

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, April 18, 2007** **1:00 p.m.**
 Date: 07/04/18
 [The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. We confidently ask for strength and encouragement in our service to others. We ask for wisdom to guide us in making good laws and good decisions for the present and future of Alberta. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

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

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my pleasure to introduce two guests who are seated in your gallery this afternoon. The first is someone that many members in this House know quite well, Mr. Stan Woloshyn, who represented the fine constituency of Stony Plain in this Legislature from 1989 to 2004, and I for one am glad that he retired when he did. During that time he also served as government caucus whip, minister of public works, minister of community development, and minister of seniors. I also have very fond memories of sitting across the table from Mr. Woloshyn when he was president of local 10 of the ATA when I was a negotiator for the Parkland school board.

Accompanying Stan today is his grandson Tyler Hrynyk. Tyler is a very impressive young man whom I had lunch with today. He is a very skilled hockey player and springboard diver, a bright student at Lymburn school, and a future PhD in mechanical engineering. I'd ask that all members join me in giving the traditional warm welcome to our guests.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

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

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two visiting students from Yokohama, Japan. They are visiting our province for two weeks on an exchange program. They're here to see how western democracy works, so let's be on our best behaviour. They are staying at the home of Jean Easton, mother of one of our pages, and Mrs. Easton is accompanying them today. They are seated in the Speaker's gallery. The students are Takeshi Kuwahara and Makoto Otake. I ask them to please rise and accept the traditional warm greeting of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On your behalf I'd like to introduce to you and through you 12 grades 5/6 students from the Meadowview school, which is currently located in the Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock constituency, right adjacent to the Whitecourt-St. Anne constituency. They are accompanied this afternoon by teacher Rod Manson and two parent helpers, Aaron Wesenberg and Bernice Harrison. They are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you today to all members of the Assembly 19 very bright students from the Clear Water Academy, which is situated in the Calgary-Elbow riding. I understand that they're all very enthusiastic Calgary Flames fans as well. They're here today to learn about how the Legislature functions. They're accompanied by teachers Miss Janley Grant, Mr. Matt Sartorelli, and parent Mrs. Sharon Van Der Sloom. I would ask them to rise in the members' gallery and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Rev. Abbott: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It does give me great pleasure as well to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 12 students and two staff from the Ehpewapahk community alternate school, also known as the Erminskine Cree nation. We have 14 visitors today, including Paul Jespersen, the teacher, and Charlene Wolfe, the teacher's assistant. I think they had a tour a little bit earlier, and we got a photo. They're sitting up in the public gallery, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a great pleasure for me to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 50 visitors from Callingwood elementary school in my constituency of Edmonton-McClung. Those guests are visiting us here today to see us in action and to observe what goes on in this very esteemed Assembly. They're joined by their teachers and group leaders, Mr. Close, Mrs. Brown, Mr. Wilcox, and Ms Cassidy, and by parent helper Mr. Owre. This is an extremely active school in the constituency, and it's always referred to as the heart of the community. Wonderful students and wonderful staff. I even attended their concert three or four weeks ago, and I was really impressed by their creativity and energy. I encourage them all to rise, please, and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly two individuals seated in the public gallery. They are Roseline Richardson and Cathy Hilderman. Roseline and Cathy are workers at the Palace Casino and are currently on strike. They've been on the picket line for 222 days now, due in part to this government's failure to protect workers from employers who engage in unfair labour practices.

Cathy has worked at the Palace Casino for the past eight years and works as a dealer and pit boss at the casino. Roseline has worked at the Palace Casino since 1991 and is also a dealer and pit boss. She has an extensive background in the arts and brings a tremendous amount of passion to the cause that she and her co-workers have taken on. They are joined today by UFCW local 401 representative Don Crisall.

I would now ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Ms Tarchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if my guests are here yet, but I will go ahead and introduce to you and through you to the members for the record four guests that I have up from Banff-Cochrane today. First is Ron Casey, mayor of Canmore; Mike Western, councillor for Canmore; Don Kochan, acting chief administrative officer of the town of Canmore; and Eric McAvity, who is with the Lamphouse Centre for the Arts Society. If they are in the House, I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of our members.

Mr. McFarland: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure today to recognize a number of people up in the members' gallery. I would like this Assembly to recognize the volunteer board members from the Science Alberta Foundation. They are meeting with the board today. I'm sorry. I think I just stepped on somebody's toes here. Sorry, President of the Treasury Board. I met with one of the members early this morning. Maybe I will cede to the President of the Treasury Board to finish the introduction.

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Speaker, it just shows how important to this province the Science Alberta Foundation really is. They're recognized from north to south, east to west. We're just one big, happy, recognizable family here. I, too, had a very enjoyable breakfast with their chairman and vice-chairman. If the board is as talented and as engaging as these two, they must have a wonderful discussion. I would like to introduce them to the Assembly, starting with their chairman, Mr. Ron Kuchinka; the vice-chair, Chuck Shultz; the secretary-treasurer, Barry Travers; and their directors Paul Clark, Art Froehlich, Brad Klak, Gordon Olsen, Linda Palladino, and Sid Shugarman. Also with them is their CEO, Arlene Ponting, and their office manager, Regula Lewis. I would ask them to please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Ministerial Statements**

The Speaker: Hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, did you give notice for a ministerial statement?

Appointment of Alberta Senator

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have some very, very good news for this Assembly and for the people of Alberta and perhaps especially for Mr. Bert Brown of Kathryn, Alberta. As of 10 minutes ago Mr. Bert Brown became the second-ever elected member of the Senate of Canada. Bert Brown has worked for Senate reform for over 20 years. He was a candidate in both of Alberta's Senate elections. Nobody is more deserving of this honour than Mr. Bert Brown. Senate reform is a much-needed and long overdue reform of our national institutions, and I congratulate Bert Brown and his wife, Alice, on their commitment to the good of the province of Alberta and the good of our nation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:10

Ms Blakeman: Well, we weren't given any notice on this ministerial statement from the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, but I'll join in the congratulations that were offered, and I hope that along with this comes substantial reform to the Senate. Aside from election, I think we have long been looking for a better balance of the number of seats that are available across the country plus a number of other issues that need to be changed constitutionally before we achieve true Senate reform. I'm interested to hear of Mr. Brown's appointment.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. leader of the third party, in order to participate, we need unanimous consent.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Proceed.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, like the hon. Official Opposition House Leader, we did not receive notification that this would be a ministerial statement. I also note that this is not a ministerial statement within the purview of the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development.

With respect to that, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I would congratulate Mr. Brown. However, contrary to what the minister has said, he was not elected. He received an unofficial mandate through an extra-legal procedure in the province of Alberta, and he was appointed – he was appointed – by the Prime Minister of Canada. So he has not been elected.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to maintain our position that the Senate of Canada is superfluous, a centre of patronage on the part of both the Conservative and Liberal governments that have inhabited the government in Ottawa, and it should be abolished. [some applause] I thank the hon. members for their applause on that point.

head: **Members' Statements**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Henry Bergen

Mr. McFarland: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the accomplishments of a Little Bow constituent. Mr. Henry Bergen of Coaldale embodies some of the finest qualities Albertans are known for. Henry is hard working, innovative, and has an entrepreneurial spirit and a deep respect for the land. Over the years Henry has taken these qualities and not only created a successful business; he has made significant contributions to our agricultural industry.

Born in the Ukraine, Henry's family moved to Germany after his father was killed in the Stalin era. In 1948 his family emigrated to Canada. With his roots in Alberta and experience working in horticulture at the Lethbridge Research Centre, Henry went on to study mechanical engineering at SAIT in the 1960s. Henry combined these two disciplines and began to design and manufacture seeders that are used in zero tillage farming today. For those of us with a farming background, we know that zero till helps prevent soil erosion and conserves moisture.

To this day Henry Bergen's company, GEN Manufacturing, continues to provide farmers with innovative tools that promote soil conservation. GEN Manufacturing received the industry achievement award from the American Society of Agricultural Engineers in 2001. In 1999 Henry received the technical excellence award from the Alberta Society of Engineering Technologists.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to share with you that Mr. Bergen is being recognized not only for his work in Alberta but also for having positively influenced agricultural practices across Canada. In May Henry will be one of three Albertans receiving the Order of Canada for these contributions, and I ask the members of this House and all Albertans to join me in offering Mr. Bergen sincere congratulations. I think it's especially fitting that we acknowledge his upcoming honour this particular week since this is Soil Conservation Week. Henry's achievements remind us that we're all true Albertans.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Physician Supply

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's red-hot economy has created shortages in many fields, including the medical profession. While these challenges are daunting, this province has taken many steps to attract and retain doctors to serve the health care needs of Albertans.

Alberta leads the country in increasing the number of physicians. Between 2001 and 2005 Alberta increased its supply of physicians by 20 per cent, Mr. Speaker, second only to Prince Edward Island, at 25 per cent. The province has also developed strategies to recruit and keep doctors in rural communities. Statistics show that the Alberta rural physician action plan has helped maintain the ratio of doctors to patients in rural Alberta over the past five years. The Alberta rural family medicine network provides rural family medicine training opportunities to encourage graduates to choose rural practice once their training is complete.

Earlier this year the government provided additional support to the Northern Lights health region to address the critical issues of maintaining adequate medical services to residents of Fort McMurray and other communities in the region.

Alberta has also expanded education spaces for medical students and residency spaces for international medical graduates. In September 2006 Alberta created 30 new first-year medical school spaces, bringing the total to 255 at Alberta's two medical schools. This year international medical graduates represented almost 20 per cent of all medical graduates entering residency.

Yesterday the Alberta Medical Association ratified an amending agreement with the Alberta government and the regional health authorities. Beyond fee increases the agreement addressed physician recruitment and retention issues with innovative new programs that include a benefit that will recognize physicians for the number of years that they have practised in Alberta and special funding to address extraordinary increases in practice costs.

Despite enormous pressures Alberta has found successful solutions to make this province an attractive place to live and work for physicians.

Volunteerism

Mr. Webber: Mr. Speaker, the nonprofit voluntary sector is one of the most vital components of our society. Those who donate their time and energy without any expectations of rewards or recognition for themselves are true heroes. It is these individuals who help play a key role in enhancing our quality of life, which, as we know, is one of this government's top priorities. This week we pay tribute to these often unsung heroes by celebrating Volunteer Week. I would like to ask this Assembly for its unanimous support in recognizing April 15 to April 21 as Volunteer Week in Alberta.

Through a unique partnership between the Wild Rose Foundation and Volunteer Alberta our province has become a leader in honouring its volunteers. All across this great province events and activities are taking place to acknowledge and thank the many volunteers who play such essential roles in our communities.

This year 142 Alberta communities representing more than 1.2 million Albertans are participating in this week-long series of events. According to the 2004 national survey of nonprofit and voluntary organizations there are approximately 19,000 nonprofit and voluntary organizations in Alberta. It is estimated that the voluntary sector in our province collectively contributes approximately 214 million hours of volunteer time. This is equivalent to approximately 111,000 full-time jobs. The annual economic impact of Alberta's nonprofit voluntary sector is estimated at \$9.6 billion.

Alberta leads the way in the voluntary sector, and we can all take pride in this great accomplishment. Through the Wild Rose

Foundation this government supports Alberta's voluntary sector in many important ways. I encourage this Assembly to continue its support and dedication to volunteerism in the province. Throughout Alberta our volunteer spirit is contributing directly to the health and well-being of our citizens and communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

McClung Goes Green

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to talk about an initiative that my team and I in the constituency of Edmonton-McClung have undertaken as of one month ago. We call it McClung Goes Green. In essence, we're encouraging individuals, families, groups, and businesses to think about ways to cut down on energy waste and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

As far as we know, Mr. Speaker, we are the first and only constituency in the province of Alberta to make the decision to go green. We're hoping to reduce our constituency's environmental footprint. In so doing, people not only help reduce damage to the environment and to the planet; they can also realize some financial savings.

This stems from the realization that we can all help, and we should all get involved. It's not only industry that is to be blamed, and it's not only industry that has to come up with the solutions. We're all in this together.

1:20

The way we designed this was to have three challenge levels: poplar, shamrock, and jade. We have suggestions for what steps people can take to achieve each level, but we also allow them to come up with their own ideas and changes. A participant would start at poplar and move on to shamrock and ultimately reach jade. Poplar, or entry level, involves simple attitude and behaviour changes. Shamrock, or the intermediate level, is for people who are motivated beyond poplar and are on their way to jade, on their way to implementing physical or structural changes to their residence and/or workplace. All participants are winners and will be recognized. Once a year, however, the constituency office will be hosting an official green challenge celebration for people or groups who stand out. Their stories will be told and their achievements highlighted.

In terms of the ideas we're presenting, we group them under five general headings: natural gas, water, electricity, waste and recycling, and automobiles, all things we can control or make decisions about. I encourage members of this Assembly who may be interested in this experiment to approach me for details. Maybe we can spread this energy around and get more Albertans motivated.

Sunday, April 22, Mr. Speaker, is Earth Day. Perhaps all hon. members can start by evaluating what each of them can do individually.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Climate Change

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earth Day 2007: the science-based warnings about the fate of the earth can no longer be ignored. Alberta must take action now, yet our Conservative government, despite its claim to now believe the science, encourages uncontrolled growth and worsening carbon emissions in the coming decade. This is part of a consistent and willful ignoring of inconvenient science at least since the government of Canada report in 1991 on the risks

of irreversible climate change. We are at a tipping point on the planet if we are to avoid hundreds of millions of lives lost and uprooted from their homes, food and water shortages, and new infectious diseases.

Albertans have always been prepared to make short-term sacrifice for the future. According to the renowned Stern report, if we fail to invest 1 per cent of our GDP now, our children will inherit a failing planet. One per cent of GDP would be approximately \$2 billion annually in Alberta. The Alberta government investment so far is pitiful in comparison.

How would a Liberal government in Alberta manage this grave challenge? We would cap carbon emissions by 2012 and, with the federal government, move toward a 30 per cent real reduction by 2020. We would eliminate subsidies to fossil fuel development and give greater financial incentives to energy efficiency and clean, renewable energy – wind, solar, geothermal – while enabling carbon capture and storage technology to assist in the transition to a new, sustainable economy.

An Alberta Liberal government would establish, one, an all-party council on carbon emissions and climate change; two, strong public education programs; three, convert the natural gas rebate program to a green fund to reduce everyone's energy use; four, a province-wide composting and recycling program in every community; five, a minimum 15 per cent renewable energy for all new energy producers; six, rebates on energy efficient appliances and energy retrofits for homes, businesses, and institutions.

Alberta's opportunity as we celebrate Earth Day this weekend is for a bold new course grounded in a commitment to confront climate change, protect people's health, and create a new economy or be left behind by the world.

Dr. Bruce Naylor

Mr. Dunford: Mr. Speaker, I deeply regret to inform the House that our friend and colleague Dr. Bruce Naylor, director of the Royal Tyrrell Museum, passed away peacefully on Friday, April 6, 2007. Bruce leaves behind his wife, Judy, and two children, John and Connor.

Dr. Naylor was the driving force behind so many of the successes and accomplishments of the Royal Tyrrell Museum. We have been very fortunate to benefit from his knowledge and passion for the museum for the past 25 years.

Dr. Naylor received his PhD from the University of Alberta. A vertebrate paleontologist specializing in fossil amphibians and mammals, his accomplishments include naming a new genus and five new species of fossil salamanders. While a student at the University of Alberta he collected the jaw of a new species of primitive primate from the Paleocene of Alberta, subsequently named *Saxonella naylori*. Bruce was not only well liked and respected by staff; he was also recognized nationally and internationally for his knowledge and scholarship in paleontology.

Bruce joined the Royal Tyrrell Museum in 1982. Over the years Bruce and his team won many accolades, including recognition for their work with a gold Premier's award of excellence in 2004 for the ATCO Tyrrell Learning Centre project and two bronze awards, in 2003 for an advanced ticket management system and in 2000 for the redevelopment of the Pleistocene Gallery.

We extend our deepest sympathy to Bruce's family, friends, and co-workers. While we mourn his passing, we can celebrate his life and his accomplishments. He will live on through our memories.

head:

Presenting Petitions

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table two petitions. The first one is signed by 221 Albertans mainly from the constituency of Edmonton-Castle Downs, petitioning the Assembly to urge the government to "reconsider the location of the new Edmonton Remand Centre and to work with the federal government to relocate [it] closer to the Edmonton maximum security prison."

The second petition, Mr. Speaker, is signed by 89 Albertans from throughout the province but predominantly Edmonton and surrounding areas urging the government 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."

Thank you.

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

Mr. Bonko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have approximately 100 signatures from a petition that reads:

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.

head:

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to give oral notice of a motion to establish the standing policy field committees that we approved yesterday. I would move that be it resolved that the following members be appointed to the Assembly's four new standing committees.

- (1) Community Services: Cindy Ady, chair; Weslyn Mather, vice-chair; Dr. Raj Pannu; Jack Flaherty; Tony Abbott, Art Johnston; Thomas Lukaszuk; LeRoy Johnson; Rob Loughheed; Shiraz Shariff; and Dan Backs.
- (2) Managing Growth Pressures: Clint Dunford, chair; David Taylor, vice-chair; Ray Martin; Bruce Miller; Denis Herard; Victor Doerksen; Ray Prins; Len Webber; Gene Zwozdesky; George Rogers; and Dave Rodney.
- (3) Resources and Environment: Denis Ducharme, chair; David Swann, vice-chair; David Eggen; Rick Miller; Ty Lund; Len Mitzel; Doug Griffiths; Frank Oberle; Gord Graydon; Pearl Calahasen; and Paul Hinman.
- (4) Government Services: Harvey Cenaiko, chair; Mo Elsalhy, vice-chair; Brian Mason; Bridget Pastoor; Richard Marz; Neil Brown; David Coutts; Heather Forsyth; Alana DeLong; George VanderBurg; and Moe Amery.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 34(3) I wish to give notice that on Monday, April 30, 2007, written questions and motions for returns appearing on the Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In accordance with Standing Order 30 I wish to give notice that at the appropriate time I intend to move that

the ordinary business of this Assembly be adjourned in order that we may hold an emergency debate on a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the immediate and pressing risk to the health and well-being of the residents of Fort McMurray caused by the recent fire and resulting inability of the community's social, housing, and health systems to cope with the impacts of this crisis without immediate provincial support.

head:

Oral Question Period

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

Impacts of Apartment Fire in Fort McMurray

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A fire yesterday left 300 people in an affordable housing complex in Fort McMurray homeless. We can all be thankful that there are no reports of serious injuries. But Fort McMurray is one of the most expensive places to live in Canada, and the vacancy rate is virtually zero. This is going to have a serious impact on those 300 people and on many others. My first question is to the Premier. How many of the 300 people made homeless by the fire yesterday in Fort McMurray are children?

1:30

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, the minister of municipal affairs responsible for housing has been working very closely with the municipality, and he may answer all of the administrative questions with respect to this unbelievable fire. But thank the good Lord that everybody was safe.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do want to say that there were no major casualties or injuries, and we are very happy for that. There were 94 units that were involved with approximately 300 individuals, some of which included families. I can't give you an exact breakdown of the number of children because I don't know that according to age.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's well known that the Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo region is very short of doctors. My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. How many doctors were on duty at the hospital at the time of the fire?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, how could he possibly expect me to know that?

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The availability of medical services in a major emergency is straightforward.

There were already 400 people on the waiting list for affordable housing in Fort McMurray. Overnight there are now hundreds more in need of affordable housing. I guess to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: will the impact of this situation be that those 400 people who are already on the waiting list for affordable housing are now 300 spaces further down the list, or is there another option?

Mr. Danyluk: Mr. Speaker, just to address the needs of the individuals that were part of the fire, the Wood Buffalo housing authority has placed or has found temporary and permanent housing

for all of those individuals, and part of it is because they have 55 units that are coming on board at the Millennium centre, that is near completion. We also have the Parsons Creek Village, that has some units that are just about at completion, as well as the good, kind hearts of Fort McMurrans.

The Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Fort McMurray the fire at Edgewater Court has left over 300 people wondering where they're going to live now even if there are new units coming on stream soon. They're not on stream quite yet. Of course, the people of Fort McMurray are pulling together and coming together to provide every bit of help they can, but still these days housing in Fort Mac is in critically short supply at the best of times, and for the residents of Edgewater Court these are the worst of times. This is very real, very focused, and it tests this government's ability to deal with a crisis. To the Premier. Church basements aren't adequate. Families need their own cooking facilities, their own bathrooms, some privacy. What is the Premier doing, what has he done, and what will he do right away to find suitable interim housing for these folks?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, the question raised by the member is in response to, of course, the preparedness of the government in terms of disaster services. Again, I said that the minister of municipal affairs, who's also responsible for that area of responsibility, may want to answer all these administrative questions.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Part of our preparedness in the Emergency Management Alberta agency is to prepare for disasters, and the government has done that in conjunction with the municipal districts and municipalities. We need to prepare for crises or emergencies or disasters of such magnitude, and we have.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the government needs to prepare. My questions have been more along the lines of whether the government was prepared and what they've done in this regard.

Is the government prepared to provide emergency financial assistance for displaced people who have had to be put in hotels? I know that there are some who had no other options. And can the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing indicate to this House whether he has an estimate of how much that will cost?

Mr. Danyluk: Mr. Speaker, right now I don't have an exact number of the amount of money that it'll cost, but what has happened is that the Wood Buffalo housing authority has not only moved the individuals to different housing authorities but is also supporting them in the same way that they were supporting them in the Edgewater apartment buildings.

Mr. Taylor: But, Mr. Speaker, some of them are in hotels. They're not all relocated in new housing units.

The residents of Fort McMurray have rallied around to help the people of Edgewater Court, but this event is going to put a strain on other residents of Fort McMurray, on churches, on quite possibly the food bank, on other social agencies, on the Wood Buffalo housing

agency. Will this government be providing any emergency funding for social agencies to help them deal with this crisis?

Mr. Danyluk: Mr. Speaker, we need to understand that this is a disaster and that this is a situation where the community comes to help. Are we there to support? Yes, we are. Will they have a place to stay? Yes, they will. And we will support them the best way that we can.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Affordable Housing

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A recent rent increase in a Calgary-Varsity apartment complex has created great desperation. This is not a time for accusations; it's a time for answers, for action. I'm appealing to the Premier for dramatic, immediate intervention. To the Premier: do you still believe that it is unnecessary to tap the brakes of Alberta's economy?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, I don't know where he's going with that question, but, you know, the last time a government in this country tapped the brakes on the economy, all of us in this Assembly paid 22 per cent interest rates. Let's not forget that.

Mr. Chase: In this 297-suite apartment building many of the residents are seniors and disabled people who are on fixed incomes, including AISH. Many have lived in their homes for several years. This apartment building was sold, and there are no new rental units coming onto the market. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: what advice do you have for these individuals who are about to lose their homes?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, Mr. Speaker, as we know, the growth pressures that have taken place on housing have been extensive at this time, and it is, I may say, a factor of growth. We are trying to deal with those issues and challenges, and the housing task force has brought forward recommendations. We are looking at those recommendations, and we're hoping to deal with some of those challenges.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are two other buildings on the same city block that used to be apartments but are now converted to condominiums. My final question is to the Premier, who should feel free to call upon any of his ministers. What immediate solutions does your government have for Albertans who are suffering as a result of this runaway economy?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, may I try and supplement some of the answers we're providing? First of all, there is certainly great concern among the ministers that share the views of many of the colleagues on the opposition side that we should be doing something, and indeed this ministry does do something. We provide income supports for low- and moderate-income people if they're evicted, if there's a natural disaster. In the months from September '06 until today we've put some 9 million dollars into supports for people who have suffered just exactly what the hon. member is referencing. We spend about a hundred million dollars supporting these folks all of the time, but for those who suffer immediate disaster, we can get involved.

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

Disclosure of Leadership Campaign Contributions

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. A cloud now hangs over tomorrow's budget because of this Premier's failure to ensure open and transparent government. The Finance minister has failed to disclose his campaign donations for his PC leadership bid and has broken his own deadlines for doing so.

Dr. Oberg: A question of privilege.

The Speaker: A question of privilege.

1:40

Mr. Mason: Bring it on, Mr. Speaker. Bring it on.

Worse, the minister has continued to fund raise even while preparing tomorrow's provincial budget. My question is to the Premier. Why does the Premier think it is acceptable for a Finance minister to be seeking financial donations from the very same corporations and individuals who may benefit from his budget?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, raising funds before, during, or after a campaign is part of the political process, and, you know, the two opposition parties are in the red, in more than one place, but they're also in debt. I'm sure that they're raising dollars every day trying to catch up with their deficits.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, why doesn't the Premier see that with respect to a Provincial Treasurer preparing a provincial budget, which the opposition does not do, this at least creates the perception of a potential conflict of interest?

Mr. Stelmach: That's one of the reasons this government moves very quickly in so many different areas. One, of course, is with respect to the Lobbyists Act, the first kind of legislation in this particular House, followed by the fact that on a quarterly basis – a quarterly basis – all Albertans will know what transactions are made on behalf of them, including how much the opposition leader gets paid by the month because I'm sure that people are interested in hearing what he gets paid, but all those transactions will be crossed. That's one opportunity to see who is lobbying the government and then on a quarterly basis who gets paid by government. That's, I think, the best test that you can have right here in the province of Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, we want some action, not distraction.

The Premier is very able to try and get the focus on something else other than the fact that his Finance minister has not disclosed his campaign contributions, is continuing to fund raise at the very same time that he's writing tomorrow's provincial budget, and this creates an enormous cloud over the budget. Why won't the Premier get serious for a minute and address the question that's put to him?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, tomorrow there will be significant announcements in the budget. I want that member to get up in the House and to any capital announcement that's made say that there's a cloud over that announcement, whether it's a new hospital for a community that's badly needing it or going to seniors that require more help or to schools or to universities, to hospitals, to any of those. I want him to get up in the House next week and tell me where the cloud is.

The Speaker: At the conclusion of the Routine we will deal with a question of privilege with respect to this, and the hon. Minister of Finance will be given ample opportunity to present his case.

The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Affordable Housing (continued)

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, we all know that it is a proven fact that the development of new apartment units seriously declines when a government imposes rent controls. We are, however, living in extraordinary times that call for extraordinary measures. My questions are to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Will the government consider reviewing the possibility of regulating rent increases for a temporary period of two years to allow one increase in rent a year of no greater than 10 per cent of the existing rent?

Mr. Danyluk: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to say that as the Alberta government we are supporting housing and we are supporting rent supplements. We are providing over \$19 million to subsidize rents for more than 4,600 households. We are supporting with \$100 million a commitment to affordable housing, 3,700 units. We are supporting homeless shelters to the tune of \$23 million. We also have committed \$16 million for a new pilot project for an outreach program.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. To the same minister: in these extraordinary times that call for extraordinary action, is that enough?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can say to the hon. member that we are examining those exact issues in regard to the task force report. The government annually reviews the programs and the funding allocations that we have presently in making sure that we address the needs and the challenges that are involved in housing and the homeless.

The Speaker: The hon. member?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Timberland Investment Loss

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday's revelation that a mistake in the Ministry of Finance cost Alberta taxpayers \$11 million has left Albertans with a lot of questions. How long before this was discovered? Who discovered it? Who informed the minister's office, and when did the minister's office know? Yet the best that the minister could do yesterday was to hang out one of his employees as being personally responsible. Shame on you, Mr. Minister. This was clearly a breakdown in management and accounting systems. The buck has to stop at your desk, not at the desk of a civil servant. My question is for the minister. Why is this minister making a scapegoat out of one single employee when his department should have had the processes in place to make sure that this type of mistake never happened in the first place?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, a mistake was made. The timberland asset was purchased on May 30, 2005.

Typically, what occurs when we have an investment such as that: the American currency is hedged to ensure that if the currency goes down, our money is safe. Unfortunately, the hedge was not made until September 22. During that time frame the American dollar changed significantly and caused the loss. I will say, though – and I think this is very important – on the timberland investment that since that time the rate of return has been 36 per cent, \$61 million.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, then, why did we have to put \$7 million into it last month in supplementary supply?

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister said that there's been a huge amount of discussion on this issue, but I haven't been aware of it. I'm the one asking questions. We're not getting answers. It's like trying to pull hens' teeth. Why was this \$11 million mistake not brought up in the Department of Finance annual report, in the Auditor General's annual report? It wasn't discussed in the Heritage Savings Trust Fund Committee when timberland was discussed. Why was it buried? Where is the openness and transparency?

Dr. Oberg: I do believe that there were supplementary estimates that were brought forward about a month ago in which this was part of it.

Mr. R. Miller: Well, Mr. Speaker, I learned this morning that the Auditor General's office had a series of meetings with department officials on this issue. There were apparently several reports made, yet none was ever made available to the public. Alberta taxpayers have been kept in the dark. My question again is for the Minister of Finance. Can the minister assure this House and all Albertans that there was not in any way, shape, or form any influence from department officials to the Auditor General's office to keep this file quiet?

Dr. Oberg: Yes.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Bullying

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know from speaking with parents and children from my constituency that bullying and harassment leave scars that last a lifetime. Bullying poisons the school environment for everyone. Increasingly we have been hearing about serious incidents of bullying in our schools. Some cases get so bad for a victim that they turn to suicide as seen when a 14-year-old girl in B.C. hanged herself. Her suicide note read: if I try to get help, it will get worse; they are always looking for a new person to beat up, and they are the toughest girls. My questions are all to the Minister of Education. Would the minister consider a provincial antibullying/harassment policy with zero tolerance?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, I hope that all of our schools in the province have a zero tolerance antibullying policy. The issue of bullying is not just one for schools; it's one for society. Students don't just learn from other students. They learn from all of us. If they see us doing things that are inappropriate, I'm afraid they're going to be doing some things that are inappropriate. So we all have a role to play.

Mrs. Forsyth: Would the minister consider a reporting mechanism so students can report bullying and harassment and ensure that it remains confidential?

Mr. Liepert: In May of 2006 we launched a toll-free, 24-hour helpline for students who were struggling with bullying to get advice, information, and support. There are crisis centre counsellors who answer this helpline. They're trained, and they provide information to any student who is suffering from the inappropriate behaviour of others. It is policy, as far as I know, that this would remain anonymous, and any student should feel comfortable contacting that line.

1:50

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister enact a provincial law that prohibits bullying and harassment on school property, at school-sponsored programs or activities, on a school bus, or through the use of a computer in the school system?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess I've always believed that you can't legislate against stupidity, and to me bullying is stupid. I go back to what I referred to in my first answer. This is a greater issue than just in schools. As a society, whether it's on the streets, whether it's in hockey rinks, we should make sure that we don't tolerate any kind of behaviour such as bullying. However, if the hon. member has suggestions relative to legislation that in fact could work, I'd certainly be open to that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Royalty Revenues

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On August 17, 2005, Greg Stringham from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers e-mailed the Minister of Energy of that day asking him to provide comments, corrections, or changes to a document that CAPP was creating to convince Albertans that the royalty system worked great. My first question is to the Premier. Whose interest is this government standing up for? Is it CAPP, or is it the owners of the natural resources of this province, the people of the province?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, the responsibility of this government of course is to represent all Albertans, and that's what we're doing.

Mr. MacDonald: The government's own documents show that from 1995 through to 2003 the effective royalty rate for oil averaged 16.42 per cent and for natural gas 17.2 per cent. Now, my question again is to the Premier: given that your government has failed so badly in meeting its own goals of 20 to 25 per cent of royalties, how much money have Albertans lost due to your government's failure to collect a fair and balanced amount under the royalty program?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, my government is conducting a very independent royalty review not only of oil sands but conventional oil and gas and coal-bed methane. That information will be very public, and it'll be transparent, again trying to find the balance between Albertans that are owners of the resource and, of course, those individuals and companies that make multibillion dollar investments in this province in a very volatile marketplace.

Mr. MacDonald: Again, this hon. member was part of the last government as well. Things are bigger in Texas, including the amount collected on oil and natural gas royalties. Yesterday the Minister of Energy indicated that Texas was the best jurisdiction for Alberta to be compared to in terms of oil- and gas-producing states.

In a report prepared for Alberta Energy by Wood Mackenzie, it is suggested that Texans receive 25 per cent in royalties. My question to the Premier: why are Albertans getting so little when Texans get so much in royalties?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, that hon. member was a member of the opposition at that time. So what's he saying? He didn't follow up on his duty, I suspect. [interjections]

In light, of course, of not upsetting him a bit and creating more disturbance in the House, that's the purpose of the royalty review. It will be completed by August, and all Albertans will have that information in a very transparent manner.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Health Care Funding

Mr. Graydon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A two-year agreement has been reached between the Alberta government, the Alberta Medical Association, and the regional health authorities. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Coming from a region that has faced and continues to face a chronic shortage of physicians, I'm wondering if this deal will help cure the shortage of physicians in the province.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very hopeful that this agreement will help us with the issue of physician shortage. First of all, hopefully, members of the House will know that members of the AMA voted 91 per cent in favour of the agreement over the last two weeks. So the agreement that will now be ratified and in place signals overwhelming support by physicians to work enthusiastically with government, health regions, and all stakeholders to advance primary care reform, improve productivity and sustainability of the system. Every province is facing a shortage of physicians, so this agreement will help to build on our past success. We've attracted 250 new physicians in the past year. The retention bonuses that are available to physicians will assist us in retaining . . .

Mr. Graydon: To the same minister: how will the new clinical stabilization initiative, which is part of the agreement, help address the extraordinary expenses and increases in physician practice costs across the province? How will it help communities that have these very serious health system issues?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, a very important part of this new agreement is the clinical stabilization initiative, and that will help in two ways. First of all, it will help us to deal with specific costs in regions where higher costs have occurred such as in Grande Prairie or Fort McMurray or those areas to target resources to those specific areas. It will help with clinical practice. So those doctors who are practising in the community and have costs rising but who, because we have a single-payer system, don't have the ability to raise their fees to cover those rising costs, we can assist them in this way. It should not detract, however, from the responsibility of the AMA to rebalance their fees as well so that internal to the agreement on their side of the agenda they can make sure that those doctors facing higher costs and higher pressures get the higher increases.

Mr. Graydon: To the same minister. A goal of every member of this Assembly is to advance primary care in our province. I would ask the minister if this new agreement will help in the advancement of that primary care.

Mr. Hancock: One of the most important initiatives that's been undertaken in this province is the primary care networks. There are in excess of 19 primary care networks now serving over a million Albertans and involving 900 physicians but, most importantly, involving those 900 physicians in teams with other health care professionals to lever the full value of our health care professionals in our communities and to broaden the access and the service that's being shared. Under this new agreement there will be \$175 million set aside to assist in the establishment of more primary care networks and to expand those networks so that they involve more health care professionals acting to the full extent of their capability and expertise.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Police Funding

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday at an AUMA session, which I attended along with four other members of the Alberta Liberal caucus, the main concern discussed was crime. The mayor of St. Paul was especially concerned that in his community the crime rate was going up, yet because St. Paul's population was sitting at 5,061, his town was forced under the Police Act to bear the full policing costs. At \$900,000 per year for a town with a small budget this is a major burden. To the Solicitor General: given that St. Paul is experiencing a rapid escalation in crime, especially with crystal meth, what is the minister going to do to help St. Paul deal with this very serious problem?

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

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member knows, revenues to police agencies have gone up over 20 per cent in the last two years. We've put more than 280 new officers on the street and also introduced a number of programs because it's not only just a matter of more police officers; it's a matter of those police agencies working together. I would ask the hon. member to stay tuned to the budget, and we'll see what's in store for next year.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 280 new officers were the first increase since the early '90s.

Crime concerns in St. Paul are shared by other rural communities such as Westlock, Redcliff, and Morinville. They all have populations exceeding 5,000 but just barely, and they now have to pay full policing costs. Their small rise in population does not translate into any significant growth in their tax base. The mayor of St. Paul joked that he would put 61 people on a bus to another community so that he can get his police budget. Police funding should be more equitable. It doesn't make sense that a town with 5,001 has to pay; a town with 4,999 does not. What does the minister have in mind to address this funding flaw? Where does he stand on this issue?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Police funding for communities over 5,000: when they reach that number, they're at a point where we believe that they can sustain their own police force. They have an option to conduct their own policing through an agency of their own, or they also have an opportunity to get a contract with the RCMP. When they reach 5,000, we give them the opportunity over two years to put a policy in place. I would also mention that the police funding formula works very well in the province of Alberta, but at the same time we also do review it, and we will continue to review it, to make sure it works well for all Albertans.

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the government was providing enough policing, why would every mayor, reeve, and organization like the AUMA say that addressing police funding inadequacies is one of their top priorities? The AUMA would like to see the province pay the full policing costs for the first 5,000 residents in every municipality and \$35 per capita for those exceeding 5,000 in population. How can the minister say that his government takes crime seriously when every year, despite the pleas of municipal government leaders, this government fails to increase the police funding formula to address the rapid rise in criminal activity both in frequency and severity? Three years in a row they're asking for the same thing.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me say again: I already addressed the issue on police funding in regard to the AUMA and their request. We're quite familiar with that request; I have met with them. But keep in mind that there isn't only one taxpayer in the province, and the majority of work that's done in these municipalities is done for the citizens of those municipalities and should be paid for by the municipal taxpayer.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Affordable Housing

(continued)

Mr. Martin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The members here were asked to participate in the housing task force, and we did and were glad to do it because it would be good for all Albertans. It was extremely disappointing, though, yesterday to see the Premier, in being scammed, say that he is outright going to reject one of the recommendations, mainly dealing with rent guidelines. We haven't even had the report made public yet. We've mentioned this: thousands of people are suffering and hurting because of gouging and rapid rent increases. My question to the Premier is simply this: will the Premier take off his ideological glasses and bring in temporary – and I stress temporary – rent guidelines so that we can get through this crisis?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that housing is an issue in the province of Alberta. We recognized that very early, and that's why we moved very quickly with the report. I do thank both parties for contributing to the report, for being members of the committee. The report is almost complete in terms of the government responses to all of the recommendations that have come forward. It will be tied, of course, to the budget. Yesterday in the

scrum I said to the media that we are going to of course release that report with all its recommendations on or around the budget delivery.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that there are a lot of other things in the report. I was there. But the point that we've been trying to make is that there are thousands of people here – and some of the MLAs, I know, from Calgary are getting these same calls. We're saying: in the short run what's going to happen to these people? If you reject immediately because of an ideology something that's so important in the short run, what can we say to these people that are facing evictions, who are one day away from being homeless? Is the answer as the Premier said yesterday: go to the government, and we'll put you up at the Super 8, the Super 8 suggestion? Is that the answer to this?

Mr. Stelmach: That's a very good question. Here's a government that's compassionate. As a government on behalf of Alberta taxpayers we actually put people that have no place to live in a hotel. Where else are you going to find the space on a very quick, ready basis? The taxpayer covers those costs. I heard across the way some of the opposition members say: well, that's too expensive. Well, it's a lot less expensive, Mr. Speaker, to pay \$100 or \$120 a day to keep a family intact in some proper living accommodations than putting them – where? In a tent?

Mr. Martin: Mr. Speaker, what I'm trying to get to is this: as compassionate as the Premier is, if he wants to even be more compassionate to more people, to thousands of Albertans, he will recognize, you know, and allow the triumph of ideology over common sense not to prevail and say in the short run: we need rent guidelines. I come back to the minister. Let's talk about rent guidelines, not the other things that are in the report. Why is the Premier outright rejecting this publicly before the report has even come forward?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, while the report was being reviewed there were discussions with respect to rent controls. They're twisting words and saying guidelines. What are guidelines? They're rent controls. All the evidence that has come forward doesn't matter. Even from the Liberal province of Ontario there has been a monumental change in policy because they found out that with rent controls, controlling to that limit that they wanted, there was no response in terms of building additional low-income rental units in that province. We want to learn from their experience, not fall into the same trap.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An issue has been presented to me by my vulnerable constituent who used to be employed but can no longer work due to severe disability. As far as I've been told, the AISH program allows for a monthly earned income of up to \$400 without any clawback, but income from other sources is deducted from the basic AISH cash benefit. My question today is to the hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. Will you consider a change in policy to make it fairer by allowing vulnerable AISH recipients to keep the first \$400 of their total income regardless of the sources?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This program, AISH, was developed to target and ensure that the needs and the resources were put to those in greatest need. When that program was developed, it was looked upon that the federal and provincial governments would work together. So it wasn't a matter of eliminating or replacing a federal government program; it was to supplement to ensure that all AISH recipients would receive a level amount of income. That's exactly what this does accomplish. So whether there are other federal programs, be it CPP or Workers' Compensation Board on the provincial side, they were meant to work together to ensure that all AISH recipients would receive . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As far as I've been told, the Alberta AISH policy states that CPP income is considered at the gross level because income tax deductions are not mandatory, and the CPP guide states that the Canada pension plan disability pension is considered taxable income. So my question is to the same minister. Given that a few dollars make a difference for our vulnerable Albertans, will you consider changing the way that we calculate incomes of the AISH recipients with CPP income at its net level?

Mr. Melchin: Mr. Speaker, once again, the design – and I would say still the best design – is to ensure that our federal and provincial programs do work together, that we will act as a supplement to the federal program, not to replace one or the other. That said, two years ago we did increase the level of income that an AISH recipient could receive, up to \$400 as a single and up to \$975 for couples or single parents. That was all to acknowledge: how do we get rid of some of the barriers so that those that can work can start earning some additional funds? We will continue to work with every person – they are individuals – to help them find employment, find the opportunities that they can if they're able.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the same minister. Given that our vulnerable AISH recipients are faced with costs rising, are you considering to increase the income threshold before clawback and the basic AISH payment?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Melchin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There has been a lot of work done on this question. Previous reviews looked at those recipients of AISH, their monthly payments. Some of these are budget questions, so we'll have to stay tuned to talk about those in the budget. I'd be happy to deal with that when this department's estimates come up before the House. I'd be happy to answer those questions at that time.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

2:10

Toxin Screening

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is essential for governments to understand the impact of decisions on health and well-being of the population; however, it makes more sense to require all

major government, policy, and funding decisions to undergo an assessment to determine the impacts on health and environment before the decisions are made. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Given that there is no commitment to modify industrial development or government policies based on the results of the toxin screening of 30,000 people, why is this screening being done?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, the screening program that's happening is actually a research program that's being done to understand the baseline in terms of the effect of environmental impact on toxicity levels, and it's being done on the 30,000 blood samples that have already been collected. So it's basically a background review, a research process that's undertaken to provide an understanding of where we are with respect to the impact of toxicity on individuals.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. To the same minister: will the minister assure Albertans that environmental pollutants from coal-powered plants and oil sands upgraders will be included in the list of toxins for which tests are being done? Let's make it relevant to Alberta.

Mr. Hancock: I would hope that everything we do in our department, Mr. Speaker, is relevant to Alberta.

This process that's being undertaken here is clearly a pilot study, a research study that's being undertaken to see if there's been an impact on toxicity levels. Obviously, in the approval processes that go on with respect to new industrial approval and new industrial developments, Health and Wellness will be working with other departments of government and particularly with Environment and Sustainable Resource Development to ensure that the health and wellness aspects of any future development are part of the considerations.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Well, thank you. Again to the same minister. We still haven't seen a study protocol that would explain the design and objectives and answer many of the concerns that Albertans have like why was the decision made to analyze the results by region rather than by proximity to major industrial developments, or why are only pregnant women and children being screened rather than seniors or adults? So my question to the minister is: will the minister make the study protocol public immediately?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I will undertake to look at the protocol behind the study. Obviously, this is a study that was embarked upon before I became minister. I will look at the protocol behind it, determine what the nature of that protocol is and, if appropriate, make it public.

But I should respond to the issues that are being raised. This is a research program that was being done to take a look at toxicity levels in Albertans. It's important for us to know and understand what's happening as a result of changes to the environment from whatever cause, not just industrial causes but whatever cause. The purpose, as I've said over and over again since this came up, of using the samples of pregnant women is because for pregnant women the blood samples in prenatal care go to the provincial lab on an ordinary basis.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Municipal Taxation

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Recently our Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has been presented by a submission report negotiated by the Minister's Council on Municipal Sustainability, which consisted of Mayor Bronconnier, Mayor Mandel, and the presidents of AAMD and C and AUMA. As a result of this report there are concerns in the community now that the minister may be considering some new taxation powers, particularly property transfer tax. My question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: have you decided to allow municipalities new taxation authority relative to transfers of property?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I want to say that the minister's council's report on sustainability was exactly that: it was a report by that council to my ministry. At that time there were 12 recommendations that were brought forward from the \$1.4 billion replacement of the education tax to the energy revenue, or resource taxation. But, in all, it is now before this government to look at, and there's no decision on that direction. I have to reiterate that the report asked for the government to allow municipalities to tax.

Mr. Lukaszuk: In response to that, to the same minister, Mr. Speaker: since there are many good recommendations in this report, can the minister tell us what process will take place prior to decisions being made on each individual recommendation of the report?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, there are good recommendations in that report, and as it goes through the process, the ones that are able to be acted on and that this government feels are important to be acted on will be acted on. For those that need to be consulted on, we are looking at consulting with the municipalities from after the budget through the summer and into fall.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Consequently, to the same minister: as a result of this process and as a result of these recommendations, can our municipalities and particularly the capital region count on better planning processes and more stable funding for such municipalities?

Mr. Danyluk: Mr. Speaker, one of the major recommendations in that report was the issue of planning. I as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing feel that planning is critical for municipalities to be able to look in a positive, unified direction, to maintain sustainability, to have predictability. When we talk about regional planning, I think it is very important, but at the same time we have not made recommendations and responses to that report as of yet.

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

School Transportation in Calgary

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Within the past few weeks the school bus shortage in Calgary has gone from bad to worse. The work-to-rule campaign by the city transit workers has further diminished the number of available buses, leaving parents and administrators scrambling to get kids to school on time. To the Minister of Education: what has the minister done to assist Calgary school boards to address these increased shortages?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raised the question around school bus driver shortages several weeks ago. I'd like to report that, actually, the situation has improved significantly, where the school bus companies in Calgary have actually filled a number of the vacancies, and the issue is not nearly as serious as it was several weeks ago.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Flaherty: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government's failure to build schools in new and growing communities has put tremendous strain on school boards' transportation budgets. The recent shortage of buses proves that the current situation is unsustainable. To the Minister of Education: will the minister admit that the failure to build schools in Calgary has put unsustainable pressures on the school transportation system in Calgary?

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, this government this year will launch several initiatives to get schools built where kids live, and we'll be looking at all kinds of arrangements to get those schools built. I agree with the hon. member. It makes no sense to be paying twice, when, first of all, students are inconvenienced because they can't go to school in their own neighbourhoods, and secondly, we're paying transportation costs. So we're going to be looking at some creative, alternative ways of getting schools built where kids live.

Mr. Flaherty: Well, Mr. Minister, would you answer this question honestly? It's from my daughter. School boards have suggested that without more government funding for transportation, higher school fees to cover the cost will be the only way to make ends meet. To the Minister of Education: is it the minister's position that parents should be made to pay for the failure of this government to plan for growth in Calgary?

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member that every answer I give is honest. There is nothing dishonest about anything that I say. I would assume that every question he asks is also honest.

The hon. member has a bill before this Legislature, Bill 208, which is up for debate in about, I think, two or three weeks. I look forward to debating the issue around school fees and fundraising, and I'll answer the question in all kinds of detail in about 10 or 15 minutes, whatever I'm allowed at that time.

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

Secondary Suites

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Affordable housing is an issue of huge interest and concern across the province. I know that the minister is working so tirelessly and diligently to deal with the problem and find a solution. In some municipalities the solution includes secondary suites, also known as basement suites or granny suites. My first question is to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Now that the government has introduced building and maintenance standards for secondary suites, when will these begin to be utilized as a viable housing option?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, Mr. Speaker, I first of all want to say that secondary suites can and should be a viable option for affordable housing. The standards that took effect on December 31, that are in place right now, are standards that meet the fire codes and the construction codes for those secondary suites.

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: what are the minister and his department doing to expedite the implementation of these suites, which would at least temporarily ease some of the pressures facing this province?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have had consultation with the public. We have had consultation with municipalities. We have also supported municipalities in regard to funding for secondary suites. I think it's very important to say that secondary suites can be implemented, but it has to be done with a bylaw by those municipalities.

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: as a result of your contacts with the municipalities can you inform the House and Albertans as to the status of these standards and when they will be implemented?

Mr. Danyluk: Mr. Speaker, those standards are in place right now. I do want to say that we have been having discussions with municipalities. The municipalities need to make the choice. We have provided them with a template for those bylaws if they so desire to have secondary suites in their municipalities. If I can say, I would encourage municipalities to get involved because affordable housing is an issue and a concern in this province, and that is one direction that we can co-operate together with municipalities and with industry and with household owners to alleviate some of those affordable housing problems.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that was 94 questions and answers today.

Before we go to the next section of the Routine, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

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

Ms Tarchuk: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My guests have now arrived, and I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House three very special constituents from Banff-Cochrane. They are sitting in the members' gallery, and we have Ron Casey, mayor of Canmore; Mike Western, councillor for Canmore; and Don Kochan, acting chief administrative officer for the town of Canmore. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

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

Mr. Martin: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and members of the Assembly 13 seniors from the Sears Plus Club, and they're here to join us. The group leader is Mr. Frank McCloy, and along with him are – I hope I don't kill too many names here – Doris Hirsekorn, Mrs. Anne Kawchuk, Mrs. Ann McCloy, Mrs. Anne Kostiuik, Mrs. Emily and Mr. Walter Andruchow, Mrs. Jean Miskew, Mrs. Betty Carnegie, Mr. Frank and Mrs. Gertrude Schoblocher, Mr. Ken Bell, and Mrs. Betty Weyts. They're in the public gallery. I'd ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

**Bill 2
Conflicts of Interest Amendment Act, 2007**

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 2, the Conflicts of Interest Amendment Act, 2007.

This bill aims to update the rules governing elected members of this Legislature. First and foremost, the bill lengthens the time former ministers are limited in their ability to influence government decisions or to accept certain kinds of employment. Instead of lasting for six months, the cooling-off period would apply for a year. The bill also sets out stricter guidelines around the activities former ministers can participate in during the cooling-off period. As well, it increases the fine for breaching the act during that period.

Mr. Speaker, the Conflicts of Interest Amendment Act also sets the framework to establish cooling-off periods for nonelected political staff and deputy ministers. There are a number of other provisions in the Conflicts of Interest Act that have been revised in this bill. These amendments were recommended by an all-party committee that reviewed the act last year.

I would like to acknowledge the contributions of my colleagues who assisted in the work of that all-party committee: the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, who served as vice-chair, and the hon. members for Calgary-Bow, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, Edmonton-Castle Downs, Edmonton-Glenora, Edmonton-McClung, Foothills-Rocky View, Highwood, Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, Lethbridge-East, and Peace River. In addition, the Ethics Commissioner and his office were most helpful in assisting the work of the committee.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all members to accept Bill 2 on first reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 2 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, in response to a question raised a few weeks ago by the Member for Calgary-Varsity, I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter sent by the general manager of Access Roads Edmonton, the P3 contractor for the Anthony Henday Drive southeast. The company gave me the courtesy of copying me on the letter. The letter dated April 4 is addressed to the Member for Calgary-Varsity and explains that the P3 contract has a fixed price for Anthony Henday Drive southeast. The letter clarifies that there have not been any overruns on the project, and the letter goes on to say that as a P3 project, if there were any cost . . .

The Speaker: I think this is tabling time.
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of documents to table today. I'm tabling an appropriate amount of copies of two letters and an attachment from April 12 from Chris Goss. Mr. Goss is very concerned about the possible seismic testing at Marie Lake. He's been expressing these concerns to the ministers of Environment

and Sustainable Resource Development. He has also attached a draft letter . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member also heard my advice to the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: tablings.

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Okay, thank you.

I also have a letter sent to the Premier on April 3 from Dwight and Shelley Homister, who are writing, again, about their concerns in regard to seismic testing at Marie Lake.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today to table a letter with the appropriate number of copies from family members of Bill Mowbray, a 30-year police veteran in our province. His family is very concerned about how his health care was dealt with by our health care system and how the dignity of patients should be respected everywhere.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My tabling today has to do with my private member's statement earlier today, titled the McClung Goes Green campaign. I have the requisite number of copies of my newsletter, the *McClung Quarterly*, which explains the green campaign and tells people how to reduce their environmental footprint. Also, incidentally, it's available online at mcclung.ca.

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

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today with appropriate copies. One is from Kim Troy in Edmonton, a child care provider running a day home through Southgate Medalion day home agency, expressing frustration about the state of the child care system, especially in not meeting the demands for children under two years.

The other is from Karen Burns in Grande Prairie, asking for provincial support for all children zero to 12 years, including before- and after-school care, wage enhancement, and PD funds for all workers for school-aged children too.

head: **Tablings to the Clerk**

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Danyluk, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, a letter dated April 11, 2007, from the hon. Mr. Danyluk, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, to Mr. Taylor, hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, responding to questions raised during Oral Question Period on March 21 and 22, 2007.

2:30

The Speaker: Hon. members, we'll now deal with a point of privilege as raised by the hon. Minister of Finance.

**Privilege
Reflections on a Member**

Dr. Oberg: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I initially rose under section 15(5) of our Standing Orders, which states:

A Member may always raise a question of privilege in the Assembly immediately after the words are uttered or the events occur that give rise to the question, in which case the written notice required under suborder (2) is not required.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also rising under page 81 of *Erskine May*, which states, "On the one hand, the privileges of Parliament are rights 'absolutely necessary for the due execution of its powers'." I would also bring forward *Beauchesne* 24, which states very similar to what was just stated in *Erskine May*. It states, "The privileges of Parliament are rights which are 'absolutely necessary for the due execution of its powers'."

I would also draw attention to section 69 of *Beauchesne*, which states:

The Speaker has reminded the House, "It is very important . . . to indicate that something can be inflammatory, can be disagreeable, can even be offensive, but it may not be a question of privilege unless that comment actually impinges upon the ability of Members of Parliament to do their job properly."

I would also suggest that section 64 applies, which states, "The House has occasionally taken notice of attacks on individual Members."

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that on page 52 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* it states that "any conduct which offends the authority or dignity of the House, even though no breach of any specific privilege may have been committed, is referred to as a contempt of the House."

I will follow that up with my last citation, which is the misuse of freedom of speech, page 76 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*.

The privilege of freedom of speech is an extremely powerful immunity and Speakers have on occasion had to caution Members about its misuse. In a ruling following a question of privilege, Speaker Fraser urged Members to take the greatest care in framing questions concerning conflict of interest guidelines. Since the question raised affected the very nature of Members' rights and immunities.

I quote again.

There are only two kinds of institutions in this land which this awesome and far-reaching privilege [of freedom of speech] extends – Parliament and the legislatures on the one hand and the courts on the other. These institutions enjoy the protection of absolute privilege because of the overriding need to ensure that the truth can be told, that any questions can be asked, and that debate can be free and uninhibited. Absolute privilege ensures that those performing their legitimate functions in these vital institutions of Government shall not be exposed to the possibility of legal action.

This is necessary in the democratic process, in the national interest.

Mr. Speaker, there were allegations made against me personally that affect my right to do my job. As Minister of Finance I will be bringing in a budget tomorrow. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood impugned my reputation and impugned my motives for bringing down a budget by stating – and unfortunately I do not have the Blues in front of me as they have not been delivered to me yet, so I am going a little bit by memory – that because there are still leadership funds to be raised, it somehow implicated the bringing down of the budget tomorrow. I think that in conjunction with all the applications that I have talked about, this does indeed constitute a question of privilege. I have been in this House 14 years. This is the first time that I've ever raised a question of privilege because it is the first time that I feel that my rights have actually been impugned.

Mr. Speaker, you yourself have ruled on numerous occasions in the last month in this House that the questions must be questions about government policy. They must not have to do with the politics of the leadership, which occurred six to eight to nine months ago. This was a definite decision by the hon. member to bring this forward today.

I was asked coming into this session the exact question that the hon. member just posed to me. My stated answer to the media at

that point in time was: the gentleman is a very nice man, kind of funny; I'll let it go.

Mr. Speaker, when he brought it into this House, I truly strongly felt that he impugned my ability to bring down a budget tomorrow by impugning my credentials, by impugning my motives and stating that I potentially could be corrupted. It's a very serious charge, and I fully understand the consequences of this charge.

Mr. Speaker, we tolerate a lot in this House. We tolerate a lot of personal attacks, but I will not have the hon. member impugn my personality and call me corrupt, although not using that exact language, in this House regardless of the rights of this House.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, are you going to participate in this point of order?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, the adage that a lawyer who has himself for a client is a fool – something like that. I'm going to let the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview deal with it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview as the third-party House leader.

Mr. Martin: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm quite amazed that one sentence has created this much controversy. The hon. Treasurer said – this is when he stood up. [interjections] Would you listen, please? This is what happened. This is the question. It says, "The Finance minister has failed to disclose his campaign donations for his PC leadership bid and has broken his own deadlines for doing so." That's in fact the case, and it's well documented. That's when he stood up.

Now, at the very minimum he may have a point of order. He certainly doesn't have a point of privilege from that. He's quoted a lot of different areas, but if he wants to go by the facts on that, it's well documented, and the minister even admitted himself outside that he's still fundraising.

We're saying that it's not about the character, that we're asking to the Premier. It's asking if this is good public policy. Most other places in Canada have leadership funds, and they control this sort of thing so that a person doesn't inadvertently have this happen. Nobody was accusing the minister of anything wrong. We're saying that as a government policy, this is wrong. Surely, the perception must be evident to even members of this government. That's what we're talking about. We're talking about government policy here.

That was the only sentence that was uttered when the member stood up and called for his point of privilege.

I would just conclude, Mr. Speaker, by saying that if we're going to look at categories, I'd say that we look at section 75. This should be the most important thing in *Beauchesne*. Section 75 states clearly, "The privilege of freedom of speech is both the least questioned and the most fundamental right of the Member of Parliament on the floor of the House and in committee."

So, Mr. Speaker, I just can't see how that one sentence that I read could create all this worry for the Treasurer, that he somehow can't do his job. Well, maybe he should have released the people that were donating to his campaign earlier on, and he would not be facing this problem. So if anybody has put himself in this bind, it is the hon. Treasurer.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Others to participate? The hon. Member for Peace River.

2:40

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member quotes briefly and incompletely from the record. I'm sure that you have the Blues before you and that you'll correct that. In my mind, the hon.

Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood drew a clear line between corporations that would be donating to the hon. member's campaign and those same corporations that might be receiving favourable treatment in the budget. In so doing, I believe, first of all, he brought into question the member's ability to act impartially, and I will refer you to *Beauchesne* 66. Also, isn't that the very definition of a bribe? In making that suggestion, I would refer you to *Beauchesne* 65.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this is a very serious matter, and I beg your ruling. Thank you.

Mr. Snelgrove: I think it's simple timing. In this House we all know that there's a budget coming down tomorrow. For the hon. member to at this time raise the question of the Finance minister's involvement with these corporations or individuals and impugn the total budget as it's coming down is simply wrong. I don't know all the numbers that you want to quote in papers, but I know what I hear and I know what's wrong, and that was wrong.

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

Rev. Abbott: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Minister of Finance did quote *Erskine May* at page 69 talking about freedom of speech, which certainly is our privilege here in the House, but I'll also go on to page 70. It says:

Freedom of speech was important and the Crown ought not to act against a Member directly for something said in the House; but it seems to have been common ground that decorum and obedience to the Sovereign's wishes ought to be respected. Just as the House increased its ability to protect its Members from arrest and molestation, so it was frequently ready to take punitive action, without waiting for the Crown or Council, against those who overstepped the mark in debate.

And I think this member has overstepped the mark in debate.

The Speaker: This is always a very serious, serious matter, and anything that impugns the integrity of one member, when that member rises to make an argument with respect to it, should be treated with dignity and concern. I am going to review everything, and I'll report back to the House tomorrow.

In the interim should the leader of the third party or the Minister of Finance want to convey further thoughts to me on this matter, I would be pleased to receive them prior to 11 o'clock tomorrow morning.

head: **Request for Emergency Debate**

The Speaker: Hon. Official Opposition House Leader, you're going to be making an argument on a Standing Order 30 on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition?

Impacts of Apartment Fire in Fort McMurray

Ms Blakeman: Yes, I am, and thank you very much for the opportunity to do that. Oral notice was given at the appropriate time for this Standing Order 30 during the Routine, and I believe that the Speaker is in receipt of the letter and the written notice as of 10:55 this morning.

The notice has now been distributed to everyone, but essentially we are asking for an adjournment of the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss the urgent matter of

the immediate and pressing risk to the health and well-being of the residents of Fort McMurray caused by the recent fire and resulting inability of the community's social, housing, and health systems to cope with the impacts of this crisis without immediate provincial support.

As always, Mr. Speaker, I am mindful that the arguments are on the urgency and other opportunities to discuss this particular issue. The urgency is the compromised capacity of Fort McMurray to react to this disaster and the emergency created by the fire. This is stemming from unmanaged growth for the most part, so we have several components of that urgency.

One is the housing now of 300 people. There was already a homeless list that they were trying to address of 400 people. We've now added 300 people to that. We've heard that housing is coming at some point. I can't remember the exact words that were used by the minister, but it's obviously not available today as housing is being built, but it's not open today. Coming on board and almost completed: those were the words that the minister used, so that housing is clearly not complete to have somebody move into. We have an urgency on housing 300 now homeless people. This is not a one-day problem. This community of Fort McMurray has pulled together and has addressed things over the last 24-hour period, but they don't have the capacity to sustain this, and being homeless is not a one-night deal. The immediacy of the problem and the likelihood that they could find other accommodation is slim to none. We're dealing with a place that has a vacancy rate of zero. As I said, there are units coming but not available now. So there's a housing issue.

There's a health resources issue. It's well known that this community is at capacity. It's actually short-staffed as far as nurses, doctors, and allied health professionals. They are lacking in some of the other equipment that they would like to have up there. They've been asking for additional infrastructure, et cetera. Part of your ability to deal with emergency is excess capacity to be able to absorb this, and this community does not have excess capacity.

So we've got housing, and we've got health care, and also on the health care issue are the stress and the risks on health as we look at the ability of the community to come forward with things like medication replacement for people that have been removed from their homes and weren't able to take medication with them: aids to daily living – sleep apnea machines, crutches, wheelchairs – anything else that they were not able to take with them as they vacated the premises.

In addition, we're now looking at increased risks around infection control. If we are housing groups of people together in common areas for any extended period of time, you are running a greater risk there of spreading things like colds and flu and outbreaks of other disease and possible infections.

The voluntary sector, which is the sector that we most look to for assistance in crises like this, is well beyond maximum capacity. Included in things like that, Mr. Speaker, would be mental health services, emergency accommodation, transition housing for those who are moving from addictions treatment, for example, or battered domestic disputes into transition housing – that's also been affected by this fire – donations of clothing and toiletries and furniture and bedding, animal shelters. All of those not-for-profit, volunteer-based organizations are already operating at maximum capacity. Their ability to absorb this addition is not there that I can determine. I think that is very much a part of the urgency. It does compromise safety.

There are a number of citations, Mr. Speaker. The first I go to, of course, is M and M 584 and 585, both talking about urgency and importance and requiring urgent consideration, 585 talking about the relevancy and attention and concern throughout the nation. I think we've dealt with that. This is coming out of a disaster. It's not something that is chronic. It's something that was unanticipated and could not have been anticipated or prepared for. I mean, fires happen, unfortunately. You try and prevent them, but they still happen.

We have parameters set out in *Beauchesne* 387 to 398 on emergency debates: specifically, whether there's an opportunity for debate under the rules and provisions of the House. This issue is not currently before the courts. There was a mention of new units of housing in the throne speech, but as I've said, those housing units are not immediately available in this case. There is a government bill on the Order Paper around disaster services, but it is a house-keeping act to change the statute name and set up a new delegation of power section. It's not dealing with the emergency services themselves. There is no bill that is yet to be tabled that was outlined in a press release by the government that we could be expecting might address this. As far as I can see, there is no private member's bill or public or private bill.

Mr. Speaker, the budget is tomorrow, but there's no prebudget indication that there be any new initiatives for Fort McMurray that could have been anticipated that would affect their capacity immediately. There are no government motions on the Order Paper, and there are no motions other than government motions that would be coming in the near future which would assist us in an emergency debate on this issue. I argue that the opportunity for debate on this issue is nonexistent. After the budget is brought forward, we have a calendar that sets out the remaining days of this session that are allocated strictly to budget debate on the estimates.

2:50

In Oral Question Period today we did raise a number of questions, but we're also admonished under 408(1)(e) that questions should "not be of a nature requiring a lengthy and detailed answer," and (f) "not raise a matter of policy too large to be dealt with as an answer to a question." Of course, with the changes in Standing Orders we're now dealing with a 45-second answer rule. So getting a level of debate and comprehensiveness is not possible with our current situation in question period. I also note in 410(7) that "brevity both in questions and answers is of great importance."

So under *Beauchesne* 389 we do have an issue that is "so pressing that the public interest will suffer if it is not given immediate attention," and I think that's particularly true for the public in Fort McMurray, Mr. Speaker. Those residents are tremendously resilient. They are creative, and they are tough, but they are already at maximum capacity. This situation is very urgent for them. They have all pulled together and come through in the business sector and volunteers and individuals, but that has an effect of one day, and we are dealing with a situation that goes beyond one day. Emergency preparedness does require some reserve capacity in staff and infrastructure, and as I've laid out, that capacity is not there.

I argue that this is an urgent situation, and we should adjourn the order of business today to provide the debate on that. Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Renner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm prepared to argue that this matter does not constitute a matter of urgent public importance as is defined under our Standing Orders. I'd like to point out to you that Standing Order 30(2) states that the Speaker shall entertain debate as he considers appropriate to determine whether the matter is "relevant to the question of urgency of debate and shall then rule on whether or not the request for leave is in order." I'm prepared to argue that this, indeed, does not meet the test of 30(2).

Mr. Speaker, the issue was raised in question period earlier today. I think the responsible minister made a very adequate response to the question that was raised in debate. I would further point out that with respect to future opportunities to discuss the matters at hand,

we'll indeed have ample opportunity in days to come as we begin a great deal of discussion and debate on various ministries' business plans and during the budget submissions.

I'd also point out, Mr. Speaker, 30(6) of our Standing Orders: "An emergency debate does not entail any decision of the Assembly." So whether or not the discussion takes place this afternoon, the status as it pertains to the issue resulting from this fire will not be affected by any decision of this Assembly.

Finally, Standing Order 30(7)(a) talks about the fact that "the matter proposed for discussion must relate to a genuine emergency, calling for immediate and urgent consideration." Well, Mr. Speaker, while any kind of a fire and this one in particular is a tragic loss of property, there was no loss of life in this case. I would suggest to you that the emergency plan that the municipality has in place thus far has done a very good job of dealing with the situation. The emergent needs of putting out the fire have obviously been met, and the municipality activated its emergency management plan, as does any municipality in this province.

It's the responsibility of the minister of municipal affairs to ensure that each municipality has an adequate emergency plan to deal with incidents just like this one. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I was in Fort McMurray myself on Monday, and I was participating with the municipality in the development of their emergency management plan around the potential for flooding. It's a little bit easier to predict floods than it is fires, but at the same time I can assure you that the municipality is doing a magnificent job in their preparedness surrounding possible flooding, and I can assure you also that I am just as sure that the same degree of thought and preparedness that they've put into their flooding plan is also in place when they exercised and activated their emergency plan with respect to a fire of the magnitude such as we're dealing with here. The people are being temporarily housed, and work is under way to find permanent housing for them.

I would suggest that for all of these reasons this motion does not meet the test for a matter of urgent public debate and that we not proceed, that you rule accordingly.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak against this motion of urgency. I have spoken in this House very clearly in the past in favour of improving the situation in Fort McMurray, and I have some experience with Fort McMurray. I do know that the emergency preparedness forces in place in Fort McMurray are highly professional, some of the best in the province, and certainly should not be questioned in any way in how they may have dealt with this fire. There was no loss of life. There was no loss to any of the families in terms of injury. They dealt very professionally. I know these agencies, and I know that they are very good.

I would like to add to the Deputy Government House Leader's citations in saying that in 30(7)(c) "not more than one matter may be discussed on the same motion." I believe that many matters in this application under Standing Order 30 have been raised, ranging from all sorts of things: health, mental health, addictions treatment, animal shelters. I think that this is far, far too wide-ranging of a Standing Order 30 motion to be dealt with by this House at this time.

That's all I have to say. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, as I did have notice of this earlier today, I am prepared to deal with this matter under this request under Standing Order 30(2). Just a quick reminder that the request here is that an application under the Standing Order 30 is to "adjourn the

ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss a matter of urgent public importance.” I repeat: I did receive notice from the Leader of the Official Opposition’s office at 10:55 a.m., so the requirement under Standing Order 30(1) has been met with respect to that.

Before the question as to whether this motion should proceed, the chair must determine whether or not the motion meets the requirements of Standing Order 30(7), which requires that “the matter proposed for discussion must relate to a genuine emergency, calling for immediate and urgent consideration.” The Leader of the Official Opposition’s proposed motion is to hold an emergency debate on risks to residents of Fort McMurray “caused by the recent fire.” Both the Official Opposition House Leader and the Deputy Government House Leader quoted from *Beauchesne*, paragraphs 387 and 398, and the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, pages 587 to 589. The chair has listened very attentively to all of the arguments of the members participating in the debate and appreciates the members who did provide quotations from the various standing authorities that we have.

However, when I look on page 587 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, there is one key consideration. Although the Speaker is not required to give reasons for his decision, there is one key requirement in this that I think is important. “The Speaker determines whether a matter is related to a genuine emergency which could not be brought before the House within a reasonable time by other means, such as during a Supply day.” Tomorrow the budget will come down. Very, very quickly we will be in supply and will be in supply probably for four to five to six weeks. As a result, the chair does not believe that this request meets the requirements under the standing order for an emergency debate to proceed today. The matter is a serious one – no doubt at all about that – but that is not the rationale behind the decision with respect to Standing Order 30. So the request for leave is not in order.

head: 3:00 **Orders of the Day**

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

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

The Chair: I’d like to call the committee to order.

Bill 22

Alberta Investment Management Corporation Act

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments in respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It’s my pleasure to rise this afternoon during committee debate on Bill 22, the Alberta Investment Management Corporation Act. The first order of business for myself this afternoon is to advise the Assembly of an amendment that I would like to bring forward on this act. I’ve provided the table with the original copy of the amendment, and I believe the pages are in the process of distributing it.

The Chair: We’ll just have a moment before we proceed so that the pages can distribute it to the members.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Hon. member, would you wish to proceed?

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The amendment that I would like to move this afternoon to Bill 22 – and I believe we’ll refer to it as amendment A2. Is that correct?

The Chair: We’ll refer to this as A2, yes.

Mr. R. Miller: The amendment would amend section 17 of Bill 22 by adding the words “but the Corporation shall not make any direct investment of any funds or any portion of a fund in securities of corporations in the tobacco industry” after the words “with the regulations.”

Mr. Chairman, I think the intent of this is quite clear. Last year in this Assembly, through a tremendous effort of co-operation and collaboration and last-minute manoeuvrings between the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, we were able to convince all members of this House to support an amendment to the Cancer Prevention Legacy Act, which as much as possible this amendment mirrors. I’m hoping that the goodwill of this Assembly will also extend to broadening that amendment which was put into the cancer legacy act and thereby instruct at the will of the government and this Assembly the AIM corporation not to invest knowingly in any funds anywhere that hold tobacco companies in their portfolios.

I’m not sure that I have to spend an awful lot of time on this. I did have a conversation with the Finance minister yesterday afternoon wherein he expressed some concern, Mr. Chairman, that he didn’t think that it was the role of AIMCO to tell the various fund holders where they should be investing. Yet my response to the Finance minister – and I hope that upon 24 hours of reflection he will have shared this with his caucus – was simply that these various funds and endowments are putting an awful lot of faith and trust in AIMCO. Should Bill 22 pass, they’re putting an awful lot of faith and trust in AIMCO to manage their assets. Given that for the most part these are taxpayers’ dollars that we’re talking about, what’s really required here and what we’re asking for today is the political will of this Assembly to instruct a Crown corporation not to invest in tobacco companies whenever knowingly possible.

I think it’s well within the purview of AIMCO that should they be instructed by this Assembly not to invest in tobacco companies, we can do that. It would be written in legislation, and it would be very clear for the board and directors of AIMCO what the policy and legislation states, and they would be mandated to follow that. So I think it’s very much within our purview.

I would just like to point out that I mentioned in debate not that long ago that any number of funds around the world have ethical investing policies, including a ban on investing in tobacco companies, where I can show that those funds regularly outperform the heritage savings trust fund, for example. One example of that that I’m well familiar with is the endowment fund at Harvard, which has an ethical investment policy, including an exclusion on tobacco companies, and that fund regularly outperforms our funds here in Alberta.

Since the minister himself has indicated that the whole intent of establishing AIMCO as a Crown corporation is to improve by anywhere from 25 to 100 points the performance of the various funds in Alberta, and since it can be shown that making a move such as excluding tobacco investments from those funds doesn’t hurt but can actually be proven to help the performance of funds, I think this meshes well with the intent of the legislation as it’s proposed.

As I said, Mr. Chairman, I won’t elaborate any further. I think the amendment is pretty much self-explanatory. As I indicated, it is based as much as was possible on the wording that this House supported last year when we passed the cancer legacy act, so I’m hoping that this amendment will find the same favour of the House.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader on amendment A2.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to address the issue of this amendment and urge members not to support this amendment but not because I don't appreciate the intent of this amendment. Just as the member indicated, this House on a previous occasion, in dealing with another piece of legislation, did pass a very similar amendment, but I don't think that the comparisons made between this bill and the bill that was dealing with the establishment of the legacy fund for cancer are nearly close enough that we should be considering using that as a precedent. When you establish a fund exclusively to be used for cancer research, I think it's reasonable to argue that you should do your very best to exclude from that fund issues or investments that specifically support the tobacco industry. In this case, though, we aren't dealing with investment strategies that are exclusive to one fund, but in fact we're dealing with investment strategies that go across all of government and will deal with significantly more than that one fund.

3:10

I would suggest that if the members of this Assembly feel that there should be some kind of an investment philosophy or an investment policy that is overlaid on the directions that are given to this organization, this is a rather piecemeal way of doing it. I think that the kind of direction that the member is referring to is talking today about tobacco. There are other members in the room that might suggest: well, we also should consider whether or not these funds are environmentally damaging in someone's opinion. Others might have other suggestions. I would suggest that we get into a very ad hoc basis of passing amendments like this.

For that reason alone, I can't support dealing with this amendment. I might be convinced at some point in time down the road to deal with legislation, not in the form of an amendment but legislation that deals with the issue of whether or not public funds that are invested in the marketplace should have some kind of policy associated with them, an overarching, broad policy. That's not what's before us. That's not possible at this committee stage of this bill.

For that reason, I urge all members not to support this amendment.

The Chair: Are there others on the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to rise and speak in favour of the amendment proposed by my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford and to address some of the comments made just moments ago by the hon. Minister of Environment. I understand what he's saying, that in the perfect world you would take a very, very holistic approach to this whole process and consider the universe of possible investments that might not be advisable to pursue in a fund like this. Part of me can understand his argument in terms of this being an ad hoc approach; however, this particular ad hoc approach is backed by over 40 years of research and experience that proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that tobacco was a harmful substance. It may be a legal substance, but it's a harmful substance.

The intent of this amendment, I think, is at least in part to make sure that as the government of Alberta, as representatives of the people of Alberta, we take steps to not endorse bad behaviour, to not endorse substances which are dangerous to public health, to take steps to endorse initiatives that are good for public health.

We have had issues before in regard to government investments in tobacco funds, in securities of corporations in the tobacco industry, and it doesn't set a very good example for 3.3 million Albertans, Mr. Chair. This amendment seeks to set a good example. This amendment seeks to set some boundaries around what it is that the corporations do with the people's money, because it is the people's money. I think it is a very reasonable and rational restriction on how AIMCO can invest funds. I think it's in the public interest to keep those funds out of securities of corporations in the tobacco industry.

Not only do I fully support this amendment, but given the body of scientific evidence and knowledge about the harmful effects of tobacco use in all its forms, I can't imagine why anybody in this House would vote against this amendment. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity on the amendment.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. On amendment A2 it's with great pride that I recognize that the city of Calgary is one of the first cities in Alberta – in fact, it may be the only city at this point – that has an ethical investment plan, that looks at investments that basically do no harm or are not at the expense of anyone else's well-being.

There's no doubt about the fact that not only first-hand smoking but second-hand smoking kills people. The idea that we would benefit from the profits of a substance which is killing individuals and continues to kill individuals in a province with very lax regulations, in a province where the government refuses to come up with rules for a province-wide ban, citing individual rights as an argument, and recognizes the rights of a small minority over the health concerns of the vast majority – the minister suggested that this wasn't the way to deal with ethical investments.

I would suggest that today we could make a major decision in cleaning up our investment policies, which is what Bill 22 is all about: improving our investment strategies. We could point out not only to the rest of Canada but to the world that Alberta believes not only in transparency and accountability, but it believes in integrity and ethics. This simple amendment accomplishes this end in a very compact, efficient manner.

Canada has indicated, for example, that it will not support mines. It will not manufacture mines. It recognizes that mines destroy and kill people and maim people. In a similar manner tobacco has no positive benefits other than the historical symbol that was used in trade. I don't want to put down the First Nation exchange. Tobacco was considered a special herb that was exchanged. But in that comparison of historical recognition we can burn sweetgrass at a number of ceremonies. We do not need to invest in tobacco companies.

To me – this may seem like stretching the point – it's the equivalent of investing in prostitution. Is the Alberta government serving as an unethical pimp for tobacco companies? By profiting from the revenue of tobacco, we are in fact acknowledging that any type of investment that brings money into the province is acceptable. I take issue with the idea that a drug, an addictive substance which is responsible for a tremendous number of deaths, would be sanctioned and held up as an acceptable investment in this province.

We have an opportunity to do the right thing. There are many ways of diversifying our economy. There are a number of wonderful opportunities to invest, particularly in green energy production. There are opportunities to invest in environmental reclamation. The list of investment possibilities is practically endless.

So I would urge as a very first step that members of this Legislature recognize that there is no good side to tobacco as an investment

or as a killing substance, and I would urge members opposite to join us in condemning investment in tobacco and support the amendment A2 to Bill 22. Thank you.

3:20

The Chair: Are there others? The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose.

Mr. Pham: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to rise and speak against this amendment for some very simple reasons. The amendment simply asks us not to “make any direct investment of any funds or any portion of a fund in securities of corporations in the tobacco industry.” Speaker after speaker from the other side has raised the health reason and the ethical reason for not investing in these companies. I have to point attention to the fact that if they are going to follow the same reasoning, then people can ask: why don’t you stop investment in fast food companies, too, because trans fats kill people? Also there are many people killed in automobile accidents. Maybe we should stop investing money in the automobile industry too. Right? If you keep following that insane reasoning, eventually you get to a point that, you know, you cannot invest money into any company, and that is very, very dangerous.

On top of that, I think that the simple basic requirement for this corporation is to maximize the return of our investment of taxpayers’ money. The more strings you put on it, the more conditions you put on it, you make the job of those people who invest the money on behalf of our citizens more difficult.

Therefore, I urge all members to vote against this amendment and focus on the goal of what we are trying to do with this corporation: maximize the return on the investment of our money.

Thank you.

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

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I’m delighted to be able to speak on this amendment, which I think everyone should really view in a very positive manner. This is the time to show leadership. This is the time to stand up and be counted as an ethical government looking after the citizens of this province and not always just worrying about the bottom line. But having said that, I can’t believe for a second that if there was a part of a portfolio – or at least this is what should happen – that was losing money, it would not be changed in a second. It would be the press of a button to be able to get rid of the part of the portfolio that handles this tobacco investment.

The other thing is that, yes, the argument appears to be that we can make money. But, believe me, the health care costs for people who are dying of lung cancer far outweigh the damage that is done. They don’t just die of a heart attack. It takes months and months and months. As an RN I have helped people towards that end, and it certainly isn’t pretty. It’s a long, drawn-out process; it’s very painful; but, more importantly if you’re only going to talk about money, it requires a great deal of money to care for people that are dying of lung cancer.

So I won’t say any more, but I would really, really like to see this government take an ethical leadership on this issue, press the button, and switch that part of the portfolio that handles tobacco into something else that would make probably even more money if they took a minute to look for it.

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

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I’m pleased to rise in support of this amendment A2 to Bill 22, the Alberta Investment Management

Corporation Act. I certainly understand the arguments put forward by the Minister of Environment and the Member for Calgary-Montrose, and I don’t think that this should be the beginning of a list of matters that should be brought in to affect the investment of this very important instrument in the development of the Alberta economy.

There are other bottom lines at play here, and it’s important to note them. I think the Member for Lethbridge-East was wise in stating that the health care costs are an additional bottom line that should be looked at in this amendment, and that’s why I support it. I think it’s important to note also in this House that we at least make statements that tell the investment managers who come to work for this fund that this type of investment is taken by members of this House to be not in the interest of Alberta and Albertans.

There’s little benefit by investing in Big Tobacco in the economic development of Alberta. The tobacco industry has very little direct involvement in the agricultural industry in Alberta. It’s not grown here. It’s not developed here. It’s not processed here in any meaningful way. I think it is important that there is a precedent that was established in looking at our cancer endowment last year, that we would not be looking to invest in this type of investment in the tobacco industry.

The importance, I think, of this amendment is clear. It could be worded a little bit differently, but I think it’s clear in its intent.

I stand in support of this amendment. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I would like to rise to speak in favour of this amendment. I think the question that we need to ask ourselves is: in being stewards for the people of Alberta and making sure that this money is well invested, do we want to make money for the people of Alberta by investing their money in companies that are responsible for the deaths of thousands of people? It’s said – and I think it’s very true – that tobacco is the only product which if used according to the instructions, if used properly according to its intent by the manufacturer, can kill you. I don’t think you can say that about other products. So in that sense it is quite different than other types of investment.

I am sure that if we asked people of Alberta this question, a clear majority of them would say, “Yes. I want to make sure that you do not invest my money in tobacco companies,” for those reasons. As a result, I think that this is a reasonable position to take. It’s a position that would be supported, in my view, by most Albertans, certainly not all but by most, and it is, finally, a responsible position to take.

So with respect to the amendment, Mr. Chairman, I want to say that we will be supporting it. Thank you.

The Chair: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Tougas: Yes. Just very briefly, Mr. Chairman. I was interested in the statement from the Member for Calgary-Montrose. I believe he said that the idea is to maximize profit, but the question, to me, that we should ask is: at what cost? I mean, do we invest in, like, the weapons industry? Do we invest in the pornography industry? Where do we draw the line? This is a line to draw right here. It’s ethical investing. It makes perfect sense. Tobacco kills people in this country by the thousands. It’s outrageous that we should be investing in the tobacco industry. It’s common sense. It’s ethical,

and it makes perfect sense. I wish the members of this House would vote for this amendment.

Thank you.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford back on the debate on the bill.

Mr. R. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Back on the main bill in committee, just a couple of points that I want to raise. Section 8 talks about employees, and it says, “the Corporation may engage employees for the purpose of carrying on the business of the Corporation and may determine their conditions of service.” Now, the Minister of Finance was kind enough to provide myself and my researcher with the so-called three-column document that the government uses in their discussions. When I look at row 11, which talks about employees, the rationale behind this particular section says:

AIMCO employees will not be subject to the Public Service Act, including position classification, salary, and vacation rules. AIMCO employees will not participate in Crown benefits. Participation in existing pension plans is to be determined.

3:30

In light of the revelations that have come forward regarding the \$11 million loss that I spoke of in question period today, it does simply cause me to question, Mr. Chairman, a number of things regarding conflict-of-interest rules and lobbyist registry rules if, in fact, the AIMCO employees would not be subject to the Public Service Act. I have to confess that I’m not infinitely familiar with the Public Service Act, but I think that that is a question that deserves to be asked: just exactly how would AIMCO employees be dealt with in terms of both the lobbyist registry and conflict-of-interest acts if they’re not part of the Public Service Act? That’s the one question I would like to get on the record.

Also, section 17 talks about the investment of the corporation’s funds. It says, again, “The Corporation may invest its funds, including reserve funds, only in accordance with the regulations.” Of course, as everybody is now well aware, we just had good debate on an amendment to that which, unfortunately, failed. But the amendment would have seen a restriction on any corporations under the umbrella of AIMCO investing in tobacco funds.

Both the Minister of Environment and the Member for Calgary-Montrose spoke in discussion to that amendment regarding section 17, and I think the Member for Calgary-Montrose actually quoted almost verbatim from the Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act, which says that the objective is to maximize the investment of Albertans and the fund. As my colleague from Edmonton-Meadowlark just pointed out, that leaves it absolutely wide open in terms of no restrictions, no limitations.

It really does cause one to pause and wonder whether or not there would be any restriction as to what investments might be made by AIMCO, whether it might be pornographic websites, whether it might be arms companies. In fact, we know that there could very well be investments in companies that deal in arms already. So I have a real concern with section 17, and I’m really disappointed that the members of this House did not see fit to approve amendment A2 because I really think it was the right thing to do.

Mr. Chairman, section 18 talks about borrowing and guarantees. In particular, it says, “If authorized by the Minister, the Corporation may borrow money in accordance with the regulations.” I’m wondering if the minister could outline for us under what circumstances the corporation might be borrowing money. Considering

that they’re managing in excess of \$70 billion in funds, I can’t offhand imagine why the corporation would then need to borrow money with all of those assets available in their investment portfolio. I would like an explanation from the minister on that.

Then, in particular, I do have to go back to the situation regarding the \$11 million that was lost by the Finance department on the timberland asset class. I can’t help but be a little bit confused by some mixed messages that the Minister of Finance is sending, and I don’t mind saying publicly that it’s not the first time this minister has sent mixed messages. I’m confused by some of the comments that have been made.

Mr. Chairman, I first started asking questions about this \$7 million supplementary supply, and then we learned more recently that it’s actually an \$11 million loss that that \$7 million was meant to address. When I finally received a response in the way of written answers to my questions that I’ve been asking for some time, I was interested to note that the minister said in his written response that, in fact, there are clauses in Bill 22 that are designed specifically to address the situation that happened with the timberland asset class. Yet in this House during debate on supplementary estimates the minister had said that there was no correlation whatsoever between Bill 22 and what had happened with that \$7 million that was required in supplementary supply. So I’m confused by that.

In speaking to the Auditor General’s office this morning, they told me that from their point of view there would be no correlation because, in fact, the changes that were required to be made to policy would have been made in regulation already under Alberta investment management and that those regulations would just flow through to AIMCO if Bill 22 passes and we now have a corporation. So I’m really a little bit unsure. Are there actually clauses in Bill 22 that address specifically the situation that happened with AIMCO? First the minister says no. Then he says yes. The Auditor General is saying no. I look through Bill 22, and I can’t find anything in Bill 22 that specifically addresses the situation that happened with the timberland asset class.

Now, it’s possible, I’m sure, that there may be something coming in regulations, which, of course, we don’t get to see in this Legislature until after they’re passed. They don’t get debated publicly, so there’s very little in the way of public oversight. It’s possible that there may be some regulation coming after the passage of this bill that would deal specifically with what happened with the timberland asset class, but I don’t see it here. So, again, this adds to the confusion that I’m having with what happened in that particular situation and whether or not, in fact, the passage of Bill 22 and the creation of this Crown corporation will deal with that situation and help to ensure that that sort of mistake, at a very hefty cost to taxpayers, doesn’t happen again.

I found it interesting this morning – and I don’t mean to be picking on the Auditor General’s office, Mr. Chairman – that a comment was made to me by one of the staff members that this \$11 million is a very small amount in terms of the big picture, that, you know, as is made clear in the government’s press release outlining the reasons for Bill 22, we’re managing at this point in excess of \$70 billion. So the comment was made that \$11 million is a very small amount in the big picture.

Well, I challenge anybody in this House to go out to their constituents, particularly those that are having difficulty finding affordable housing, and tell them that \$11 million is a very small amount and that, you know, we shouldn’t be making such a big deal out of an \$11 million loss because of a mistake that was made and because, as I pointed out in question period today, of the really poor accounting and systems management practices in that particular department. So \$11 million, although it may be a small drop in the

bucket to this government, is a huge, huge amount to the average taxpayer. In fact, I'm willing to guess that the average taxpayer can't even really wrap their heads around how much money \$11 million is. That's how much it is. My experience in this Assembly is that people can better relate to a \$22 glass of orange juice than they can to an \$11 million loss in a pension fund.

Mr. Chairman, the fact of the matter is that this is a lot of money and deserves an awful lot of careful consideration and scrutiny by the members of this House. That is, in fact, the reason why I'm asking the questions that I am today as we debate Bill 22 in committee stage.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I will look forward to other questions and comments from members of the Legislature on this bill, and I would hope that prior to dealing with this bill in third reading, we may be able to have some answers to those questions that I've raised this afternoon.

Thank you.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yesterday during the debate in second reading of Bill 22, Alberta Investment Management Corporation Act, I covered a number of points, but one important point that I made, to my regret somewhat more briefly than I would have liked because the time ran out, was the issue of ethical investment principles when dealing particularly with public funds.

3:40

I talked about the issue of ethics in investments. There are various aspects to this, you know, the issue of investing in corporations whose products may directly do harm to individuals, to their health. The tobacco industry is one area. Corporations which either produce products or trade in products that are produced through child labour or companies that deal with jurisdictions or countries which are in a very clear and blatant violation of human rights around the world are some of the instances where the ethical concerns arise when making decisions about investing money, particularly money that's owned by democratic governments and their citizens and is at the disposal of Crown corporations, such as the one being proposed here, for investment on behalf of the people, citizens who are the real owners of those funds and capital.

This particular amendment, Mr. Chairman, does speak to that concern that I expressed about the ethical side of these investment decisions. That must always be in the minds of people who make those decisions. This bill doesn't provide for this kind of a filter, this kind of a check, this kind of an instruction to the people who'll be responsible for this Crown corporation to in fact be not only sensitive to ethical issues but to respect the principle of ethical investing and make their decisions in light of the obligation to not invest in corporations that do not respect those ethical standards and ethical principles.

So, Mr. Chairman, I am glad to rise and lend my support on behalf of the NDP caucus to this amendment which does specifically . . .

The Chair: Hon. member, are you introducing an amendment?

Dr. Pannu: No, no. I'm speaking to the amendment.

The Chair: That amendment has been dealt with. We're back debating the bill.

Dr. Pannu: Then, Mr. Chairman, with your advice I'll just speak to the bill in general, then, in its committee stage. May I?

The Chair: You can't speak to the amendment anymore because the amendment is defeated, but you can speak on the bill itself.

Dr. Pannu: Absolutely. I'm speaking to the bill, then. Thank you for your advice and correction.

I think that because it does not have a clear requirement in it that makes reference to the need for the corporation that this bill will create to respect ethical principles and bring into play ethical considerations, the bill is seriously flawed. It's a bill that leaves open the possibility that we as a province, that we as a government, with this Legislature as part of that government, will be seen as having not addressed its obligation to address the serious question of ethical investing. Making a profit at any cost: that kind of orientation is something that must be discouraged, certainly, by a Crown corporation which is being established by virtue of the legislation that we are debating here.

If this corporation is in fact to represent the real interests of Albertans, then it must commit itself to respecting human rights issues, paying due attention to those when making those investment decisions, paying due attention to and respecting the principle that child labour must not be part of the production activity or part of the goods that that corporation trades in and in which this corporation invests.

Similarly, Mr. Chair, the whole issue of our being sensitive to environmental issues now. We've stretched the definition of ethical concerns. I think one of the concerns that has an ethical, moral dimension is the activities of corporations that might do irreparable harm to the environment, particularly harm with reference to the global warming issue.

A whole flood of studies by academics, by scholars located in different parts of the world, by international bodies such as the international panel on climate change, a group of close to 2,000 top-notch scientists around the world; the Stern report, which was prepared by a well-known, famous economist who is the special adviser to the Prime Minister of Britain; over 900 pages of a book that's available in our Library, *The Economics of Climate Change*: all of these documents, all of these reports, all of these discussions and their summaries, all of the recommendations coming out of these reports made by these experts indicate to us that we need to take action. We need to take corporations on board to take this action, action directed at doing everything that we can to mitigate, to start with, and then to reduce in absolute terms the emission of greenhouse gases identified by these experts and scientists as one of the key factors which is leading to an ever-growing rate of climate change in the form of global warming.

Ethical issues, I think, must be at the heart of the debate when it comes to putting in place the legislation that will create a Crown corporation to invest the publicly owned funds in this province. So, Mr. Chairman, speaking to this bill in committee, I think it's important that we be reminded of the flaw in the bill, which has to do with the absence of any mention referencing ethical concerns and putting some ethical limits and boundaries around how such a Crown corporation should arrive at decisions for investing these funds.

Mr. Chairman, with that note on the problem with this bill, a problem having to do with the absence of any ethical concerns formally expressed in the bill with respect to the obligations of such a corporation when making decisions to invest, I close my brief remarks at this point.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning on the bill.

Mr. Backs: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm very pleased to rise in support of Bill 22, Alberta Investment Management Corporation

Act. This act, I think, is a very prudent and far-sighted approach to changing the way that we deal with our investments here in Alberta. "Securing maximum value," as the press release says, "for Alberta's investments is a key part of Premier Ed Stelmach's plan to build a stronger Alberta." I think that if we can gain greater basis points in the full investments that we are dealing with in Alberta – and that is the future Alberta – if we were to gain . . .

The Chair: Hon. member, I would like to remind you, as I reminded some members opposite yesterday, that the use of proper names, including the Premier's, is not permitted.

3:50

Mr. Backs: I'm sorry.

To gain, say, potentially 100 basis points would be \$500 million per year, and that would be an incredible gain for the citizens of Alberta.

Looking at the way the bill is structured in how it would look for excellence in investment I think is a very appropriate and far-reaching move. As we do look forward, even though the amendment on tobacco was defeated, I think that there should be some understanding and ability by the investment managers to avoid these types of investments and to avoid, in fact, any investment that would act to the detriment of Alberta or Albertans. You know, something like Osama bin Laden mountain resorts might be one they should flag as one not to look at. Something like the al Qaeda infrastructure industries might not be a good one to look at. We could maybe have some sense and sensibility in the way that those investment managers look at how they deal with the bottom line and how that deals with Alberta.

I do support this bill. I think it's a wise move forward, and I commend the government for moving on this one. Thank you.

The Chair: Are you ready for the question on Bill 22, Alberta Investment Management Corporation Act?

Hon. Members: Question.

[The clauses of Bill 22 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 27 Emblems of Alberta Amendment Act, 2007

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments with respect to this Act? The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Mr. Herard: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. On behalf of the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture I'm very pleased to rise this afternoon and begin discussion in Committee of the Whole on Bill 27, the Emblems of Alberta Amendment Act, 2007. The amendment to the emblems act will allow cabinet to add any Alberta symbol of distinction to the list of official symbols. Bill 27 proposes to grant authority to cabinet to officially recognize symbols of distinction through an order in council. This will allow cultural groups to obtain a symbol of distinction to celebrate important milestones such as the 25th anniversary, for example, of the Franco-Albertan flag.

In fact, it was kind of interesting. After the debate on that particular bill the media were all after those of us who could utter a few words in French as to why we killed the bill to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Franco-Albertan flag, which is not what we did. We voted to in fact create a bill, such as Bill 27, that essentially would make it easier for every organization, every culture in Alberta to approach its government for official recognition.

Bill 27 will provide an efficient process to ensure that important symbols of distinction that recognize the valuable contribution of Alberta's diverse population can be recognized in a timely manner. Much easier to bring something through an OC process than it is to find a private member who could either win or not win the lottery in terms of being drawn for a private member's bill. This will streamline the process for everyone so that every single individual group dealing with respect to language and culture can be duly recognized in an easier way to do things.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I trust that we'll hear good comments.

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

Mr. Chase: Merci, M. le Président. Je suis très triste, très désolé que les membres de ce gouvernement ont dévalué l'importance des contributions francophones dans l'histoire de cette province. Plusieurs députés de cette Assemblée ont raconté l'histoire excellente des francophones en Alberta, symbolisée par les noms des villes, des fleuves, et des lacs qui reconnaissent l'histoire d'un groupe qui a beaucoup contribué à la fondation de cette province. Les membres des Premières nations avec les habitants francophones et anglophones ont travaillé depuis des centaines d'années pour créer et établir l'Alberta que nous sommes fiers de partager aujourd'hui.

Les francophones ne sont pas seulement un autre groupe. Leur symbole, le drapeau, appartient à l'histoire de la formation de cette province. L'emblème francophone mérite plus d'honneur.

Just in summary, I am very sorry that members of this government have devalued the importance of French contributions in the history of this province. Several MLAs from this Assembly discussed the excellent history of francophones, French speakers, the French culture in Alberta symbolized by the names of towns, rivers, and lakes which recognize the history of a group which contributed tremendously to the foundation of this province.

Members of the First Nations together with French and English settlers worked for centuries to create, to establish the Alberta which we are now proud to share today. French speakers, the French culture is not just another group. Their symbol, their flag, belongs to the history of the formation of this province. The French emblem deserves greater respect.

The Chair: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise to speak to Bill 27, Emblems of Alberta Amendment Act, 2007. Let me express my deep regret at the failure of this Legislature on Monday to proceed with Bill 204, Emblems of Alberta (Franco-Albertan Recognition) Amendment Act, 2007. My constituents are deeply disappointed and, in fact, angry that this bill was not allowed to proceed through the Legislature on the pretext that another bill, a government bill, Bill 27, was coming up and therefore there was no need for the Legislature to pass Bill 204.

Mr. Chairman, Bill 204 was a very specific bill, a very powerfully symbolic bill in that it was designed to recognize the historic contributions made by the Franco-Albertan community as the first pioneers to this part of Canada. The bill was being debated on the

20th anniversary of a rather ugly incident in this Legislature which denied a Franco-Albertan MLA, Leo Piquette, who was a member of the NDP caucus at that time, from speaking French in this House. This happened despite the fact that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms of Canada had been in place for five years before that incident happened. So I thought it was a fitting way of recognizing in this Legislature last Monday that we indeed had erred in disallowing Mr. Piquette to ask his question in French and that on that day 20 years later we were going to make a statement in the form of a piece of legislation that would make appropriate and due amends to that error that was made in this House. That wasn't done.

Now to Bill 27. Bill 27, Mr. Chairman, is a sort of framework legislation which will permit the government of Alberta, the cabinet, the Executive Council through order in council to bestow such important recognition to a variety of ethnocultural groups and other groups in our province who seek such recognition who are making important contributions to the development and growth of this province over time and now.

4:00

There's nothing wrong with that. That's a very laudable thing. As a matter of fact, I was reading through some of the remarks made on Monday, one last paragraph from a speech on Bill 204 that was made by my hon. colleague from Calgary-Egmont. Except, Mr. Chairman, perhaps this is just the beginning, speaking to Bill 204. That's how I treated it too. That's a good beginning. Perhaps this bill brought forward by the hon. Member for Peace River will be the beginning of a celebration of all cultures found in this great province of Alberta. I think that is absolutely appropriate and the right thing to do. So there is no contradiction, no problem with passing this bill in the Assembly and then moving on to creating opportunity by way of Bill 27 to permit other groups to be able to seek similar recognition by way of an emblem or other means of choice that they have at their disposal.

This bill will now make that possible for other groups, and to the extent it does that, I support it, but I have a problem with another aspect of it. It takes away from this Legislature the opportunity to both debate and through that debate recognize and express appreciation on this floor for the contributions of other groups who seek similar recognition by way of making application to the government for a recognition emblem or something.

This Legislature plays a most central role in the government of Alberta, and any bill that takes away from it the opportunity as a House, as an Assembly, to be able to express, to have the chance to express appreciation in a debate, appreciation for the contributions and the work that has been done to make this province better by ethnocultural groups or religious groups or other groups I think is a real loss of opportunity. This House should never relinquish without serious consideration its right to insist on having that opportunity to do what the Executive Council is allowed by this piece of legislation, Bill 27, to do. So that's the only part that I find objectionable about Bill 27. It robs the House of that opportunity to officially and formally express appreciation for the contributions of various groups and give a form of recognition to them.

With that said, Mr. Chairman, I will take my seat. As I said, you know, I have some problems with this bill, but it is a bill that will now allow groups to seek recognition for the contributions that they make, and to that extent it's a bill worth supporting. Thank you.

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

Rev. Abbott: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, I did listen very intently to the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. I guess I have to

say that I really do feel that he's incorrect in some of his statements because what happened is that Bill 27 has come in basically as a replacement bill for Bill 204. As much as I appreciated Bill 204 – and I know that I spoke in favour of it. I don't remember if it was here or if it was in caucus, but I did speak in favour of Bill 204. Actually, what has happened is that I absolutely support Bill 27 as a replacement bill for Bill 204.

Let me just tell you a little story, Mr. Chairman. As one who was a sponsor of Bill 209, a private member's bill for this Legislature 2007, I had a very good bill on community treatment orders. What happened was that the minister of health came in, and he actually kind of adopted that bill as Bill 31. He took it as a government bill, Bill 31, the Mental Health Amendment Act, 2007, and he did not only what I was going to do in a private member's bill, but he went above and beyond what I wanted to do as a private member. He really dug into the Mental Health Act and made it so that it suited all of the areas that needed to be kind of amended in order to implement community treatment orders, and I really think that's exactly what happened with Bill 27.

What happened here is that we had the government come in and say: "Lookit, this is a good bill. This is a bill that a private member has put forward." In this case the hon. Member for Peace River. "It's a good bill. We want to take it. We want to do not only what that bill says, but we want to do above and beyond what that bill says." Thus, we have Bill 27, the Emblems of Alberta Amendment Act, 2007.

Mr. Chairman, I am very supportive of this because I think this is how democracy works. This is what it's all about. This is when a private member puts forward a bill, kind of piques the interest of government. It might be an opposition member. It might be a government member. It doesn't matter. It's a private member who piques the interest of government and says: this is something that we have been overlooking and that we need to take on as part of the government agenda.

Mr. Chairman, this is exactly what's happened with Bill 27, so I guess I want to thank the hon. Minister of Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture for recognizing the importance of Bill 204, the private member's bill put forward by the Member for Peace River, and taking this on as a government bill.

I want to just support this in Committee of the Whole wholeheartedly, and I hope that all members of this Assembly will join me in supporting and in endorsing Bill 27 in Committee of the Whole because this, in fact, is not only an encompassment of Bill 204, but it is an expansion to recognize the culture and the emblems and all the history that Alberta has to offer to all Albertans. So let's do it. Let's get on with it, and let's go forward.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Are you ready for the question on Bill 27, Emblems of Alberta Amendment Act, 2007?

Hon. Members: Question.

[The clauses of Bill 27 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Bill 19**Appeal Procedures Statutes Amendment Act, 2007**

The Chair: Are there any amendments, comments, or questions with regard to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, a pleasure to stand and respond to a justice bill, this time in committee, to Bill 19, Appeal Procedures Statutes Amendment Act, 2007. The purpose of Committee of the Whole, Mr. Chairman, as we all know and as some members of the public also know, is to dissect and scrutinize pieces of legislation line by line, paragraph by paragraph, and page by page. Now, today I'm not going to belabour this process because most of my remarks have been put on the record in second reading. Like I mentioned before, this appears to be a housekeeping bill, and it doesn't really warrant a lot of debate unless members from the government caucus would like to stand up and further tell us why it's such a wonderful thing. However, I just have very minor clarifications to seek from the hon. mover of the bill.

The first one is basically with respect to the application for leave to appeal, and it appears, you know, seven different times in the bill because we're dealing with seven different acts that we're amending. Usually the way I read bills is the before and after, you know, what it presently reads and what we're trying to make it say. I notice that now we're talking about 30 days. In the current language it says one month. So I was just wondering if it really makes a difference, you know, one month versus 30 days. Or is it just the hon. mover of the bill exercising his legal background and expertise and playing with us in the House? However, I don't think it's really a major thing.

4:10

It talks about the leave to appeal, and then the other one, the new one, is talking about the application for the leave to appeal. So if he can walk us through an example of, you know, somebody who learns of a decision from one of those boards or tribunals mentioned and would like to raise a concern or appeal that decision or that statement or that decision. How is he or she going to do it and what are the steps? Just walk us through an example or, you know, a case scenario of how it's done. Because, really, as a layman – and I keep admitting that I am – 30 days is one month and one month is 30 days. So I don't understand the value.

Moving on to the other section, Mr. Chairman, with respect to the written request for materials. I think that's positive because we're now saying 14 days, but again I was just reading in the old language, and it says two weeks. Maybe it's clearer. Maybe it is more reader-friendly to say 14 days, and I think it's positive, you know, because we don't want boards and tribunals to sit on a request for information or a request for materials indefinitely. So that is basically telling them that they have to do it within a prescribed period of time, which is positive.

The other question I have, again something that appears frequently in this amendment act, is about the request for the transcript. It's a little technical. I have to admit that I don't fully understand whether the transcript should be automatically released or whether it should be the court, on application or on its own motion, releasing it. Again, if the hon. sponsor of the bill can tell us an example of where that might be warranted, why it's a good decision, why it's a good move.

Then, having said that, I think I just have one last comment, Mr. Chairman, with respect to those boards and tribunals and commissions and agencies. We have a few of them, and they have grown both in size and in scope. Sometimes the public has a concern with respect to how the public is being notified of those decisions, and they're usually decisions of major consequences. They're decisions

that have implications, and they might affect people's lives and their livelihood and the fees they pay, you know, the access to services that they're granted, and so on. So it's basically a request to maybe mandate somehow that notifying the public and making the public aware of the decision, trying to inform people what the decision is and what potential implications it might have, should be standardized. It should be mandated in legislation that this is how you do it. You advertise on television, you advertise in major print media, and you do it repeatedly and you do it over a certain period of time before the effect or the decision comes in operation.

We keep hearing from people saying, "I didn't know about this," or "When did this happen?" Now we're requesting them to only file the request for appeal or their intent to appeal within 30 days. So I think that maybe in fairness we should also have a special, you know, hard, set way to inform the public of those decisions, again noting that they're usually decisions of major implication and magnitude. So just minor clarifications.

I would really appreciate the hon. sponsor giving us an example or a case scenario of how it's done and why it's better this way. I don't think I'm going to disagree with him, and I don't think I'm going to hold up this legislation. Just a point of clarification if he might.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm prepared to stand today to move Bill 19, the Appeal Procedures Statutes Amendment Act, in committee. I spoke somewhat extensively with regard to the details of the bill in second reading, so I will attempt to be brief. The bill does include some minor amendments, as the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung had referred to, which do affect a number of provincial statutes, eight in number, in fact. These are designed to reduce delays and to make better use of the court's time.

The amendments will reflect the current realities in the Court of Appeal that make it impractical to hear all of the cases that come before it "at the next sittings of the Court," as the legislation currently requires. Unfortunately, those types of restraints do not reflect the realities and practices of the court as the cases are scheduled many, many weeks in advance to allow materials to be distributed and for counsel to prepare. In practice the hearing date for the appeal is one agreed on by all of the counsel for the parties. So this bill will allow the court to schedule new appeals in a time frame that is appropriate for the parties involved and in consideration of other previously scheduled matters. It will also bring consistency to the statutes in terms of the time limits for filing and serving appeal documents.

Mr. Chairman, the proposed changes in the bill will better reflect the current practices within the Court of Appeal as it relates to appeals from boards and tribunals. As I mentioned earlier, the stakeholders are supportive of these amendments, and the changes already reflect their input.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung had requested some clarification on what steps would be entailed in order to have an appeal of one of these tribunals proceed. The steps essentially are that within the 30-day period after the decision by the board or tribunal there would have to be an application for leave to appeal. Then, if necessary, under the new provisions if there is an appeal granted, the appeal would proceed in the normal course with the procedure and practice of the Court of Appeal. If there is a written request for materials in the interval between the initial decision to appeal and the actual appeal, then the tribunal has to provide the materials required within 14 days on which the written request is served. Basically, that's the procedure.

I would like to respond to some specific points that the hon. members made in second reading of the bill yesterday. First of all, the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung had expressed concern that he could not find the Gas Utilities Act in reference in the bill. He is correct, but there is a good reason for that. The appeal provisions, it turns out, for the Gas Utilities Act are actually contained within the body of the Public Utilities Board Act.

So based on his remarks, I'd also like to clarify for the same hon. member how the appeal process works. Permission is still required from the judge to proceed with an appeal – and this is what we call the application for leave – and when you seek permission, that is based on the principles of law that allow the court to determine if the board erred in law in making their decision. So it's not always a requisite to have all the materials or the transcript for that leave to be given. It could be something that is obvious.

Yesterday the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona had also asked why there was a distinction between the materials that the applicant can request when preparing for the application for permission to appeal versus the appeal itself. The first point that I would make in that regard is that transcripts are not normally given to the court at this stage because, as I said, they're not always required. In fact, they're often not required to determine whether the court will hear an appeal. Normally the court would have a copy of the board's decision as well as the applicant's other documents. Those by themselves might explain the reason for the appeal.

4:20

Now, if permission for the appeal is granted, then and only then would the transcripts be provided with the other material to be reviewed by the court which is actually hearing the appeal. I can also assure the hon. member that there need be absolutely no concern over whether the lack of transcripts at this stage would affect the applicant's success at the actual appeal stage. Again, this is because transcripts are not required for the court to decide whether it will simply grant permission to proceed with an appeal. The grant of permission to proceed with an appeal, as I said, is based on legal criteria that are separate from what is contained in the transcript.

So I trust those comments have answered my hon. friends' queries. I would ask for your support on this bill.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill for his response to some of the questions that were raised yesterday in second reading of the bill. It was a serious response on his part. I do thank him for it.

I continue to have some concerns about the leave to appeal application provisions here and the fact that those leave to appeal provisions in the bill do make a distinction between the materials to which the applicant would have access and the transcript, to which it will not have access when preparing the leave to appeal application.

These boards and tribunals are quasi-judicial bodies. They have fairly extensive powers. I'm not entirely certain that the law requires all of these tribunals and boards covered by these seven pieces of legislation that are being amended by this bill to keep transcripts. In conversation with some people it has been suggested to me that not all tribunals and boards have a legal obligation to keep transcripts.

If that is the case, then the provision in this bill of not requiring these boards and tribunals to issue these transcripts in order for the

applicant to prepare the leave to appeal application causes me concern because this could further in fact send a signal to those tribunals or boards who do not keep transcripts – and I use the word “if” here: if they don't already have a practice of keeping transcripts, they will find encouragement not to have these transcripts. Given the fact that these boards are quasi-judicial boards and tribunals, I think it's important that they keep those transcripts. For that reason alone I find a problem with this bill because it would send a signal for these tribunals to continue with the practice of not having the obligation to keep the transcripts.

Mr. Chairman, my second reason for seeking some change in the bill has to do with the issue of efficiency and costs. The provision in the proposed piece of legislation, Bill 19, whereby section 26 is amended by (3.2) – I think it is here that I'm talking about. At the time of seeking leave to appeal, the transcript can be certainly requested on the motion of the judge himself or herself, or an application can be made to have this transcript made available. This back and forth with both procedures that are implicit in here in my view will prolong the number of appearances before the court, adding to inefficiency and extending the time over which the case can be concluded. So I'm also concerned from the point of view of the efficiency argument for keeping this provision in the bill, which by legislation, in fact, takes away the ability of the person preparing the application for the leave to appeal to request transcripts.

In order to be able to do this one, we have to appear before the judge in the Court of Appeal. To me that's expensive for the client's side. Every time a lawyer appears before a court on behalf of the client, it's expensive, I think more expensive, perhaps, than getting the transcript. If the issue is the concern with the cost of transcripts, I think it should be left to the counsel for the applicant or the legal representative of the party that's seeking to make an application to seek leave to appeal as to whether to undergo that cost or not. It shouldn't be by legislation. It looks to me to be too arbitrary to at the very outset deny the opportunity to the counsel or the applicant to have the ability to have the transcripts if that party deems it necessary to have them attached.

So both on grounds of efficiency and on the grounds that this might encourage, in fact, some boards and tribunals to not keep transcripts or to discontinue the practice of having transcripts because they're not required at least in part of this law, it makes it necessary for me to seek to amend the act, and for that, Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment here. The original, I think, goes to the table, and I have the copies for distribution.

The Chair: We'll allow the pages a moment to distribute them and bring the original up to the table.

Dr. Pannu: I should wait, I think.

The Chair: Yes.

We'll refer to this as amendment A1.

Hon. member, you may proceed.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise to move that Bill 19, Appeal Procedures Statutes Amendment Act, 2007, be amended as follows: (a) in section 1(2)(d) by striking out the proposed section 27(4.2); (b) in section 2(2)(c) by striking out the proposed section 26(3.2); (c) in section 3(2)(c) by striking out the proposed section 70(3.2); (d) in section 4(2)(a) by striking out the proposed section 41(2.3); (e) in section 5(2)(a) by striking out the proposed section 688(2.2); (f) in section 6(2)(c) by striking out the proposed section 31(3.2); (g) in section 7(3) by striking out the proposed section 70(5).

4:30

Mr. Chairman, the effect if this amendment were to be voted in by the House would be to improve the bill in two respects that I've just drawn attention to: making sure that the boards and the tribunals keep the transcripts and making sure that those transcripts are available on request by the party interested in appealing the ruling of the decision of the tribunal or the board and, secondly, to improve the efficiency of the procedures through which the appeal process can be and will be conducted if this bill is passed.

Just the last point, Mr. Chairman. If this amendment were to be passed by the House, it will impact all the seven statutes proposed to be amended by Bill 19: the Agricultural Operation Practices Act, the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board Act, the Electric Utilities Act, the Energy Resources Conservation Act, the Municipal Government Act, the Natural Resources Conservation Board Act, and the Public Utilities Board Act. All these seven statutes will be impacted if this bill is amended as proposed by my amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Does anyone else wish to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll be brief. It's something I just asked earlier of the hon. sponsor of Bill 19. He explained that the request for the transcript – whether it's made through the tribunal or the board or whether, in fact, there's an application through the court or maybe the court on its own motion asking for the transcript to be released, that circumstance doesn't really affect the processing or the outcome of the appeal process.

I'm puzzled as to the rationale as explained by my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Strathcona. I'm going to reserve my decision on this amendment. At first glance I don't think it's warranted or necessary, but I'm going to trust some comment from the hon. mover of the bill because, you know, I think he actually provided that clarification earlier. As such, I am inclined to oppose it, but till I make that decision, I'm interested in hearing him one more time, explaining the issue with respect to transcripts having no effect on the outcome of the appeal case. Or the Minister of Justice if he's willing to participate.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I just want to make a couple of comments with respect to the thrust of what we're trying to accomplish here. First of all, what we want to accomplish is a common standard or common process with respect to these leave to appeal applications. The leave to appeal applications are from an administrative tribunal, which will keep a record of the proceedings before it. That record would include, perhaps, a transcript but more likely something that could be turned into a transcript. There may be a digital record, for example, of the proceedings, which could upon request be turned into a transcript. Nonetheless, there will be a record of what goes on there, including the evidence before the tribunal, the documents filed as exhibits, and so on and so forth.

Under the provisions of this amendment it's contemplated that the applicant would make a written request for the materials to the board for the purpose of the application for leave, and the applicant is not to request a transcript of the hearing unless the court believes that a transcript is absolutely necessary for the purpose of determining that the leave to appeal application will proceed. In other words, they don't want the applicant to expend the money on behalf of the leave to appeal application unless absolutely necessary.

So this is a good thing. What it essentially says is: don't spend the money on the transcript unless we the court in looking at it think that it's necessary for us to see that to determine that a leave to appeal application should be granted. So this is, if you will, a cost reducer for the typical applicant at this stage. In other words, you might make a leave to appeal application, lose, and in that particular case, if you haven't got the transcript, you're not out the considerable amount of money in many cases for the production of the transcript.

So I think that the approach that is taken here is quite rational, is beneficial for all parties included, particularly the applicant. I would remind the members of the Assembly that this particular initiative is being brought before the Assembly with the support of the court because they see it as advantageous to the administration of justice and access to justice. I do believe that the amendments as currently drafted accomplish that.

I would ask the Assembly to vote against the amendment put forward by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, although I know that he is well motivated in bringing this forward, and I do appreciate the opportunity to have further discussion regarding it. I think what we currently have does the trick.

Thanks.

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

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the minister for his comments. I agree with him that the one purpose of Bill 19 is to rationalize the procedures and to bring in common standards. That's a good thing. Yesterday in my remarks on the bill, in fact, I quite clearly recognized that and supported that part of the bill. That's a good thing. I also note that the minister is making a serious attempt to make the whole system work better. There's no question in my mind that that's what the minister is trying to accomplish.

That being said, I'm still not totally persuaded that the amendment in the bill, which denies the availability of transcripts at the time of preparation of the leave to appeal application, would necessarily cut costs. If the court is the one that has to determine whether or not the transcript is needed, someone has to go to the court to hear that from the court. You increase the number of frequency of visits by the lawyer to the court by this procedure, in my view, not reduce them. Lawyers representing you in a Court of Appeal is not something that's without cost. That in itself, I think, has the potential to increase costs. It won't necessarily, but it has the potential to increase costs rather than reduce them.

4:40

As I said, if you don't legislate that ability to have access to a transcript out completely, you then leave it to the discretion of the parties seeking the leave to appeal as to whether they, he or she or it, want to attach a transcript to the leave to appeal application. To me that leaves, certainly, the possibility open that one could save costs if one so chose to or that one could spend money on getting the transcript but then have the opportunity to save money by reducing the number of appearances before the Court of Appeal because you don't have to go to the Court of Appeal to determine whether or not you would need a transcript.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Chair: Are you ready for the question on Bill 19, Appeal Procedures Statutes Amendment Act, 2007?

Hon. Members: Question.

[The clauses of Bill 19 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Bill 15
Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution
Amendment Act, 2007

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mrs. Mather: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a very important bill, and I feel that it's a privilege to be part of this process. The highlights, as I see it, are that this amendment will change the terminology of the act from "Children Involved in Prostitution" to "Sexually Exploited Children," improve legal services to apprehended children or youth, improve privacy measures to protect apprehended children and youth, and expand access to voluntary treatment for young adults up to the age of 22. I would like to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for her efforts in the original Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act and again now with amendments to increase the potential to meet the intent of the original PCHIP.

The amendments are largely improvements, but in general I want to say that they do not deal with prevention, increasing penalties for perpetrators, or increasing services for children who are sexually abused in their homes or communities. There are ongoing concerns that PCHIP criminalizes children who are themselves the victims of a crime. I know that PCHIP has been most effective in the cases of addictions. With drugs, children are often unable to recognize or react to their situation. Pimps and other adults may use drugs to control children, and PCHIP, I know, can pull children out of that fire.

Looking first at the name change, I think it's very positive. This continues to shift public consciousness and is closer to reality. It reflects the fact that children are exploited in other realms than just the street. Previously the name implied that children can make choices of this nature. However, this new title misrepresents this bill. Inclusions of the terms "sexual abuse" and "sexual exploitation" into the text of the act is a valuable step that recognizes the reality of these children's situations; however, the title of the amended bill is misleading. The intention of this bill is not and will not be the protection of all sexually exploited children but, rather, a small subset, I would say, of sexually exploited children. Children who are exploited in their homes and their communities will not be protected by this act.

While the name change is likely well intentioned, it is not accurate. However, I believe the name change will have an impact on how the act is implemented. I understand that the previous program made clear that unless there was direct evidence of prostitution, services could not be accessed under the act. There are many children who are sexually exploited, however, who are not engaged in prostitution as we know it. So we could be helpful in cases where the victim does not think they are being sexually exploited, say a 12-year-old who just thinks that, well, dad loves them in a special way.

I think with the existing enhancement act in a case like this the child would not get secure services. The name change implies changes to the existing practice and that specific secure services might be provided in the case that I just mentioned, for a specific reason. On the other hand, I think under the old act there were specific, almost black and white criteria to work with. So with the name change I'm wondering if it could open up to some confusion.

Again, PCHIP focuses on apprehending the victim, not the offender. It has some token punishments for offenders, but the Criminal Code offers much stronger sanctions. At its core this act still apprehends and confines children who are being sexually exploited through prostitution, so there's a danger of this further criminalizing and ostracizing an already vulnerable group of individuals who should be able to access services without first being apprehended. We need to focus on those preying on children as well, but this is difficult to control since the criminal aspect, I understand, is handled federally.

My concern, other than apprehending the victim, not the offender, is also that we're not looking at preventative steps here. It is widely documented that the majority of children involved in prostitution have been previously sexually abused. This act makes services available after the situation is already very severe. Better services for children, families, and communities early on would increase the chance of successful intervention. Given that PCHIP does indeed infringe on civil liberties by imposing that secured care without charges, this could be a cause for concern. The publication ban is a real improvement; so, too, is making legal representation fall under the jurisdiction of the children's advocate much better than the legal aid approach.

I do think that anybody receiving secure services under this act should be entitled to due process; that is, a judge should determine if there is sufficient cause for secure in the first place, and second, there should be a requirement for some sort of service plan to be presented and approved by the court. Too often, I think, we take action and then we take too long to figure out what the plan should be, what the resources should be, and what steps are going to be taken in terms of the crisis that we're dealing with.

The Child and Youth Advocate roles in this amendment, again, I think are really good. I appreciate that that change has been made from the other approach with legal aid.

Now, I know that some social workers see this legislation as being about saving kids' lives, but some other workers in the system tell me that kids under PCHIP seem to run back to the street over and over again, that true success is far and few between. I think what the program tries to do is to link the youth to a job, school, work, home, and to some community integration, and it's difficult because these young people find the lure of money hard to ignore as the alternative, seemingly, is poverty for a number of years till they get on their feet. It's not surprising that the program is most effective when you just catch somebody who's starting out in prostitution as opposed to those who are more into that culture. How much better we could do if we had dedicated programs to help the sexually exploited before they turn to prostitution.

These amendments will extend services to youth beyond the age of 18 in order to provide better supports during the transition into adulthood. Services past the five days are voluntary and include such things as addictions treatment, counselling, health services, and training. Service providers have largely approved of this step, and I'm hearing good things from the community in terms of the pleasure or delight with the increase in the age range. The struggle is the same whether one is 17 or 18, but at 18 they become criminally liable. The increase in age range is good news, but I'm wondering: will they be criminally liable if they seek services?

4:50

If services and treatment that are voluntary are funded for those over 18, this is really a positive thing because we need to provide services to kids beyond 18, when there's a real benefit to a youth, and being told that we can't because of the youth's age just doesn't make sense. If we truly want rehabilitation and the youth to have a chance for positive change in their life, we can't just say: "Well, too bad. You're 18 today, so you're on your own."

I really need more clarification on that last point: increasing the age beyond 18 so that youth can continue to receive services into early adulthood. This sounds really good because often youth who reach the legal age of 18 are not emotionally or mentally mature enough to deal with many factors because of varying things that have happened in their lives. So offering support and protection to age 23 I think is a wonderful thing. But I understand that this is for individuals who have an open file with Children's Services. That's something I would really support, but I'm wondering: what if they've never had a child welfare file? Would we then apprehend legal aged people up to 23? That would be a slippery slope, I think, but good for some. So I need more explanation there as to what criteria would be followed to determine who is covered and who is not.

I'm wondering if there have been any implementation reviews of PCHIP. Does the government know if it works? I believe that there is an urban/rural difference in how this act gets used. I understand that in Calgary and Edmonton there are specific workers who work in this area and have the ongoing support and training and connections, but I believe that rural workers do not get assigned in the same manner, meaning that there's sort of a jack-of-all-trades approach. What happens in the rural areas is that unless you have a working knowledge of the act through experience, perhaps you tend not to use it and go with what you do know.

The existing act is very black and white, so unless the youth was involved in prostitution, you could not use the act, meaning that any other sexually exploited youth had to be dealt with under the standard legislation. Do we have any information on the effectiveness of this program? I also wonder who actually implements the act. I know that there are some private services that are contracted to perform some or all services under the act. In terms of results, the community approach; that is, supporting kids in their own home, I know is generally seen to be very effective. I believe Catholic Social Services has a big role providing services under the act, but I'm not sure of that. I have been told that region 6 has two workers dedicated in this area.

Another question is that I understand that this act is one of three that links apprehension with service provision. The other two are Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, PCHAD, and to some extent the Drug-endangered Children Act. However, this act differs from PCHAD in that the individual being apprehended and confined is him or herself the victim of a crime. So it's unclear how successful this program will be in terms of real numbers. There's no information in the annual report as to how many individuals have been apprehended or have received services, nor how many perpetrators have been arrested or charged.

I know that drug trade and addictions are fuelling sexual exploitation. It's hard to tell if PCHIP is driving the sex trade underground or if technology is doing it. Those who intend to perpetrate will always try to be one step ahead of us, and this shift was happening before PCHIP was ever enacted. Law may or may not have an impact, and the Internet is a new factor. Apparently, johns are getting organized and warning each other about police stings and so forth. The ICE team, the integrated child exploitation team, is another effort to curb illegal activity.

My understanding is that presently the police charge the youth. I'm wondering: is that correct? If so, I would like to suggest that maybe if we had a team approach, an assessment team similar to CART, the children at risk team, assessing to take the onus off the police, that might be a better way to go. Presently, I believe, the kids have to disclose they are prostituting where a team could assess, and the disclosure would not be required, perhaps. In most cases I can't see a young person disclosing. I think that when they take a look at where that might lead, they might be inclined not to disclose.

I'm wondering also: can parents use PCHIP? I think that it's important to take a look at the role of parents and their responsibilities and their desire to do the best for their children. That leads me to wondering if there is any arrangement that we could have between PCHIP and PCHAD. Probably not because one is Children's Services, and I believe the other one is AADAC. However, it seems to be that most working youth do have addiction issues, and maybe there should be some consideration there.

Overall, again, I want to say that it's a privilege to be involved in this process because this is so important. The sexual abuse and exploitation of children is a critical problem, and we as government and community leaders must do everything in our power to prevent abuse and to provide the supports and services needed to make sure that Alberta's children are safe and secure. So I appreciate the intent of Bill 15, and I'm happy to support these amendments. I look forward to getting some of my questions answered.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mrs. Forsyth: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will be brief because I think when I was speaking in second reading that I answered a lot of those questions that the hon. member has asked.

I want to reiterate that this particular piece of legislation and the amendments that we're bringing forward did not come from the government. When I happened to be the Minister of Children's Services, I put together a symposium about a year ago November because I thought it would be a good time to see what was happening in the act: if it was working, what we needed to do. So at that particular time we brought many, many people together in the field; that is, social workers, people who had worked on the street with these kids.

We even brought some of the kids who had been apprehended under PCHIP to this particular symposium. In fact, Mr. Chairman, we had about seven children there. We asked them if they would like to come, and they said yes, that they felt it was important for us to hear their story. When they were speaking very eloquently and telling their story in their own words with swears and everything, there was not a dry eye in the house, and every one of those children that spoke at this particular symposium – and there were girls and boys – indicated how PCHIP had saved their lives.

I can tell the hon. member that currently we have apprehended 770 children under this particular piece of legislation. I can tell you that the social workers in this province, the police in this province, and kids who have been apprehended under PCHIP like this program. In fact, Mr. Chair, it was to the point where the children were calling the police and telling them what corner they were going to be at so that their pimp didn't know – but the police knew – so that we could apprehend them and take them into a safe house.

The member talked about dealing with perpetrators. We deal with perpetrators. The Crown will go in once a charge has been laid with two charges: one under the PCHIP and one under the Criminal Code. Their hope is always to get a conviction under the Criminal Code because of the sanctions, and of course then you have a criminal record. But if they have to, they will take a conviction under the

PCHIP, and yes we've had convictions under that particular piece of legislation.

A lot of the things that the hon. member talked about were and can be services under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act. I can tell you, Mr. Chairman, that that particular piece of legislation that was brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, when he did a review of the old Child Welfare Act, is a wonderful piece of legislation, being watched right across the country. In my time in the Ministry of Children's Services, I can tell you that it was one of the highlights on the successes that were seen under that particular legislation.

She also talked about due process. That due process comes from the judges. It's the judges that determine if the child is apprehended on a voluntary component or if we have to apprehend them. The judge makes that decision.

5:00

Does this legislation work? Absolutely, Mr. Chairman. It's been watched all over the world. I've fielded questions all over the world. I always believe, if a particular piece of legislation is working, in going to the people that it's affecting, and the kids have told us over and over again that it is. It was the kids that talked about extending it to 22, very similar to what the Member for Calgary-Buffalo recommended when we brought forward the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, about extending those services till 22.

The rural and urban issue. All of the workers are trained. We're well aware of the issue of child exploitation, and it's not just confined to the big cities.

I can tell you that the name change is what the kids wanted. They found that when we talked about prostitution, they were unwilling or unable to – they felt that they were being segregated, and they had asked us to change the words to sexual exploitation. That also encompasses much more than prostitution because sexual exploitation covers many, many things. While I have a great deal of love for the Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Act, because it was my piece of legislation, and the acronym PCHIP, it was time to change it, get into the year 2007.

We're excited about this piece of legislation. The workers, the Kate Quinns of the world, are all very excited about this particular piece of legislation.

The member has asked many, many questions, and I hope I've answered most of them.

The Chair: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Yes. Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm happy to rise and make some comments with respect to Bill 15. I wanted to say at the outset that I think that Bill 15, the Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Amendment Act, 2007, or PCHIP, is a good bill, and we will be supporting it. It introduces some components to the current act that greatly augment the service delivery and the effectiveness of protection for children.

It does so in three ways. It strengthens privacy regulations by ensuring that no child or guardian can be identified if they have come under the attention or care of the ministry. Previous privacy regulation would only be applicable during legal proceedings. Second, it changes the immediate point of contact for the children during detention from legal aid to child and youth advocates, who are better trained to deal with the issues that might arise from such situations, and the bill extends the age at which children can continue to receive services provided through the ministry from 18 to 22. That, I think, Mr. Chairman, is one of the strongest elements

of the bill, and I would congratulate the government for taking that step. I think it's a very positive step given that there's no cut-off point at which a child becomes an adult in reality other than arbitrary dates that are set around legalities. The extension of services represents a strong component in the recovery and protection of those children who are abused.

Mr. Chairman, I have a constituency in which prostitution, drug-related issues are a serious and ongoing concern for the community. I think that anything that can deal with this in a compassionate way and particularly by focusing on people who are just entering into this kind of lifestyle is a very positive step. I think much tougher laws are needed to deal with the kinds of situations that give rise to this. Certainly, there's a close relationship with drugs, and the community, I think, is very aware of that, and the community has taken very strong and clear positions with respect to this issue.

The whole question of pawnshops came up at a large public meeting in Alberta Avenue the other night. It was a meeting to deal with some planning proposals in the Norwood and Alberta Avenue area and the Eastwood area, and there were nearly 400 people at that meeting. A big concern was the whole question of pawnshops and the relationship of pawnshops to crime and break-and-enter crime. That, of course, is connected to drugs, and the drugs are connected to the prostitution, and all are connected to bad housing and absentee landlords.

So there's a complex mix of problems that the community is struggling to deal with, and I commend the community for the work that they have done and are doing. It's a beautiful community, Mr. Chairman. It has many beautiful older homes dating from after the First World War, has beautiful tree-lined streets. It's close to downtown, and it has a major commercial strip on 118th Avenue that has enormous potential, so this is a community that has a great deal going for it. Lots of young families are moving in, but they don't always stay because of the activities in that community relating to prostitution and relating to drugs and some of the break-and-enter criminal activity as well.

The community is very united around this question, and they need support. I think whatever we can do to strengthen the supports for people to keep them from getting involved in prostitution and also by taking stronger steps against drug houses, stronger steps against people who would exploit children and women, and even matters like traffic circulation or dealing with pawnshop licensing in the area: all of these things are part of the solution. I think that this act, this bill, can also be part of the solution for that community.

Mr. Chairman, 10 to 12 per cent of those involved in street prostitution are children, and 85 per cent of children involved in prostitution were sexually abused prior to becoming involved. What really concerned me when I started looking into this matter a bit more is that the average female gets involved at the age of 15 years; the average male – and there are a number – at 17 years. I believe that there are steps that can be taken – and this is part of the solution – to eliminate or reduce this problem for our communities.

I want to say that there's a real concern in the community about the attitude of police with respect to this issue. Many times people in the community have heard the answer from the police: they have to go somewhere. So we've seen examples of people who are homeless, for example, being picked up on Whyte Avenue and dropped off in this community, and that's not acceptable.

Mr. Chairman, if, in fact, we care about people and we put the proper supports in place, the proper programs to keep people out of prostitution, and we take a hard line on people who have been involved in supporting that trade and the drug trade in our communities, we can eliminate it, I'm convinced. I think the conventional wisdom is that you can't really eliminate it. You can only move it

around. Well, the people in my constituency have had enough, and if society and the police cannot eliminate it, then they are taking the position that it's somebody else's turn, and they're not going to put up with it anymore.

I know that there are some members, both in Edmonton and in Calgary, who have similar sorts of problems, and I want to recognize the work that's been done over the past number of years by some of those members as well.

This is something that can be dealt with. It's unacceptable that any community should have to put up with it or that children going to school would be harassed or children playing in parks and playgrounds should come across needles or condoms. That's unacceptable. I think it's a duty of all of us, Mr. Chairman, to see to it that this problem is eliminated. I would encourage all members in the Assembly to support this bill as one piece of that answer.

Thank you.

5:10

The Chair: Are you ready for the question on Bill 15, Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Amendment Act, 2007?

Hon. Members: Question.

[The clauses of Bill 15 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that the committee rise and report bills 27, 22, 19, and 15.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 22, Bill 27, Bill 19, and Bill 15. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

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

Bill 28
Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2007

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

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon and to move Bill 28, the Provincial Court Amendment Act, for third reading.

This bill, briefly, amends the Provincial Court Act to permit a judge who is more than 70 years of age and who is working full time to be appointed a part-time judge if he or she wishes. The amendments also change how sittings for part-time judges can be scheduled. I've commented at some length in second and at Committee of the Whole with respect to the detail and don't intend to do so again.

I appreciate the comments and support of members who have spoken to this particular bill, in particular the Member for Edmonton-McClung. That member raised a question about whether this bill changes the number of days a part-time judge will sit each year. He also wondered whether the bill makes scheduling easier for the Chief Judge or the assistant chief judges. Bill 28 does not change the number of days a part-time judge is required to sit in each year of his or her term. It merely changes how those days are scheduled. Currently it's two three-month blocks, and this particular amendment will allow a number of days to go into the accumulation of the total of six months. So it's really a facility change for the court. It provides more flexibility to schedule part-time judges as caseload requires.

The member also asked whether amendments to the act might interfere with the ability of younger, qualified people to be appointed to the bench. These amendments do not in any way put younger qualified people at a disadvantage. In fact, the policy that we have in place is that when two full-time judges start working part-time, that creates a vacancy for another full-time judge and so effectively gives rise to an opportunity for a younger qualified person to go to the bench.

The great benefit, actually, Mr. Speaker, in this amendment is to allow judges who are over 70 years of age to be appointed on a part-time basis and retain their experience and knowledge for our Provincial Court and for the benefit of the justice system in Alberta generally. This gives very experienced judges an opportunity to use not only their knowledge in the disposition of cases but, equally as importantly in terms of the overall court, their mentorship for the younger, less-experienced judges who are just coming on.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, I believe that those are the questions that were raised by the hon. member and by hon. members. This is a piece of legislation that is supported by the court, and I would ask members of the Assembly to support it.

Thank you.

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

Dr. B. Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me pleasure to say a few words on Bill 28 in third reading. I thank the hon. minister for such clarity in answering the questions of my colleague from Edmonton-McClung. The effect of this bill is clear. The change will allow for experienced judges to keep working for a longer period of time, and it gives judges who are full-time the choice of a reduced workload after 70 if they so choose. Having more experienced judges in the court system for a longer period of time will only enhance the system, providing more access to justice.

The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and the hon. Minister of Justice commented during second reading and Committee of the Whole that this change is an improvement on the system of appointing supernumerary judges, who fill in as the need arises. With full-time judges becoming part-time judges and continuing to be of service, we will have more reliable, up-to-date, informed judicial expertise on a longer term basis. If this has the added effect of

speeding up the process of justice, then that is an obvious added benefit.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. minister wish to close?

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a third time]

**Bill 16
Police Amendment Act, 2007**

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader on behalf of the hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security, I move third reading of Bill 16.

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

Mr. Elsalhy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to respond to the hon. minister moving third reading on behalf of the Solicitor General. We have already discussed Bill 16 at considerable length in the earlier stages of debate, second reading and Committee of the Whole. I just want to emphasize that I'm really pleased that in the province of Alberta we're finally moving towards bringing in oversight of our police and law enforcement services. We have long advocated for such an oversight mechanism to be brought in, and we're really pleased that, finally, the government is responding favourably.

During debate, Mr. Speaker, we have highlighted the fact that oversight has to be civilian oversight, public oversight. It has to be a mechanism where members of the public at large are put in charge of evaluating and investigating incidents, you know, involving serious allegations of police wrongdoing. These are not simple mistakes or little inconveniences. These are serious cases where death or injury or, indeed, corruption are brought forward, and those allegations have to be investigated thoroughly and decisively. But also to ask members of the public to be on that investigative unit is the right thing to do.

5:20

The police are entrusted to uphold the law and enforce the law, and we entrust members of the law enforcement community to protect us and to protect our interests and our rights. We expect them to be efficient, and we expect them to be effective. But, then, we also expect them to conduct their business with the utmost integrity and with the highest ethical standards. No one arm of that equation outweighs the other arm. They're both equally important: efficiency and effectiveness on the one hand, integrity and ethical behaviour on the other.

So bringing in oversight of police services is a good decision, and it's a good move. It serves two purposes. One, it basically offers the public the assurance that things are going to be investigated, you know, when there is such a serious allegation. Number two, it also, probably, sends a message to members of the law enforcement community that there are consequences, and people should be thinking twice before maybe being tempted to do something that is contrary to the law.

We brought an amendment, Mr. Speaker. Actually, we brought two, but the more important amendment that we brought in required the government to stipulate the composition of the integrated investigative unit. I particularly asked for two members of the public – true civilians, people who are independent, at arm's length,

lay people if you will – to be on that investigative unit. The government, unfortunately, decided that it wasn't worthy of their support, but the hon. Solicitor General indicated that that's a commitment of his, to have members of the public sit on the committee.

While I commend him and thank him for expressing that commitment, I still think that a verbal commitment is not adequate and is not binding. I would have much rather seen the composition or the structure of that special investigative unit and who sits on it to be embedded in legislation so it's not left up to the will or the whim of the Solicitor General of the day. I wanted it to be enshrined in legislation so it's basically something that is mandatory, and it has to be done.

As always, Mr. Speaker, members of the Official Opposition struggle with certain dilemmas. You know, we have certain questions that we ask each other: whether, in fact, anything is better than nothing, or do we vote for, like, all or nothing? In this particular case we voted in favour of Bill 16 because it really builds on something we brought forward two years ago in 2005 when we were debating Bill 36, which was also called the Police Amendment Act back then. We brought up the Ontario model, and we brought up true civilian oversight. The government had the opportunity in 2005 but declined to seize that opportunity.

Two years later we're pleased that, you know, we're seeing movement, and it's a positive movement. We're also pleased that the mandate of the integrated investigative unit is not only to investigate cases of death but also to investigate serious injury and to investigate cases of corruption or using police resources inappropriately or things like that. So that is a favourable turn of events.

The other comment, Mr. Speaker – and we've expressed this before – is that many people in the Official Opposition, including my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Glenora, have said that the way the integrated investigative unit is invoked or triggered should be, again, something that would be mandatory, would be automatic whenever an allegation of serious misconduct is brought forward. Unfortunately, again, the Solicitor General prefers to have the freedom and the room to manoeuvre, so he or she would make that decision according to what he or she deems appropriate or whether in fact it's necessary. We wanted it to be automatic, we wanted it to be in legislation, but unfortunately the government side did not see the wisdom of accepting that recommendation.

Mr. Speaker, again, it's a step forward. Anything, as we deemed in our caucus discussions, is better than nothing, and this is something that we called for, something that the public is calling for and members of the media are supportive of.

With that, I encourage all members to vote in favour of Bill 16. Who knows? Maybe two years from now we can bring it back and amend it further and make it even stronger. You know, I would like forward to such a day coming.

I'll take my seat, and I call the question.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 16, the Police Amendment Act, 2007. I'm prepared to support the bill in that it amends the act so that an integrated investigation unit can look into complaints about police behaviour and serious incidents involving police.

Mr. Speaker, we believe it's very important that there actually be civilian oversight of police actions, particularly when there are serious allegations against police. You know, we depend so much on the police in our society, and certainly in my communities the police are highly respected and valued. People absolutely depend on the police.

But from time to time there are allegations that the police abuse their authority or get off the track of being there for the community.

Robert Peel said that the police are the community and the community is the police. I believe that. I've seen community policing, in particular in Edmonton, work very effectively, not only in cracking down our criminals but removing ongoing sources of criminal activity and, in fact, bringing about changes within community that give rise to a greater sense of security, participation of the public, and so on.

So I'm a big fan of community policing. I don't think community policing in any way means that police are somehow softer on crime. In fact, what I think it means is that in many ways they confront the crime and criminal activity and factors that lead to crime more aggressively and more proactively rather than just waiting until the crime is committed and try and catch the person who did it. In my view, strong police with close ties to community is important and valuable.

There have been a number of instances in different parts of the province and particularly in Edmonton in the last number of years that have given rise to concern that not all police officers are necessarily playing by the set of rules that we've all agreed on. It's those instances that I think require us to ensure that there's a vigilant nonpolice public body that looks after the public interest when some police may have left the agreed upon path with respect to how they deal with individuals within our society.

There are a few cases. One, I think, was the question of the Overtime sting, where very significant police resources were put into what seemed to be an attempt to catch a critical journalist and the chairman of the Police Commission at the time in a drunk driving offence. Like some members opposite and others, you know, there were concerns. Some politicians were present there, and there is an ongoing inquiry. But that was very inappropriate. In my view, we still haven't got to the bottom of it. I think it would be important to have some independent ability to deal with this, and I specifically think that citizens, nonpolice civilians, need to be at the core of that.

5:30

There are other cases of abuse, large and small. There was a case where one officer repeatedly tasered a First Nations man but was related to the chief at the time and was not charged. That is something also that cries out: when police abuse helpless people. It's very rare, thank goodness. Those people need to have somebody in their corner who will protect them.

Recently some members of our staff – one gentleman was aggressively dealt with by police on Whyte Avenue, and there were some slurs involved. Those kinds of things are not as serious as cases of clear misuse of power, but they are still a matter of concern.

So I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that consistent with the principles of the police being part of the community and the community being part of the police and consistent with the goal of making sure that we have the very best police and that they work in the interests of the community and not against the rights of individuals, this is a step forward. But our party has called for a considerable period of time to make sure that there is some more comprehensive, civilian-based, democratic oversight of police activities, including the investigation of serious allegations against the police.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, of course there will always be frivolous complaints or complaints directed against the police by individuals who don't have the public interest at heart. I think we're not particularly looking to support that kind of activity in any way, but legitimate concerns of people need to be investigated properly and objectively.

Mr. Speaker, I think that that's pretty much what I wanted to say. I think that this is a small step towards the kind of oversight that we need, and I look forward to more initiatives along this line in the future. With that, I'll just indicate that we'll be supporting this bill and thank the House for their attention.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Cenaiko: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great privilege for me to address the Assembly regarding third reading of Bill 16, the Police Amendment Act, 2007. I'll be brief given the fact that the hon. members from both the Liberals and the NDs made some very good points regarding the fact that civilian oversight is critical in today's policing world, in the 21st century, and will continue to be ever so important as we move into the future as technology expands into the day-to-day operations of police investigations.

This legislation really does provide for the evolving of the Alberta Police Act. In 2005 a major overhaul of the Police Act was brought before this Assembly and was approved. This act and the amendments that are brought before us today took months and months of work in 2006 of consulting and working in a partnership with police commissions, with the police services, to ensure that this legislation is moving forward on a positive front, looking at best practices from across Canada, internationally and the United Kingdom and, as well, throughout the United States to look at what some of those areas are where we want to ensure that public oversight is in place in investigating serious incidents.

So this legislation really does provide the minister with the opportunity to set in place an integrated investigative unit that will be able to do investigations throughout the province on any police service regarding any serious allegation.

The other component I wanted to just touch on as well. The amendment will allow the minister to direct the lock-up facilities, which include our arrest processing units in both Calgary and Edmonton and in our major centres. We have highly trained and skilled police officers working in those facilities right now, where the legislation that's being provided here will be able to provide for the transfer of those officers back to the front line and be replaced with corrections officers within the minister's department. So, again, utilizing the appropriate skills and the appropriate officers in the right locations and facilities, as the Solicitor General's department did with protecting our courts throughout the province, utilizing sheriffs versus RCMP officers, provides positive direction and provides this government with the opportunity to look at legislation to ensure that it evolves in the future and doesn't remain static.

So I support this bill and would like to call the question.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others?

Does the hon. Deputy Government House Leader wish to close on behalf of the minister?

[Motion carried; Bill 16 read a third time]

Bill 27

Emblems of Alberta Amendment Act, 2007

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

Mr. Renner: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture I am pleased to move third reading of Bill 27.

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

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is my first opportunity to be able to stand up and speak to this Bill 27. The very first thing that jumped out to me was where it says that Alberta symbols of distinction will be decided in cabinet and not the Legislature. I think that is probably an insult to all of us who have been elected to

represent everyone in this province. I see no reason why this has to be decided behind closed doors. I would like to know exactly how many ethnic representations of nationalities we have sitting in this House, that it can't be discussed here.

Having said that, I would like to speak to the bill. I think it's very important to remember that we are unique as a nation called Canada to have two founding languages and nationalities: French and English. But we must not forget that there were nations here before us, the First Nations of our country, the indigenous peoples of our lands. However, at that point they were separate nations and, to a point, remain so. They are a very important part of the mosaic of the mind of our nation.

But, Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak about my French heritage. My first Quebec ancestors on my mother's side of the family were Jean Royer and Marie Targer. He came in 1640, and they were married in 1663. Many, many hundreds of families can trace their heritage from the same group of women that my great-ancestor came from. Both of them were born in France. He was a tanner, and she was a fille du roi, a girl of the king. These young women came at the expense of the king to New France to be a part of creating this new land. We can trace her village back to France, but we can't his. They lived in L'Île-d'Orléans, near Quebec City, and to this day there are Royers living on the lot next to the original housing property. The original house is now a bed and breakfast and is still standing.

5:40

One of their great-granddaughters, Marie Giroux, lived from 1756 to 1861, which I believe started the longevity which is on that side of my family. She married Johann Théodore Besserer, an army surgeon, in 1776, and they lived in Château-Richer.

Their son, Louis-Théodore Besserer, was a notary, soldier, politician, and businessman. When he was admitted to the profession of notary, it was noted that he was a man of good counsel, an alert financier, sound and rarely at fault in his judgment, and who quickly won the confidence of his fellow citizens and built up a fine clientele. In the War of 1812 Louis was a lieutenant in the second military battalion of the Quebec City district. He was transferred to the sixth battalion and was promoted to captain. He enjoyed the confidence of the governor, Sir George Prevost, and was entrusted with a number of special civilian missions and established settlers along the portage road between Rivière-du-Loup and the Quebec and New Brunswick border. He received a land grant for his military service and settled in the Eastern Townships.

Now, this is where I can relate to my ancestor. He was a politician, as well, and he represented the county of Quebec in the House of Assembly from October 7, 1833, to March 27, 1838. Although he agreed with the 92 resolutions, he was one of the patriots of the Quebec region who were more prudent and deliberately preferred constitutional methods to rebellion. The difference between Montreal and Quebec mentality showed in their discussions, and it was clear that Louis would not follow Louis-Joseph Papineau in the Papineau rebellion.

He did escape arrest and retired to an immense estate, part of which is Bytown in Ottawa, and to this day there remains a street named after him. He donated vast lands to the bishop for the Catholic Church and the schools.

He was my grandmother Charboneau's grandfather, and she married a Jobin from Pont-Rouge, Quebec, and they came west. My grandfather was a railroad man with the CNR, and that was during the time when it was a prestige and a very high-paying job.

My mother, Florence Antoinette, was born of that union, and there the story ends. My mother, much to her French father's displeasure, married the love of her life, an Irishman named Brennan, and then

they had me. So my family started to be the multinational Canadian of modern times. I married a Dutch immigrant, and so the story continues. This is a very, very brief part of my rich French-Canadian history, and I haven't even started on the Irish side, that started at approximately the same time in Canada.

I believe it's very important to remember where we came from, but it's also important to respect all of the nationalities that make up our great country. So we should have all of our symbols to honour and in this case a symbol of the founding culture of our nation.

[Motion carried; Bill 27 read a third time]

Bill 22

Alberta Investment Management Corporation Act

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

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Finance I'm pleased to move third reading of Bill 22.

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

Mr. Chase: Yes. Earlier I stated my objections to the lack of an ethical investment strategy, but I definitely support Bill 22. There has been a tradition within this government of losing or abusing our savings account. Bill 22 would see that wiser investments took place. I credit former Premier Lougheed with establishing and having the wisdom to establish the heritage trust fund. Under the authority of previous ministers who are currently serving in this House, that fund has decreased in value tremendously. In one year it dropped from \$13 billion to pretty close to \$11 billion because of mismanagement. So with the aim of Bill 22 to improve the accountability and management process, Albertans in general will benefit.

I would hope that in the application of Bill 22 this government would take into account the idea that we have put forward of setting aside 30 per cent of our nonrenewable energies, oil and gas specifically, and come up with a similar situation that we have proposed whereby 35 per cent of the 30 would be saved into the heritage trust fund, which would rise to the sum of \$120 billion by 2020. I would hope that this government would see as part of its investment management the importance of setting aside 35 per cent for postsecondary promotion, the idea that we must get rid of our infrastructure deficit, which 25 per cent, according to the Liberal plan, would accomplish, and of course the importance of the 5 per cent that we have proposed for arts and culture, which would grow to an endowment fund very rapidly of \$500 million.

So the investment management act is extremely important. It's a welcome first step. The sooner we have ethics as a part of our investment, the better.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Others?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a third time]

Bill 19

Appeal Procedures Statutes Amendment Act, 2007

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to move Bill 19, the Appeal Procedures Statutes Amendment Act, 2007, at third reading.

We have had good debate on this bill. I've appreciated the questions from the members as well as the input and support that we continue to receive from all of the stakeholders, including the Canadian Bar Association, the Law Society of Alberta, the judiciary, and, of course, the legal counsel for all of the tribunals and boards which are affected by the legislation. I also appreciate the support of members to date, and I would ask for their further support on third reading.

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

Mr. Tougas: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to say a few brief words – brief – about Bill 19. I'd first like to thank the Member for Calgary-Nose Hill for shepherding this bill through the House. He did a very good job, as my friend from Edmonton-McClung has assured me. The Member for Edmonton-McClung tells me that there are no ticking time bombs in Bill 19. It's intended to streamline a number of processes and bring them up to date with current practices. I believe that this bill has been adequately debated in this Chamber. We've looked at it very carefully and believe it is worthy of support as it stands.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member wish to close?

[Motion carried; Bill 19 read a third time]

5:50

Bill 15
Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution
Amendment Act, 2007

Mrs. Forsyth: Mr. Speaker, it's with great pride that I move Bill 15, the Protection of Children Involved in Prostitution Amendment Act, 2007.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank all of those people who participated in this piece of legislation and all the children in this province. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a third time]

Bill 6
Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2007

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed an honour to move third reading of Bill 6, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2007, sponsored by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

I now ask for the question.

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

Mr. Tougas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've looked over Bill 6 very carefully. It appears to be just as it claims to be, which is a housekeeping bill, and we'll just let it go as is.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a third time]

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

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the excellent progress that we made this afternoon, I would like to move that we now call it 6 p.m. and adjourn until 1 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 5:53 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1 p.m.]