort of a little bit of quickstep, a bit of tango, some rumba thrown in there, and a bit of tap dancing to get out of the room.

Really, what we all want is clarity, we want definitive timelines, and we want absolute reductions. I'm disappointed that the government came as far as it did with Bill 3 and still did not manage to achieve those simple concepts. I think some of that is being achieved through this motion.

I'm also very aware when I read the legislation – and this is appearing on page 2 of the bill – of this whole section that's added after section 2 about advisory committees and experts. I think the public is beginning to tire of politicians who when they don't want to make a decision have another study, another expert panel, another round-table, another task force, another public hearing. The public knows where they want to go. I think the energy sector knows where it's going to have to go. But government doesn't want to come out and commit, so we have yet another round of experts that are presumably paid to try and help the government figure out how to not do what everybody else wants them to do. Here we have this again.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I'm going to stop and say, you know: don't misquote me and say that I'm not in favour of public consultation. Clearly, I am, and I think there are very appropriate places for that to happen, but that's not what's happening here. This is about the government gathering more information to support its very slow progress here. It is about advisory committees and retaining experts, about the content and administration of the act, policies, and programs, other matters under the minister's administration, and these functions, including the seeking of input from the public – there we go again – and the manner and the time in which the functions can be performed. Then this particular amendment adds the only clarity that we get out of this, which is: “measures necessary to effect a reduction in the total specified gas emissions in the province.”

I guess that I'm not terribly hopeful that the government members would support this motion, but I certainly think they should because I think history, and not too far in the future, will very quickly reveal that we were dragging our feet at the very moments of a war that's already been won. Really, I was hoping that this government would have been braver and would have just done what needed to be done. Clearly, it's not, so we're going to delay another who knows what – another year – because of these sections that are being amended in this amending act to try and slow down the implementation of what is essentially the inevitable.

I think the amendment that's been brought forward, which I'm assuming would be amendment A1, does something to speed this process along in that it does offer some clarity about where we're trying to end up. It may well be that I can go back and work with my colleagues and our support staff to indeed come up with some of the other amendments that I think should be redirecting this bill in a different direction, with stronger leadership being shown by the government.

So with those comments in support of the amendment that is on the floor, I urge all of my colleagues in the Assembly to support it, and I will take my seat. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is indeed my pleasure to participate again in deliberations on this particular bill, Bill 3, the Climate Change and Emissions Management Amendment Act, 2007. Now, this time I am speaking to voice my support for this amendment, that was brought to the floor by the Member for Edmonton-Calder.

In listening to the earlier part of the debate, I think I heard the hon. Minister of Environment signalling a desire for intensity targets to be a step towards bringing in hard caps on emissions. If this is the way I heard it – and I am hoping that this is the way the hon. minister meant it – then that's definitely a positive sign. This amendment would aid in taking this government and this province in that direction.

The Member for Edmonton-Calder is suggesting that the advisory committees which the minister is going to establish would add another task or would look at something above and beyond the two that are already proposed in this act. This third job for those advisory committees would be to suggest mechanisms to bring in a reduction in the total specified gas emissions. So, in a way, if the minister is going to bring in those advisory committees and tell them what he expects them to be looking at and what he expects them to be focusing on, then it doesn't really hurt to tell them that one of those little jobs that he's assigning to them is going to be: please, members of the advisory committee, look at ways where this province can bring in hard caps – intensity targets in the interim, hard caps at the end.

3:50

This is like a two-step process, Mr. Chairman, and, you know, the amendment that we're speaking to brings that clarity in. It basically sets the stage for those advisory committees to be more than people who just discuss administration and legislation and regulations, all the dry stuff. We also want scientists and experts in the field – people who understand the environment, who understand emissions, who understand emission control – to sit down and come up with ideas and give those ideas to the minister, who I hope is sincere in his signalling that hard caps are going to be brought in at some point in the future. He would use that information and that advice to look for ways to move toward that goal that we're all aspiring towards. It's, basically, the goal to one day not only arrest or cap emissions but also, hopefully, to reverse emissions and to go from a carbon-positive economy to a carbon-neutral economy and then, hopefully, a carbon-reducing economy. Many people tell us that the damage we do to the environment is irreversible and the only way we can arrest it or even reverse it in little steps is to start right now and if we don't start right now, every day we lose is a generation of damage.

So in essence, I support this amendment. I don't think that there is anything in it that the government side is going to find particularly offensive or objectionable, and I urge all hon. members from both sides of the House to support it. If we're really serious about working together and if I heard the Minister of Environment right in his introductory speech earlier this afternoon, talking about hard caps being a target and an objective of this government but not discussed in that capacity in this bill, what we're hoping to do is to make this bill even better, and I will be more than keen to hear other members of this House speak in favour as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any others? The hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise and support this amendment to Bill 3, the Climate Change and Emissions Management Amendment Act, 2007. My colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder has moved this amendment. Of course, the amendment focuses very much on the necessary measures to make an absolute reduction in the total emissions – the total emissions – and I really do think that it's reasonable to begin to talk about this question. I know that the government has put all its eggs in the basket of reduction of emissions intensity, and I understand why they've done that. I understand why: because they have a policy that allows unlimited growth in the economy regardless of the capacity of the province to support that growth, and of course any hard caps would interfere with that growth.

The real question that's not being debated here is the government's underlying policy with respect to growth. Now, back in January of 2006, I believe it was, Mr. Chairman, there was a meeting in Houston that was organized by Energy Canada and the United States Department of Energy. I believe one minister from this government was there as well as many executives from some of the biggest oil and gas companies in the world. It was the position of the United States government and, as far as I know, agreed at this conference, which was not known to the public, that they would like Alberta to increase its production from the tar sands by about five times what we're currently producing.

Mr. Chairman, let's consider the impact of the present rate of development that is occurring in this province. We talked this afternoon about housing and the rents that people are being forced to pay, people, even workers in the tar sands themselves, on the verge of homelessness because they cannot afford the housing. We've seen an increase in homelessness, and many people moving to Alberta move back. Saskatchewan for the first time had more people moving from Alberta to Saskatchewan than the other way around simply because of the cost of living in this province. We are in an enormous deficit with respect to our infrastructure, and we can't keep up with the growth that's going on.

There's the other question, Mr. Chairman, about who that growth is actually for and who actually benefits by the growth that's now taking place in this province. Now, we know that the government, in collaboration with the federal government, has encouraged companies to bring in temporary foreign workers, notwithstanding the fact that there are hundreds, in some cases thousands, of qualified unionized tradespeople, highly skilled, highly motivated, born and bred in Alberta or from other parts of Canada, that are being overlooked by these companies because of their access to cheaper foreign labour. So if Albertans aren't getting the first call on jobs, notwithstanding the fact that they're skilled and willing to work, then you have to ask who this policy is for.

Not only that, there are now a number of projects that would increase the export of unprocessed bitumen to the United States. In other words, we dig up the stuff and send it in an unprocessed form in order to create jobs in the United States. There are billions of dollars in investment going on right now in the United States to build the kind of upgraders and refining capacity to refine Alberta's tar sands. So, Mr. Chairman, "who benefits from that?" is a really good question. Not only that, to top it all off, on almost all of the oil that is produced in the tar sands today, we are receiving one penny on the dollar in terms of royalty revenue.

The American oil companies are cleaning up, making most of the money, workers from other countries are doing much of the work at the expense of Albertans, and in fact jobs are being created not in Alberta but in the United States because of the export of raw bitumen. So, Mr. Chairman, the policy of this government is in the

interests of the big oil companies and in the interests of the United States.

4:00

I happen to agree with the hon. Minister of Education's former boss Peter Lougheed that we should go a little slower on this and build the plants on a staged basis. I agree with the former Premier Lougheed's view that we need to start thinking like owners, that we own this resource. This is a valuable resource, and we are in the driver's seat. We can set the pace of development so that it benefits Albertans, we can set the price so that it benefits Albertans, and we can make sure that Albertans are the first to get jobs. We can set a pace of development that allows us to catch up on our massive multibillion dollar infrastructure deficit, and we can also make sure that we are not leaving our future generations with a massive multibillion dollar environmental liability as the sole legacy of what's happening in tar sands development in this province right now.

Let's come back to the whole question of CO<sub>2</sub>. The government's policy with respect to CO<sub>2</sub> is designed, and consciously in my view – consciously designed – to permit massive increases in CO<sub>2</sub> output in this province. It's deliberately intended to be open-ended and allow huge increases in CO<sub>2</sub> production. Mr. Chairman, you don't have to go very much farther than the daily newspaper or the newscast on TV at night to realize the impact of CO<sub>2</sub> on this planet. That's what people don't want to address. They are very proud about reductions of CO<sub>2</sub> on a percentage basis as a result of emissions changes; however, they don't like to talk about the fact that global climate change is occurring at an ever-faster pace, and it is the future generations of Albertans that are going to be left with that legacy. They just don't want to reconcile those two facts in their heads, and as a result we have this piece of legislation.

Now, in my view, if the bill requires people to take a look at what measures are necessary to effect a reduction in the total specified gas emissions in the province, then that's a good thing. Why not at least study it? They may not agree with me about the pace of development in this province. They may not agree that we'll be able to control absolute emissions or that we could ever go to hard caps, but surely they would agree that we should at least be studying how that could be accomplished. That's what the amendment is supposed to do.

So, Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, I just want to say that the government is sticking its head in the tar sands, when it comes to the whole question of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and the pace of development in this province. The pace of development in this province and the emissions that will result will damage the quality of life of Albertans and, particularly, damage the quality of life and the economic prospects of the next generation and the generation that follows it. But this government is too interested in the quick buck, is too interested in their friends in the oil and gas industry making enormous profits so they can continue to support the Conservative Party at election time to actually care about future generations. It's this short-sighted policy that I think is going to come back and bite this government in certain parts of its anatomy in the next election.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Now, it's interesting, and I enjoyed the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highland-Norwood's comments regarding the temporary foreign workers and the labour situation in this province. Certainly, I would have to agree with him that we're providing the tax concessions and the royalty concessions, yet we're not getting the work, which is quite unusual, and hopefully it will change.

Now, specifically, when we look at the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act and we look at the definition of the total specified gas emission – it took a while to find this – I’m going to quote the gas emission target directly from section 3(1) of the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act: “The specified gas emission target for Alberta is a reduction by December 31, 2020 of specified gas emissions relative to the Gross Domestic Product to an amount that is equal to or less than 50% of 1990 levels.”

Now, section 3(2) goes on to talk about cabinet regulations and establishing interim specified gas emissions targets for the province and other items, but if we were to accept this amendment, wow, would this ever be a strong start in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in this province. It would be significant, to say the least, if we were to adopt this amendment A1.

If this was to be accepted – and I apologize to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder because I had other matters to attend to when this amendment was introduced – how does the hon. member propose to do this? Is this just going to be strictly through reductions in the energy sector, or is it going to be in the transportation sector? Is it going to be in the agricultural community with intensive livestock operations? Is it going to include the electricity sector, electricity generation or generation capacity? How is this exactly going to work? This is a substantial reduction.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any others?

Hon. members, we have before us an amendment moved by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, and the amendment is referred to as amendment A1. We’ll have a vote on this amendment.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I’d move that the committee rise and report progress on Bill 3.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathcona.

4:10

**Mr. Lougheed:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 3. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Concur.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**  
**Second Reading**  
*(continued)*

**Bill 16**  
**Police Amendment Act, 2007**

[Adjourned debate April 3: Mr. Lindsay]

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

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise and participate in debate on Bill 16, Police Amendment Act, 2007, in second reading in response to the Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security having introduced it and in my role of shadow minister to lead the debate. First, I wish to thank the hon. minister for meeting with me to provide my researcher and myself with the pertinent briefing points on the contents of this bill. I have to note that his staff were particularly helpful and accommodating, and for that I thank him. Second, I would say that my caucus colleagues are more than likely going to lend our support to this bill but are equally likely to move some amendments to make what is a tremendously good first step an even better piece of legislation.

Now, to start off, I would like to go through what we’re trying to accomplish here today. So what is Bill 16, and what are we hoping to achieve? Very briefly, it has two components. The first one, which is the more important one as well, is that it establishes an integrated investigative unit for serious incidents that involve serious injury or death that may have resulted from the actions of a police officer. So this special integrated investigative unit will conduct an investigation into the alleged incident or complaint and will make recommendations on how to deal with this particular incident and how to deal with the particular officer in question.

The second piece in this bill, Mr. Speaker, is to allow for municipal police services to utilize provincial sheriffs to take control of lock-up facilities instead of police officers themselves. So, as I say, the second piece is not as contentious. Anything we can do to free up the time of police officers to focus on more important things is probably a good idea. You know, those provincial sheriffs are available, and with proper training and the proper tools they can be utilized more efficiently, again, with the ultimate goal to free up time for our regular police officers to do more of the work that they’re entrusted to do. So the first piece is, I think, where most of the debate is going to be focusing.

Again, what are we trying to accomplish? The most important objective is to bring in some level of oversight, a mechanism with which we can investigate allegations of serious police misconduct or wrongdoing. Police officers, Mr. Speaker, are hard-working, law-abiding citizens who are entrusted with or given the task of maintaining order and peace and enforcing our laws and statutes. They are citizens just like everyone else, but they are special citizens. The majority of people have faith and confidence in our law enforcement personnel and always view them in a traditionally positive light. They are our neighbours and friends, but more importantly they are the ones we go to when we need to protect our rights and freedoms and enforce our laws.

Sometime they themselves even face serious injury or death in carrying out their duties. Their job is quite stressful, and the risks are great. However, as with any other profession, Mr. Speaker, there is the potential for a mistake to occur, for someone to go too far, for a law to be broken, or for this societal trust to be breached. Take a crop of apples as a simple example. However few bad apples there may be, they need to be dealt with or weeded out to, number one, protect the rest of the crop from corruption or illness, from bad influence basically, and, two, maintain the consumers’ trust that this particular farm produces quality apples that are disease free. This trust is necessary if we are to expect this consumer to continue to buy from this particular supplier. Now, I’m hoping that this analogy is clear. People have to continue to respect and co-operate with our law enforcement agencies.

Law enforcement agencies, on the other side of that equation, have to continue to earn that trust and confidence, and they have to deal with incidents where discipline is warranted and expected. In some cases, though, internal discipline may not be adequate, and even if it were, people need to be assured that wrongdoing is being

dealt with efficiently and quickly. Bill 16 is attempting to bring in that oversight component, where people can say: "Something happened. How can we deal with this, and how do we prevent this from happening again?" So there is a lesson to be learned.

Now, two years ago, in 2005, Mr. Speaker, in this very House we were discussing Bill 36, which also amended the Police Act back then. I want to thank, first of all, my honourable colleague from Edmonton-Glenora, who was then the shadow minister for Justice and the Solicitor General, for his work with the then Solicitor General. It was unfortunate, however, that when we were hoping to introduce an amendment to bring in civilian oversight to our police services, this amendment was rejected by the hon. government members. So two years later we have it here in a different shape, a different form, which is not bad. Two years is in some definitions long, but in other definitions – you know and we know that the wheels of government turn slowly – it's not too bad. So better late than never, basically.

Sir Robert Peel, who served as the British Home Secretary during the 1820s, basically the Minister of the Interior, the equivalent back then of our Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security, is considered by many people as the founder of modern policing. Now, he had suggested that the ability of the police to perform their duties is dependent upon public approval of police actions. So for them to continue to be effective in their role, they have to always maintain public confidence.

He also said that police at all times should maintain a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and the public are the police. That's basically going back to my remarks that they are citizens like everyone else. They have the same obligations, and they have the same rights, the police being members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to the duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence. So, basically, it's like we're all police officers, and we're all citizens. Some of us carry on the duties of police officers, and they're paid for that, but in essence we are all in the same boat. So that's what Sir Robert Peel said.

To take it a step further, Mr. Speaker, you have to look at police integrity and police independence. People argue that police can investigate wrongdoing internally and deal with it, which is probably true in most cases. But sometimes the incident is of such gravity or seriousness that an outside, independent agency or body has to be brought in to offer that assurance of impartiality and neutrality. So there is the need for actual independence and impartiality, but there is an equal need for the appearance of independence and impartiality because what we're trying to do here, again, is to maintain that trust and to maintain that confidence from the public in their law enforcement personnel.

Now, we've had incidents in this province where some concerns were raised. I have to admit that they're not too frequent, and that's really a good thing because, you know, it would be a totally different situation if every second day there was a story about some police misconduct. So I'm grateful in a way that they're separate incidents and that they're far between. However, again, it's the gravity and the seriousness of those situations, where there might have been serious injury or death, you know, undue force, or certain sensitive situations where there might have been, like I said, breach of that societal trust.

#### 4:20

So it's good to bring in oversight, but I would argue – and I'm hoping that other members of this Assembly might second my sentiment – that it has to be civilian oversight, and I would underline and highlight the word "civilian" because they have to be really in

the driver's seat when it comes to that special investigative unit. It's very useful to bring in other officers maybe from other regiments or other services to offer that technical competence. You know, we need to investigate, and maybe we need somebody to do forensic work. We need somebody to do detective work and all that stuff. So in that regard I'm not against having police officers from other agencies join or be appointed to that investigative unit. I don't mind. But they have to have certain credentials and certain qualifications, and we're going to talk about this, hopefully, in Committee of the Whole when it's time for us to discuss certain amendments and enhancements to Bill 16.

I would argue that, maybe, we need somebody from the judiciary, and we potentially need an agent of the Crown, a Crown attorney, to be there, and we would have to request at least two if not more civilians, people who are totally unaffiliated individuals, to come onboard and to sit on such investigative unit. And I would treat this, Mr. Speaker, as jury duty. We entrust jurors to participate in really big trials, and we expect them to conduct themselves with impartiality and to be fair. I think we should treat people who are civilians who sit on this investigative unit as such, as jurors. The way we pick them could be the same way: from the phone book or from the voters list or the tax roll, you know, those databases.

So I am going to highlight and underline the word "civilian" in civilian oversight. That is what I'm hoping this bill would allow us to do. It's one thing to have a special unit to do the investigation and to release the report and to issue, you know, recommendations or to suggest sanctions, but then it's another thing to say: "You know what? It was a fully public review that was conducted, and here are the recommendations." I think the value and the weight is a lot greater that way.

Some people might argue that the public is not qualified and they might not be able to collect or interpret evidence, that they might not be able to work with the parameters. But, yes, you can have people who would give them the expert advice. All they would do is hear the advice and then base their decision on the facts and the evidence that was given to them, again, just like we do with jury duty in any court of law.

The hon. Solicitor General, when he was announcing the introduction of Bill 16, was asked by people of the media and others what the composition was going to be like of this special investigative unit, who is going to be on it, and how much it might cost, things like this. I think the way he came across is basically signalling that at least, you know, four or maybe six people will be on it each time. I'm going to use this opportunity to indicate that they don't have to be the same six people investigating all police wrongdoing all the time. It's not going to be a fixed body; I'm thinking it should be case by case. We might have three or four simultaneous or concurrent cases, so maybe we should have four teams dealing with these, each in their own city or their own part of the province.

He indicated that it must include a former police officer or someone with a law enforcement background, and I agree. But it has to be from a different service, the service that is not being investigated, and with certain credentials and qualifications as in a minimum number of years on the force or, you know, having written the detective exam or something like that.

He also indicated that it might cost between \$2 million and \$4 million annually to administer. Now, I'm hoping that this number will be in the budget and that it will be a single line item for civilian police oversight. It should be allowed that should there be more cases, maybe we need to investigate them all at once or simultaneously, that there is not going to be a backlog created, where you basically say: "You know what? We only had \$2 million this year, and we can only investigate three incidents. We are going to wait until next year's budget because we don't have the money." I think



we should be prompt and swift. That's another thing that the public will be appreciative for because, you know, it's the government and it's an agency that is swiftly looking into an allegation and dealing with it. Timeliness is very important as well.

The province's police chiefs and unions representing rank-and-file officers I think are in agreement, and that is one of the tests that we have in the Official Opposition in reaching our positions on the different bills and stuff. We ask the stakeholders, and we ask everybody who's involved in this particular field that is being dealt with in a particular bill. We were pleased to find out that they don't have any serious concerns with this bill. It's a very positive thing that they don't mind being investigated by civilians. They have no issue whatsoever with being investigated by civilians, again going back to my argument that we're all police officers and we're all citizens. In that regard I think that that was a very positive thing. If they don't mind it, I don't think the government should either.

The findings of the review, that's another thing. I think that whenever this investigative unit is invoked, whenever they're triggered, there should be, you know, a time expectation as to how quickly they should conduct their investigation. What happens to that report after? I would argue that the default should be that the report is made public. Only in very select and limited cases should this report be kept within the confines of the minister's office. It should be the default or the norm for all those investigations to be made public because we are trying to learn lessons as to how tempers flare or how people take things into their own hands or how a single incident might escalate, to learn from them and to prevent those from happening again in the future. It's an invaluable tool for us to ensure that those incidents are not repeated. I would urge the hon. Solicitor General to offer the assurance that the findings of those investigative units are always made public and that if there's going to be an exception, it's going to be made on a very limited and very focused basis.

Mr. Speaker, I can go on and on, but I'm going to reserve more of my remarks for Committee of the Whole because I am hoping to introduce some amendments, which I hope the House is going to find very favourable. I am looking forward to other members from my own caucus and from across the way participating. Let's make a good first step and an even better piece of legislation for the benefit of the public and for the benefit of the police equally.

Thank you very much for this opportunity.

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

**Dr. B. Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to make comments in second reading of Bill 16, the Police Amendment Act, 2007. Now, this amendment comes after dealing with Bill 36, which made changes to the Police Amendment Act. It's interesting to see what the changes being proposed here are. It certainly doesn't go as far as we wish it would go, considering all the questions we raised about Bill 36 last year.

4:30

I would just like to make some comments about different portions of this bill. Section 46.1 is being amended to add a section. It deals with the chief of police reporting any kind of injury or death and so on or complaints to the minister, and there's an outline here of the different kinds of complaints.

(a) an incident occurs involving serious injury to or the death of any person . . .

Now, of course, any serious matter like that ought to be reported.

(b) a complaint is made alleging that

(i) serious injury to or the death of any person may have resulted from the actions of a police officer . . .

That should also be reported. I have no problems with that.

Then there's a curious statement that what also should be reported is "any matter of a serious or sensitive nature related to the actions of a police officer." Now, that raises lots of issues in terms of definition of what could be considered serious or sensitive. There's no interpretation here, so I guess it's left open.

I received some time ago a document from the Criminal Trial Lawyers Association, which represents defence lawyers here in the Edmonton area and also from other places in Alberta, and they were responding to the whole issue of oversight of police action. Of course, criminal lawyers are involved in that because they have to defend people in court, and they certainly express a great deal of respect for the work that police do. At the same time they are often put in the position of having to go to bat for civilians who feel wronged by police action.

In their submission they mention the fact that there are different kinds of complaints and that some complaints should probably stay within the police force for internal investigation; in other words, issues that are fairly minor like, for example, regulations about arriving for work on time or uniform care, personal presentation, even practices such as note taking, preparation of reports, forms of paperwork, and so on. These kind of issues internal to a police force and their action could even include, in the so-called Overtime scandal in Edmonton, one officer who was alleged to have uttered inappropriate words on a police radio frequency. So that is the kind of behaviour that should be disciplined within the police force. It's an internal matter. That's not the kind of thing that would be sent to the minister in order for there to be an investigation.

But, of course, there are middle-ground concerns that sort of fall between what could be considered a criminal action and what's considered an internal matter. Again, a good example would be from the Overtime scandal in November 2004. This incident involved a number of Edmonton police officers who were thought to have targeted two newspaper journalists, particularly vocal critics of the Edmonton police force, in hope that either of these two would actually be caught driving while impaired, so silenced in this fashion. That kind of concern is sort of in the middle, but it's sufficiently serious and of a sensitive nature to warrant a public investigation. So it's difficult. I mean, I think that would fall under 46.1(b)(ii) in that it would be considered a serious nature. But without any definition here it leaves it open and ambiguous, so I have a bit of a problem with that.

Now, once these matters are reported to the minister, then the bill states that then the minister "may do any one or more of the following," and then there's a list of matters. This amendment is going to add another option to that list, so instead of there being three options, there are four options. But I'm concerned about the "may" do any one of the following. In other words, there's not a necessity to investigate these serious matters. It's left open to the discretion of the minister to interpret the seriousness of the matter and then pursue one of the options. It seems to me that if there is a serious incident involving death or injury, that should lead to an investigation. So I think there's a problem with the wording there.

In terms of the three options the first option is that the police service would itself investigate an incident or a complaint. The second one is requesting another police service to come in and investigate the perceived wrongful action. The third option is to involve members of the public as overseers to observe, monitor, or review. Now it's being suggested – and this is the amendment – that a fourth option is that there be an investigative unit to conduct an investigation into the incident or complaint. I'd like to say a few words about the nature of that investigative unit in a few minutes. As the Member for Edmonton-McClung has pointed out, none of

these four options really deals with the important matter of providing for a civilian review, a civilian oversight.

So again I go back to the submission that I received a year or so ago from the Criminal Trial Lawyers Association, which really pleads for public, independent, civilian oversight of police in Alberta. Their summary of that plea is that they want to have investigation and prosecution of allegations of police wrongdoing conducted by a body with no connections to either the individual officers who are at the heart of the complaint or to the police force of which those individuals are members. So there's a whole question of independence and impartiality that is extremely important. When I was dealing with this issue with Bill 36, the information I received from the public, from those who are really interested in these kinds of issues, was that they're not happy with the way such investigations are carried out now in Alberta, that there should be a more independent, impartial investigation.

The Criminal Trial Lawyers go on to say that where investigation of any particular complaint reveals apparent criminal conduct and a charge is laid as a result, prosecution should be the responsibility of an independent prosecutorial agency. If it's only minor breaches of internal policy, as I mentioned before, then, of course, the police can deal with that internally as a question of discipline. But when the form of police misconduct is more serious and has the appearance of involving criminal behaviour, then there needs to be an open and public forum for examining these matters. It's a question of public confidence. The Member for Edmonton-McClung mentioned Sir Peel's principles. The police represent the public, so there has to be accountability to the public.

I find these options that are available to the minister to be, finally, inadequate. I mean, basically there are only two ways to go here. One way is to have an in-house model, and the other is to have a fully independent model: an in-house model, where police investigate themselves, or have another police force come in and investigate actions that have occurred or a fully independent model, where civilians both investigate and adjudicate the complaint.

4:40

Mr. Speaker, there is a good model, and I don't know why the Solicitor General has never seriously considered this model. There is a good model in Canada for such an open, fully independent civilian model, and that's the model of Ontario's special investigations unit. So instead of the investigation unit that's being suggested here, which is to "appoint special constables as investigators under the authority of the head of the integrated investigative unit," in Ontario there is a special investigations unit which is fully independent and a civilian oversight model which operates to oversee the police. Their mandate is to investigate the complaints brought to them and also investigate deaths and injuries that have occurred.

Now, this model actually came out of a task force on race relations in 1988 in Ontario in which many people stated that they were actually upset and concerned with the integrity of the process in which police conducted investigations because it was a question of police investigating themselves. So the task force recommended that there be new legislation that would lead to the establishment of an arm's-length, independent special investigations unit. That happened, and it received royal assent in Ontario in 1990. So, actually, in Ontario they've had long experience with this kind of investigations unit, from 1990 to the present.

The question for us in Alberta is: if the Ontario government could do this in response to citizens desiring the creation of such a truly independent civilian oversight, why can't the government of Alberta respond to the wishes of its citizens? It's a question of appearance. It's a question of confidence. I support fully the work that our wonderful police forces do throughout the province, but clearly in

the public's mind there's a problem if you don't have a mechanism in place that enables all the complaints to be dealt with by an independent body. So I find this bill quite inadequate, and I don't know why this kind of amendment is being brought. It doesn't go far enough.

I have real problems with an investigation unit that involves the appointment of special constables. Now, we just passed the Peace Officer Act, which recognizes a new role for people in Alberta: to be involved in peace officer activity on the highways of Alberta, handing out speeding tickets and so on. We've seen the special constables on the highway. I'm not questioning the ability of special constables to do that particular work. They have training to do it, and I'm sure they do work very well. But on what basis are they able to participate in an investigative process?

Some of them, I know, are former police officers who have retired and have now come back as special constables. Of course, they would have the training because they were trained as police officers to do investigations. But normally a special constable who has a number of weeks of training does not have a lot of – I don't believe any – training in the area of investigations because that's not the kind of work that a special constable does.

So I'm really surprised at this, and I'm not sure that I understand why this is here, that the minister has the option to appoint special constables as investigators. That's under 46.2(2)(b). I think when it gets to the committee, we're going to have to deal with that.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Sir, I just wondered what it was that the hon. member thought he was going to suggest be dealt with?

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

**Dr. B. Miller:** Thank you. I think that the least we could do is amend this because it's completely inadequate.

I'm not questioning the ability of special constables to do the kind of work that they're trained to do, you know. That's fine. But to ask them to engage in investigative work to find out whether the particular offence that is being reported is going to lead to a criminal conviction and that there's enough evidence to lead to a criminal conviction: that's not the kind of work that the special constables are trained to do. It's police that do that or former police officers, and there are plenty of civilians out there who have that experience because of their work in the past. So I just find this quite limiting, and I'm surprised to find it here. I'm not sure what the intent was with that.

Mr. Speaker, thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any others?

There being none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really take pleasure in speaking to this Bill 16, the Police Amendment Act, 2007, because I feel the intention is honourable. Bill 16 takes a step that the government had the opportunity to take in 2005 under Bill 36, where Bill 36 provided the framework for the minister to take three actions in response to any incident that occurs that involves death or serious injury to any person resulting from the actions of a police officer. However, as we know, these three steps are widely criticized for failing to provide the level of public oversight that was necessary in the wake of several high-profile incidents involving allegations of serious police misconduct in the following years.

So the Alberta Liberal caucus would applaud this move as responding to the concerns of the public. It's a step, however, that does not go far enough towards a truly open and accountable mechanism to deal with serious incidents and complaints.

The main problem with this Bill 16 is that the mechanism it provides to conduct independent investigations is permissive. It does not make implementing this type of investigation automatic, and that's a problem because at the very least any incident involving death should automatically trigger an independent investigation.

This is not meant to be critical of the ability of the police to investigate their members, but in real terms there's a conflict when a police officer investigates one of his colleagues, just as it would be the case in any other profession. If they were to take these investigations out of the hands of the police themselves by not allowing police to investigate police – it is critical to not only showing actual independence but preserving the appearance of impartiality and objectivity so that members of the public maintain confidence in their system. The public cannot be left with the impression that bias or favouritism or prejudice had an influence on the outcome of any investigation, especially when the matter involves serious injury or death or trauma to more than just the one victim.

I have heard from constituents who have brought forward complaints about police. It is clear that if they are to believe that the process of investigation is fair, we need to look at two crucial elements. The first is the need for actual independence and impartiality in order to ensure that the matter is being dealt with in accordance with the established procedures and values.

The second is the need to preserve the appearance of impartiality and objectivity so that members of the public maintain confidence in the system and will not be left with the impression that bias, favouritism, or prejudice had an influence on the outcome. It is essential that more serious allegations of police misconduct ought not to be left to the police themselves but, rather, conducted by a separate public body not connected to a part of the service being scrutinized. This is crucial to ensuring that there is neither actual nor the appearance of bias in reaching the appropriate outcome.

Ontario has a special investigation unit which operates to oversee the police who act in the province of Ontario. Their mandate is limited to situations in which death or serious injury may have been caused by police misconduct, but it's established as an independent, arm's-length agency of the government, led by a director and composed of civilian investigators.

4:50

So we have to ask the question: if Ontario could respond to the needs of its citizens by creating a truly independent civilian oversight, why can't the government of Alberta respond in kind to the wishes of our citizens? There should be a mechanism in place similar to the SIU in Ontario, that has a broader scope to investigate all complaints of police misconduct and to cause, where appropriate, criminal charges to be laid or disciplinary proceedings to be taken against individual officers who are believed, upon reasonable grounds, to have committed an offence or misconduct.

Having a body which is truly in fact and in law independent and separate from the police services which might be involved in any particular incident or matter would add to the overall credibility of the investigation and the conclusions. I know that I have constituents that have often asked how they can possibly believe that the police chief alone can make an impartial, fair judgment. We need a body that would be free from undue political influence. This would clearly be seen by the public at large to be independent, objective, and impartial.

It's generally accepted that Sir Robert Peel is the founder of

modern policing. Sir Robert Peel served as the British Home Secretary during the 1820s, and it was his act, An Act for improving the Police in and near the Metropolis, that was passed through the British Parliament, that resulted in the creation of the first law enforcement agency in modern history. The beliefs and principles of Sir Robert Peel are just as relevant and viable today as when first authored. In particular, these two principles apply directly:

The ability of the police to perform their duties is dependent upon public approval of police actions . . . Police, at all times, should maintain a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and the public are the police; the police being only members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to the duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence.

Those principles are very important, probably more so now when we've got such a multicultural society and people may come to the country with different ideas of what police are. It is in these principles, which should at all times guide police processes, that we will find credibility. It seems that the focus of police services has shifted from the intentions as outlined in these founding statements to becoming adversarial with the public.

The only way to restore the public's faith and confidence in the police is to realize that the best way for the police to effectively do their job is to work with and through the public, not to perpetuate the perception that the police are a separate entity and do not need any scrutiny in their investigative procedures. I am very proud of the police force in Edmonton-Mill Woods. We have a new police station, and it includes a community hall where different groups and agencies, not-for-profits, can have a space to meet without charge: a real effort to show that they are working to be part of the community and that they need citizens to be part of their work.

As stated in Peel's principles, police are "dependent upon public approval of police actions" to perform their duties. If that public approval is eroded, then it impairs the ability of the police to do their jobs in the best interest of the community. So I think that when a police officer investigates a crime involving a citizen, they enjoy the total independence that they would like. But when a suspect in a crime is a police officer either on or off duty, the public are entitled to that same total independence of the body conducting that investigation.

Thank you.

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

There being none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on Bill 16, Police Amendment Act, 2007. It certainly seems to be heading down the path that we in the NDP caucus were interested in in regard to looking for independent oversight of the police, but by that same token there are, I guess, some problems that I would like to perhaps point out to you this afternoon.

This bill seems to add one section on the establishment of an integrated investigative unit looking into matters where death or serious injury was sustained at the hands of police officers. That certainly is a good thing. The minister having the option to appoint special constables to the head of a unit for the purpose of conducting an investigation seems reasonable as well. The amendments, all told, seem to be fairly minor.

There has certainly been growing pressure throughout the province to implement some sort of independent oversight involving police officers. Under the current regulations police officers themselves conduct internal investigations, which can raise conflict

of interest charges from some people, throwing some element of doubt into the credibility of the impartiality of the procedure.

I know that the first attempt at reform was in Bill 36 back in 2005, which tried to outline clearer processes for complaints. Bill 36 as well mandated reports every 45 days on complaints. The police forces outside the immediate jurisdiction are now conducting internal investigations, and this is, again, a step forward, but certainly we could do better.

Among some of the noteworthy complaints that, you know, we've seen recently here in Edmonton were, for example, where quite a number of people were picked up and then dropped off in another neighbourhood, from Whyte Avenue up to somewhere in Highlands-Norwood, I think it was. Another thing comes to mind: the Whyte Avenue riots that we had last spring. Whenever these elements of doubt enter into the public's mind with regard to the conduct of police and their function, it doesn't serve the prevailing function of having a police force, which is to sort of represent the laws that they are meant to uphold and then be a deterrent power for people to actually look after themselves because, of course, there's not and can never be police around every corner. Rather, we rely on the internal mechanism by which people abide by the law because they've made some tacit agreement. That sense of law and order is a good thing, so whenever that gets cast into doubt, you are again casting into doubt the internal mechanism of almost all citizens of the province to abide by the law with that personal agreement that they have with the police and the law.

Looking around the country to see what is going on with other law enforcement legislation such as this, a special investigations unit in Ontario has a civilian oversight body that was established back in 1990 as part of their Police Services Act. In fact, according to that law, they cannot employ an investigator that is a police officer or ever was. So, you know, it's kind of going in the opposite direction from where this legislation might be going. This unit in Ontario is mandated to investigate all police activity where a death or serious injury has occurred, and at the end of an investigation in Ontario, the director can decide if a criminal act was carried out by the police officer or whether charges should be laid.

Now, this amendment does not explicitly state that any investigative unit is going to be formed as a civilian body, and the word "integrated" has not in fact been defined in this bill. So what I'd like to ask from the outset is: does "integrated" refer to a joint police force who is a civilian body, or does it mean to be integrated into the police service? And how does the word "integrated" affect the independence of this said board?

There are provisions for members of the public to observe, monitor, and review investigations, but that's a separate clause that already exists in the Police Act. So I think, Mr. Speaker, that the trick is to ensure that when an integrated unit does come into existence, the head of the unit and the investigators (a) have not previously been and (b) are not currently police officers. It's also important to ensure that the unit remain an independent body, so I would recommend that we look for the clarification on that word "integrated." For sure, I would like to see a commitment for a civilian-driven body. As well, I would like to ensure that this unit operates at arm's length, in an independent manner, and that it is perceived to do so by the public.

5:00

There are a number of changes that I see going on in the Solicitor General's department that I have some interest in. You know, this bill reminds me of the evolving use of sheriffs in our province and the evolution of their powers and their duties as well. Certainly, I think that as this evolves and changes – on which I would like to see

clarification too – it sort of makes the necessity for an independent commission to oversee police activities all that more urgent, I would venture to say. We saw last year about 40 sheriffs being hired to police the highways, and then we saw over the last few months the powers of those sheriffs increasing quite a lot. These sheriffs are undoubtedly doing a fine job, but again just to have some civilian oversight into their activities I think is absolutely necessary and in the best interests of the public as a whole.

I have been speaking on this when I was, in fact, the Solicitor General critic and saw the need for this independent civilian board way back probably more than a year ago. The circumstances have not changed, and as I said before, with the sheriffs in a greater role, I think that the necessity for an independent civilian board is even more important. So I wrote a letter to the then Solicitor General to seek encouragement towards this last year, and I believe that we are moving in that direction. My suggestion would be to go full bore and put that in as part of this Bill 16. I will be introducing amendments in that very direction.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Any other speakers?

The minister to close debate?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 16 read a second time]

## Bill 12

### Income and Employment Supports Amendment Act, 2007

[Adjourned debate April 4: Ms Pastoor]

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

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 12, Income and Employment Supports Amendment Act, 2007. I appreciate that there's an understanding of the need and necessity of this bill. It has to be supported to clarify the repayment process. It also deals with other issues, like the appeals panels and child support, which are very, very important. With the problem of overpayment it's apparent that tightening up the process seems to be something that's quite necessary. There has to be some sort of process of recovering debts that have been incurred and that are owing to the government, and this bill deals with that process. It's also talking about the issue of child support, which is very important, and the fact that the appeals process is being addressed, I think, is also a positive.

I understand the concern about the overpayment issue. It's important that we support integrity in our citizens and that we have a clear understanding that applications must be honest, but to me the real problem is that we need a system that ensures that people who are living in poverty have all the support systems that they need. There is much work to do in this regard, and this bill does not begin to address this greater need. My work with my own constituents has demonstrated that it's very difficult for somebody who doesn't have the wherewithal or the education to represent themselves and go after what they need. The appeal process is very difficult and intimidating, and in most cases they need somebody to walk them through the process, to help them.

It's good that this bill is providing the process where the director's decision concerning a person's right to appeal is communicated to the person in a number of ways. I know that that's through fax and

electronic and postal and so forth, but I'm wondering if we could, perhaps, look at some other ways that would make that process more comfortable and welcoming. The social workers and the people that work in the agencies that already know the individuals, perhaps they could be involved in a process to make sure that the individuals know what their rights are. A person has to know that they have the right to appeal, but if we don't go out of our way sometimes to let them know that, certainly they're not going to fulfill a 30-day requirement. I think that often the bureaucratic part of this can be just overwhelming and intimidating.

I know that this is really a housekeeping bill, which is changing things to bring it in line with the AISH Review Committee's proposals, and that is good. But, again, the real problem, if we're going to be talking about income and employment supports, is the poverty in Alberta; it's having adequate income supports and employment supports. We know that the gap between the rich and poor is getting larger and larger all the time. This gap in income between the rich and poor is growing. It's unacceptable, and it's going to have serious repercussions. It definitely does already have serious repercussions to our society, to our sense of community, to our sense of being valued if we're seeing the gap getting larger and we're at the bottom end.

So we need to take seriously the whole issue of income support. If we're really serious about helping people in poverty, we have to have adequate supports all the way along the line. These supports have to go with the person when we finally get them off welfare and into the employment world. But we are more concerned, it seems, about punitive action for the few that take advantage of the system or do not report everything that they're supposed to report and get punished because of that. We're more concerned about that than we're concerned about people who are actually trying to do their best. They are working and trying to live without a living wage in Alberta.

The title of the act, income and employment supports, suggests that we need to actually support these people and move them along. If so, we should have a proposal to index the welfare rates, the rates for people able to work and not able to work, a market-based approach, some way of attaching the rates of inflation and the changing standard of living that we have in our society in a way that is not arbitrary.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know that this is a housekeeping bill, and I certainly accept what it is intending to do, but it does so little. We need a vision that truly addresses adequate income supports and employment supports for individuals.

Thank you.

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

Any other speakers? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak briefly on Bill 12, the Income and Employment Supports Amendment Act, 2007. As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods pointed out, this is, in fact, largely a housekeeping bill, and it seems to oversee a wide range of income and employment opportunities for marginalized members of our society. Bill 12 deals explicitly with debt recovery along with the integration of the assured income for the severely handicapped program into the same structure. The bill seems to strengthen the government's ability to claim overpayments made to recipients and to their financial administrators.

5:10

The government was taken to court, as I recall, on how it collected overpayments to AISH recipients. Based on that application of the

old act and the interpretation of the AISH regulation, the government made an administrative mistake and overpaid AISH recipients back in the 1980s. The government ignored, I believe, its own regulations and aggressively pursued debt collection from AISH recipients by cutting back on their benefit cheques without offering a repayment agreement or going through any judicial oversight. The courts ruled against the government in 1999, saying that its actions were wrong. The government, however, continued the practice until 2004.

In 2004 the regulations were amended to ensure that no more than 10 per cent was to be deducted from payments. Then a lawsuit was introduced in 2004 as well by two recipients against the government concerning issues of overpayment and underpayment of AISH income and how that was being dealt with. The government settled the case, paying \$2,323 to each AISH recipient, \$1,105 to recipients under the Social Development Act, and \$698 to recipients under the Widows' Pension Act.

So in 2004 the government revamped its collection payment regulations to make them less onerous to AISH recipients, and this bill seems to be able to tighten up the government's abilities, means, and mechanisms by which it can collect money. This bill is timed to kick in once the current payment time period expires in March 2007.

It seems that the bill is just a way to clean up all of these things, and it streamlines and certainly simplifies the act. The lawsuit, however, was not based on a poorly written act or regulations but on an explicit disregard for the act as well as a misinterpretation of the regulations. So it was made far worse by the fact that the ministry seemed to act without particular concern for people who, I believe, are amongst the very most vulnerable in our society even though the mistake was the ministry's to start off with and the courts, in fact, did rule against it. I believe that it is more symptomatic of dubious management, really, than a poor act. As long as the management remains somewhat dodgy, then the end results will always remain bad regardless of how well written the act or the bill might be and might evolve over time.

So even though the government can collect the whole amount due in whatever amount of time it has, the government puts a six-month limit on underpayments to recipients. Amounts in excess of six months' underpayments need special permission. Okay? So I find that, again, to be somewhat dubious for the government to be acting in this manner. While the government seems to be justified in clawing back benefits, they're doing it against, as I said, some of our most vulnerable people in the province, and I think that that is not necessarily in the best practices of a democratic government.

So we do have some problems with this bill and some questions, that I would like to put forward in the near future, but at this time, Mr. Speaker, I will let that go till later.

Thank you.

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

There being none, any other speakers?

The hon. minister to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a second time]

## Bill 7

### Private Vocational Schools Amendment Act, 2007

[Debate adjourned April 3: Dr. Pannu speaking]

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

**Dr. B. Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have a few words to say about Bill 7. This is a very important issue in a sense because it

deals with vocational schools in Alberta in terms of providing eventual employment. We know that we have so many openings in our job force in the province that we need to have strong vocational training in this province in all kinds of areas.

I notice that the act has been changed to refer to private vocational training and not schools, because there are lots of training programs that wouldn't be considered schools. So this is all about approving those programs and the funding for those programs.

I agree with the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona in his participation in the debate on Bill 7, that these vocational training institutes are for-profit institutes; therefore, there should be special scrutiny of these programs. I mean, I have heard so many examples over the years of job training programs which didn't lead to any particular job. People invested money in a program which turned out not to be a program that was up to the standards that are necessary, that didn't lead to the job that they were intending to find after they graduated from the program. So there really does have to be scrutiny of these programs, and I don't think this bill really does much to further that scrutiny.

The one thing that it does is do away with the classification of vocational training institutes in terms of a class A licence, which refers to granting these vocational training institutes a licence because the programs are new and the programs have a student graduation rate and employment placement rate that are satisfactory, and a class B licence, which refers to vocational training institutes where the programs really are not satisfactory but somehow continue. To do away with this distinction, this class A and class B, would be in the interests of students who are investing their money in these institutes and their programming. It's clear that we have to have the scrutiny, especially the scrutiny to not continue to approve a program that's unsatisfactory. That's, I guess, an important thing to change.

Then there's the question of the licence not being just every two years, but there'll be a kind of rolling review. There are no specifics about that, and it's not clear whether that will be any more effective than what we had before. This is in the area of accreditation. Now, we all know how thorough the accreditation process is at the university level and at the college level. It's very important that universities, if they're going to continue to grant degrees, get the proper accreditation. Usually the accrediting bodies consist of professional bodies quite outside this province, and there is sufficient scrutiny of the programs. There should be some sort of accreditation process for these kind of training programs so that they come up to a very high standard so that when students pay their money – and these are mostly for-profit institutions – they should be able to get what they're expecting, and it should lead somewhere. It should train them for a particular vocation so that they can enter into the job market.

This bill is very superficial, making a few changes here and there, but I'm not sure that it does anything to really effectively deal with this oversight issue: the issue of accreditation, the issue of trying to raise the standards of education in our province.

Mr. Speaker, those are my remarks, and I look forward to more conversation about this bill when it's in committee. Thank you.

5:20

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

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, this is a bill that when one looks at it, at first glance, looks innocent. I have questions in regard to this Bill 7, the Private Vocational Schools Amendment Act, 2007, and hopefully they can be answered.

Certainly, when we look at removing a licence distinction between A and B category private vocational schools and removing the two-year term for licences and replacing it with ongoing monitorings, it looks like, you know, business as usual. When we look at what's going on in this province and what's going on outside this province and recruiting workers into this country and province, we have to be very, very careful about what we're actually going to do with this legislation.

Now, certainly, we know that there are many different agents recruiting workers across Canada for Alberta locations. There are also many agents recruiting temporary foreign workers. It is unfortunate that some of the temporary foreign workers are being asked for megabucks, thousands and thousands of dollars to gain access to this province. They're getting here, and they're finding there is very little, if any, work.

Now, there are people in this province that are offering training programs to prospective temporary foreign workers and also to prospective immigrants to this province. My question is: how are these trainers affected by Bill 7, if at all? Do their schools fit this criteria? I realize there are 140-some private vocational schools, and they're offering thousands of training programs in this province, but how is all this related?

Certainly, there are problems around the delivery of these programs. In fact, I'm going to get this investigated, but I was told that some of our red seal, interprovincial trade examinations are being sold to prospective candidates in advance, so they've got a heads-up on that exam. This is very serious, and I hope it proves not to be true. I'm told that the price for these exams is anywhere between \$350 and \$700. If by changing this training program we are encouraging this sort of activity, I would say that we have to be very cautious with this, and perhaps we should re-examine this. I for one am not convinced, after what I've heard and what I've experienced, that we can afford to have any of our training programs reduced. We certainly can't have confidence eroded in those training programs or those certification processes. This is, unfortunately, what I have been told is happening.

Now, I would like to support this legislation. When I have been reassured that my concerns are not valid regarding this legislation, then certainly I would be in favour of this legislation. But I'm not convinced because there are too many people going around, and for the training programs that have been developed over decades in this province, the standards are being eroded. I'm not convinced that this Private Vocational Schools Amendment Act, 2007, is not a further erosion of our standards and our training programs.

Thank you.

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

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills to close debate.

**Mr. Webber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the hon. members across the room here for your comments and your questions, and I hope to have answers to some of those questions in Committee of the Whole. I would call for the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a second time]

### Bill 13

#### Access to the Future Amendment Act, 2007

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

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you can see, I rose a little early. I'm just so excited to get this bill through the House just in time for our Easter break.

It's my pleasure to rise today and move second reading of Bill 13, the Access to the Future Amendment Act, 2007.

This bill deals with minor amendments to Advanced Education and Technology's Access to the Future Act, which among other things establishes and governs the access to the future fund. [interjections] I'm hearing members say agreed, but I will continue on with the speech just in case there are any questions.

The purpose of the access to the future fund is to support innovation and excellence. The fund enhances and expands opportunities for Albertans to participate in accessible, affordable, and high-quality advanced education. The access to the future fund is now in its first year of operation based on government-approved parameters. The amendments we're proposing to the provisions governing the access to the future fund will facilitate fully implementing the approved operational parameters of the fund.

The first amendment will expand the ability to make financial transactions from the fund. The scope of financial transactions will be broadened to allow the minister to use the fund to match private donations for scholarships administered through the Alberta heritage scholarship fund, such as the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board family of scholarships.

The second amendment concerns regulation-making powers. Currently the act limits regulation authority to specific initiatives that further the fund's purpose and circumstances for which a grant may be given. When the current regulation was drafted, it was felt that including broad operational parameters would provide transparency for eligible recipients. However, because of limited regulation authority, operational details could not be included. This amendment broadens regulation-making authority so that regulations can include other matters considered necessary to carry out the purposes of the act and fund. This change would mean that future regulations could outline the fund's operational parameters and provide additional detail to the role of the council that provides advice to the minister on the fund.

So, Mr. Speaker, these amendments are minor, but they will enhance the effectiveness and transparency of the operation of the access to the future fund. I therefore ask hon. members to support Bill 13.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Tougas:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a thrill to address Bill 13, the Access to the Future Amendment Act, 2007. I don't know what I can say about a bill of this magnitude. We're looking at an eight-page document, and four of them are blank. Apparently it's a bill of such huge importance that only the Member for Calgary-Lougheed would be entrusted to see it through the Legislature, to sherpa it through.

You know, this is the third time that we've had a bill from advanced education, and all of them have been housekeeping so far. This one is even just a light dusting. This doesn't even qualify as housekeeping.

**Ms Blakeman:** No Pledge?

**Mr. Tougas:** No Pledge. Nothing. It's just like brushing off things like this. This bill is so small, Mr. Speaker, I actually read it. That's how small it is.

**An Hon. Member:** That's a first.

**Mr. Tougas:** It is a first, believe me. It's a first. [interjections] It's okay. It's 5:30 on a Thursday. It's fine.

5:30

I could go on about the Access to the Future Act and what's happening with it. I don't think anything has actually come out of the access to the future fund yet, and there are still many questions regarding the administration of it that perhaps we'll get to at some other point.

I'd like to read over some of the comments made by the Member for Calgary-Lougheed to see what this bill is all about. Perhaps there's something in here that I don't see. I'm not sure, but I don't think there's anything else in it.

**Ms Blakeman:** You'd have to be blind to not see it. It's two sentences long.

**Mr. Tougas:** It's actually 54 words.

Anyway, I'm done. If anybody else wants to tackle this mammoth project here and take it on, I'm sure we could be here for days and days and days, but for now I'm finished.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any others?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed to close debate.

**Mr. Rodney:** Mr. Speaker, as you know, the usual custom at this point is to suggest that questions will be answered in Committee of the Whole, but since I didn't hear one, I have a feeling we're going to push this through rather quickly in the Committee of the Whole, not just today.

With that, I would ask you to call the question, sir.

[Motion carried; Bill 13 read a second time]

#### Bill 14

#### Pandemic Response Statutes Amendment Act, 2007

(continued)

[Adjourned debate April 5: Mrs. Jablonski]

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise and speak in principle in second reading to Bill 14, the Pandemic Response Statutes Amendment Act, 2007. I know that the sponsoring Member for Red Deer-North had spoken briefly in introducing the bill.

First of all, I want to make note that this is, in fact, an omnibus bill. It is amending four different pieces of Alberta statutes. Prior to Standing Orders being changed in 2003, I think it was, members of this House used to have 30 minutes to debate omnibus pieces of legislation, and I have to say that I do miss that. When you were amending several pieces of legislation at once, it was helpful to have more time to be able, at least in second reading, to go through more in depth. So I'll just note in passing that that's now been reduced. The second speaker, obviously, in the position I'm in right now, gets 20 minutes, but henceforth all others will have only 15 plus that five minutes that is allowed under 29(2)(a).

I want to say that overall I'm in favour of what's being proposed here, Mr. Speaker. There are a couple of hesitations that I have, and I will point them out as I get there. Just to put this bill in context, what is being predicted is that in fact we're overdue for a pandemic. What they're expecting is that in the next one to three years we will

be faced with a pandemic and that it could in fact be affecting us over a period of 18 months. That is because the infections come in waves, and you may well have some people affected in the first wave, but then there's a second, a third, a fourth, and so on. We could have pretty significant disruptions to our way of life over a period of 18 months. I think that's important to remember when we look at some of the powers that are being proposed as being added in this legislation and the extensions of time limits that are being considered here.

Now, the government is claiming that it needs flexibility, resources, and protections to be able to respond swiftly. The Speaker will be aware that I'm not a great fan of empowering the government with a lot of extra abilities to curtail its citizens, which is what often happens. But I'm also aware that we are pretty naive in this part of the world about how these kinds of pandemics affect us.

I've said before that I've spoken recently, actually in preparation for this bill, with people in Ontario about what they experienced during SARS and in Quebec around the ice storms and just how much that affected what we expect to go on. I mean, the idea that you could continue to get, in the case of the ice storm, you know, cash out of an ATM: well, no; because the power lines were down, they didn't work. So you weren't necessarily able to stock up on your cash and go out and purchase all these things that you wanted. In the case of a pandemic, I mean, the grocery store may not be open. There could be people that are quite ill, and the local corner store has to close down or close down, you know, for periods of time and reopen when everybody is well enough to work.

We just don't have a concept of what that's like. As government we have a responsibility to provide emergency services and, more than that, to attempt to get some resumption of normal servicing back, and that includes resumption of business services. So we want our public services to be restored and working efficiently as soon as possible, and we want to give some assistance or at least not hamper unduly the business sector from being able to resume their business. But this is going to be different, and we, I think, haven't wrapped our heads around what's going to happen with this coming.

Now, the one encouraging thing that I did hear as part of the briefing is that we may well get warning. It may well happen somewhere else first, and we would have some warning that it was coming to us next week or next month, which might be very helpful.

What is an influenza pandemic? I'm very grateful to the Public Health Agency of Canada for providing information. Essentially, a new strain of a virus emerges, and people have no protection against that particular strain, so it spreads pretty rapidly around the world, and this is what's known as a pandemic. It can have minor to severe complications. It can result in death in some previously healthy individuals, but certainly we're most concerned about our vulnerable citizens, who may already be frail or susceptible to pneumonia, for example, which could cause a great deal of damage to people and possibly even death.

We've had three pandemics: in 1918-19, 1957-58, and again in '68-69. So they're saying that we're basically overdue. We're 38 years since the last influenza pandemic, and they're thinking that we're well overdue for this. Nobody can tell us exactly when, but, as I say, they are expecting it in the next year to three years.

The single most important lesson I've learned is that communication is key and particularly communication between all levels of government. So in Alberta, for us, that's going to mean between local health providers, local hospitals for example, the regional health authorities, the municipalities, the provincial government, and the federal government, and that is all going to be really key. Where they have examined where they didn't do well, for example with

SARS in Ontario, the single biggest problem they had was poor communication between different levels of government and confusion and chaos in communications around what was supposed to happen. That was the biggest factor in either causing more people to become ill or not being able to prevent others from it or not being able to recover as quickly as they should have.

5:40

I think what we need to know very clearly are the roles and responsibilities of the different levels of government and the agencies that have some authority, and I would put that to the sponsoring member to be able to outline that for us. What is Alberta's role in this? How do they fit into that structure? What, specifically, are the roles and responsibilities that the province accepts?

That co-ordination needs to cover things like contracting for vaccine production, creating a stockpile of the antiviral serums, managing that stockpile system – because if you keep it too long, it gets out of date, so you have to be replacing and refreshing it – and support for quarantine services.

I was very surprised to find out how many people could be affected here. I'm still struggling to grasp this, but we are looking at between 11,000 and just under 60,000 people that could be affected in the province. That does seem like a lot of people, but that's what we need to get prepared for. Essentially, it's between 15 and 35 per cent of the population. Of course, with adequate and timely delivery of antiviral drugs, those percentages could be reduced.

There was a working agreement between deputy ministers of health from March of 2001. The roles and responsibilities of the federal and provincial ministers were supposed to have been outlined in that. I think that the minister of health should be co-ordinating – or, clearly, we'll want to hear that they're co-ordinating – with other governments to anticipate problems and, as always, to be able to have an ongoing monitoring in anticipation of additional problems. As always, you know, you've got the plan or the standards in place, and then you need to monitor it, and then you need to enforce it. That is an area where this government has faltered in the past, so I'm starting right now to make sure that those extra stages are built in and can carry along for us.

The provincial governments are responsible for mobilizing the contingency plans and resources, so it does start at the, sort of, health region level, moves to the municipality, and then up to the province, but the province is responsible for organizing all of that and, again, that the lines of communication have to be clear. Everybody's got to know who they're supposed to be communicating with, and that has to be well established prior to a pandemic affecting us.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at the acts that are being amended here, there are four of them: the Disaster Services Act, the Employment Standards Code, the Government Organization Act, and the Public Health Act. Under the Disaster Services Act essentially it's regarding the expiration of the declared state of emergency. Currently it's 14 days. They want to expand it to 90 days or to when it's terminated by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, whichever is sooner.

I'm a little interested in why the 90 days was chosen and how many times that can be renewed. The first time out we're saying that the state of emergency ends after 90 days, but can that be renewed indefinitely? If we are looking at something being in place for 18 months, do we keep coming back every 90 days, every three months, to take us through the 18-month period? That may well be appropriate, but I'd be interested in hearing exactly what the government has anticipated.



The Employment Standards Code. I'm actually pleased to see what's in there, and I'm pleasantly surprised. I have not pegged this government in the past as being particularly kind to employees, but what's happening in this is an amendment that allows an employee to make a written complaint for being suspended or laid off or terminated, I suppose, because they weren't performing their job because they'd been conscripted to perform duties by the minister. They may have been conscripted to perform duties that aren't what they regularly do, but nonetheless they're not available for their regular job, and I don't think it's fair that they get fired for helping out with something. So this amendment to the employment standards is, I think, a very good part of what's being anticipated in the proposed legislation.

The Government Organization Act is adding regulation making authority to the minister to basically authorize some people to do certain activities during the public health emergencies. Again, that may well be someone who doesn't usually do them. They might be conscripted to do something. I think we need the ability to do that.

Now, a number of amendments flow from the fourth act, which is the Public Health Act. Some of these I have some concerns with, and some I don't. For example, they're removing the term "physician" because a physician is included in health professionals. They often say: physicians or health professionals. Well, a physician is a health professional, so that's a redundancy. It's being eliminated throughout the act here, and I think that's perfectly appropriate. It actually does start to talk about health professionals as a team and as a sector, putting everybody together as a team, and I think that's a great idea.

There's a very tricky balancing act that comes in one of the sections that I'm going to watch very carefully. Essentially, it's allowing a physician to obtain a certificate of authority for noncompliance on an individual; that is, an individual who is refusing to have a test done. So a physician can get a certificate of authority and perform any test or examination that's required to determine whether the patient has a communicable disease, further detaining this individual, possibly, in a facility until they have the test results back.

I think there needs to be a very careful balance when you are restraining personal liberties. It's easy in times like this to let it get away from you. I think that we need to always be on guard and really work hard to protect people's personal liberties. This is a state of emergency we're talking about. This is a health crisis we're talking about. There may well be people who just don't understand how dangerous this can be for everybody else and that they need to be tested to see, you know, if they've been infected or if they're carrying it. I understand all that, but boy would we need to be vigilant about this because it's so easy to slip down the other side. So I will be persistent in making sure that that is applied in as balanced a way as possible.

There are new powers that are allocated to the minister. Mostly it allows the minister to do it without consulting with anybody. So there are all kinds of extra things that are added: suspend or modify the application or operation of parts of an act that the minister is responsible for if the minister thinks that the application of it may hinder or delay the action that they want done. Again, I think you've got to really work hard to balance this stuff.

The one that I was most concerned about is a clause that allows the changes, any action that the minister orders to not be made public immediately. In this day and age of mass communication and communication by, you know, cybermail, which is instantaneous, I really don't understand the reason for amending the clause so that they don't have to make these new orders public immediately. I

think there's some idea that it would be made public eventually, but I think it should be made public immediately. Most of the people know what the new game is, what the new expectation is, what the new action or order is, but also I think there has got to be an understanding that the citizens we are serving are common-sense individuals, and most of them will comply.

This government tends towards secrecy. They tend towards doing things behind closed doors. I do not understand why you would not have that kind of information out in the public domain. So I will likely be doing an amendment to change that clause because I just am not comfortable with it.

5:50

There is an additional section that I have no problem with that basically grants the chief medical officer the power to authorize someone to be absent from work if they're helping a family member who is suffering or if they themselves are afflicted so that people, you know, have the required documentation for their employment.

The last thing I want to talk about here is the termination of a public health order, and it may be that this is needed if the timeline is, in fact, 18 months. But it's basically saying that an order declaring a public health emergency expires after 90 days instead of after 30 days. So there are two kinds of timelines that are being talked about here, the first one I referred to and this one.

Finally, there is, of course, another power that's very sweeping that's been given to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, allowing it to make regulations basically regarding anything. For me, again, that always raises red flags. That's basically empowering cabinet to make regulations on whatever they want, and I think that always has to be kept in check.

The last thing that concerned me was removing the ability of individuals to hold the government accountable or responsible for their management and the choices that they've made, because basically there's a protection clause that's coming in here that would protect them from any liabilities. In other words, they couldn't be taken to court for the choices that they've made. I think, you know, most people act in good faith here, but we also as legislators and policy-makers and as government sometimes make whopping mistakes. I think it's important that we can be held accountable for that, so I'm not comfortable in completely protecting people and absolving them from any accountability on issues like that.

The issues I've raised, then, are the clear lines of communication laid out in advance and clearly understood.

I'm looking forward to continued debate in Committee of the Whole.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any others?

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

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a second time]

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the hour and knowing that members wish to get back to their constituents and constituencies to celebrate Easter, I would move that we adjourn until 1 p.m. on Tuesday, April 10.

[Motion carried; at 5:54 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1 p.m.]

