

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, May 7, 2007**

**1:00 p.m.**

Date: 07/05/07

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Let us pray. At the beginning of this week we ask for renewed strength in the awareness of our duty and privilege as members of the Legislature. We ask for the protection of this Assembly and also the province we are elected to serve. Amen.

Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, I'd now invite Mr. Paul Lorieau to lead us in the singing of our national anthem. I invite all of you to participate in the language of your choice.

**Hon. Members:**

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

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Coutts:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly and to all Albertans a group of people who have been involved and remain involved in the Pacific Northwest Economic Region. They are visiting our Legislature and visiting Alberta to find out more about this great province, the things that we do in it, and how we can fit into a regional system from Alaska right down to Oregon and over into Idaho and Montana, which is really important.

To encourage that kind of dialogue, we have with the delegation today the Hon. John van Dongen, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations for the province of British Columbia and a PNWER vice-president. Next is George Eskridge, a Representative from Idaho state and also a vice-president of PNWER. Next is Jeff Morris, a Washington state Representative and a PNWER past president. We also have Glenn Anderson, a Representative from Washington state and also a PNWER past president. We have with us Peter Lloyd, consul general, Canadian consulate general of Seattle. Because it's a private/public partnership, Mr. Speaker, we have Neil Windsor of APEGGA, the PNWER private-sector chair for Alberta and no stranger to this House. We have Matt Morrison, the executive director of PNWER. Joining Matt today from his office is Brandon Hardenbrook, deputy director of PNWER. And we have our own director of U.S. relations from the Alberta government, Mr. David Kettles.

Now that they have all risen, I would ask that they receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: **Introduction of Guests**

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

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and indeed your gallery is full today. It's my pleasure to introduce a delegation in your gallery from the Ukraine. Leading the delegation is Dr. Vasyl Kremen. Dr. Kremen is the president of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine and is the former Minister of Education and Science. Joining him is Dr. Vitaly Bondar, the director of the Institute of Special Pedagogy, and Dr. Viktor Andrushchenko, the rector of Dragomanov National Pedagogical University. With the delegation also is Dr. Roman Petryshyn, the director of the Ukrainian Resource and Development Centre at Grant MacEwan College here in Alberta. I'd ask them all to rise and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly. [Remarks in Ukrainian]

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, what a thrill it is to rise and introduce members from my school, the school that I see when I look out on the backyard in the morning and cast my eyes over to Glen Allan. Today we have 20 students, as I say, members of Glen Allan school. They're accompanied by Scott Miller; Krystle O'Dell, education assistant; and two parent helpers, Rien Visscher and John Sirovyak. I'd ask that they please stand and that we give them the warm welcome they so richly deserve.

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This week is National Nursing Week, and we'll have a member's statement a little later to recognize that. But I want to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly three representatives of the Alberta nursing community, seated today in the members' gallery and here to recognize National Nursing Week and to salute the vital role that nurses play in our health care system. First is Margaret Hadley, president-elect of the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta; Ruth Wold, president of the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta; and Barbara Lowe, executive director of the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Alberta. Together these three individuals represent the largest professional sector of our health care workforce.

National Nursing Week is a special time to recognize the indispensable knowledge and compassionate care we trust and depend on from members of our nursing profession. I'd like all members of the House, first of all, to thank a nurse this week and, secondly, to give a warm welcome to our guests in recognition of National Nursing Week.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Mr. Danyluk:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 11 students from the Kikino elementary school, dedicated students who are committed to education. The Kikino settlement is located just south of Lac La Biche. With them as teachers/group leaders are Miss Laurie Thompson, Mr. Wade Coutney, and Mr. Karl Merritt. If I could ask those students and teachers to stand up and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great privilege for me to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of students from Meadowlark school in my constituency. They're accompanied by their teachers, Ms Cindy Awid and Ms Lu Zhang. I hope they'll find today's question period if not educational, at least entertaining. It's always a pleasure to see

young people in the Assembly, so I'd like to thank these students for joining us today. There are quite a number of parent helpers with them, including Mrs. Lori Jeske, Mrs. Mary-Anne Anderson, Mrs. Julia Wong, Mrs. Jael Chum, Mr. Stephen Tsang, Mrs. Tanya Jiang, and Mrs. Fiona Chung. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the warm reception of the Assembly.

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

1:10

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Karly Kayll and Catherine Darker. Both Karly and Catherine are Palace Casino workers, on their 241st day of strike due in part to this government's failure to protect Alberta workers by creating fair and inclusive labour legislation. Karly has been at the Palace Casino since 1998 and has worked with the slots department the entire time. She was a member of the former Palace Casino staff association's executive board, which preceded the UFCW. She's a member of the bargaining committee of the union. Catherine has worked for the Palace Casino for seven years as a dealer. Catherine was active within the former staff association and also served as a shop steward. They are joined today by Don Crisall, UFCW local 401 representative. I would ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

head:

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

#### National Nursing Week

**Mr. Ducharme:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Health and wellness services are supports that Albertans cannot live without. Within Alberta's large health care system each individual fulfills an important function. Thanks to everyone's collaboration, our province is blessed with a superior health and wellness system. Within that system nurses play an incredible and crucial role. They work everywhere: in hospitals, clinics, and communities. Nurses give us wise advice, take care of us when we are unwell, and most of all save countless lives.

This week Canada and the global community are celebrating Nursing Week. During this time we reflect on the importance nurses play in our lives. As in most health and wellness systems, nurses in Alberta comprise the largest professional group in the workforce. There are approximately 38,000 dedicated nurses within our province.

The slogan of this year's Nursing Week is Think You Know Nursing? Take a Closer Look. This statement calls on all Canadians to really think about the role nurses play in our lives. It's probably safe to say: they do it all. The fact is that registered nurses play a critical role in providing and improving clinical care, leading advocacy, and advancing technological innovation.

The work of Alberta's nurses is very important to this province. That is why the government of Alberta is committed to implementing a comprehensive health workforce strategy to secure and retain health professionals, including nurses.

The future of our province depends on our health and well-being as individuals, families, and communities. Our health determines the quality of life we enjoy. Nurses play a vital role in enhancing the wellness of Albertans and helping Albertans realize a healthy future. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all the members of this Assembly I wish to thank them for the work that they do in our health system.

Thank you.

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

#### Building Safety Week

**Mr. Cenaiko:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize that May 6 to 12, 2007, is Building Safety Week and to talk about the vital role that well-built homes and buildings play in providing safe and secure communities. In Alberta this week is supported by the partnership of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Alberta Building Officials Association. The theme of Building Safety Week 2007, Building Smarter . . . for Disasters and Everyday Life, reflects the importance of inspectors and building officials in creating safe places for people to live, work, and play.

Mr. Speaker, the regulation of building construction can be traced back more than 4,000 years. Codes and practices are always evolving, keeping pace with new technologies, materials, and practices. Whether in our homes, offices, schools, or factories we trust in the safety of our buildings. This trust is built on the expert development and administration of safety regulations essential to protecting the public from fire, structural collapse, and other unsafe conditions.

In Alberta, Mr. Speaker, provincially certified safety code officers interpret safety regulations and promote safe building in their communities. The Alberta Building Officials Association is a not-for-profit organization that promotes the importance of safety in the building environment. I commend Alberta's building professionals for their efforts to promote safety in our province.

Thank you.

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

#### Alberta Liberal Affordable Housing Policy

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Across the province thousands of Albertans face homelessness thanks to skyrocketing rents. Landlords are confused, tenants are afraid, and this government's ham-handed policies are quickly transforming a crisis into a catastrophe.

There is a better way. Last year, before this crisis became front-page news, the Alberta Liberal caucus made a promise to Albertans. We promised to come up with workable solutions to meet the affordable housing shortage head-on. We kept that promise and presented a policy that will create 10,000 units of affordable housing in Alberta within five years, protecting tenants from unmanageable rent increases while respecting the rights and needs of landlords. Like the government we would limit rent increases to once per year, but to protect renters from the huge increases this policy has encouraged, an Alberta Liberal government would also institute a temporary, one-year rent cap measure limiting increases within that year to 10 per cent.

To put that in perspective, the \$500 monthly increase many Albertans face today would become a much more manageable \$50 increase. This will lower the risk of Albertans losing their homes while giving builders time to create additional affordable housing units.

When vacancy rates fall below a certain threshold, we would implement a two-year moratorium on condominium conversions, unless of course the developer wanting the conversion agrees to replace any rental units lost with new affordable rental properties.

Rather than just creating subsidized housing, we would connect supplements to the renter rather than the unit. This gives low-income Albertans seeking a home far greater freedom and flexibility.

In other words, the Alberta Liberals would resolve this crisis and create a sustainable affordable housing market. Everyone needs a home, Mr. Speaker. Let's protect Albertans from losing theirs.

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

### Augustana Campus Library Groundbreaking

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Monday a historic event occurred at the University of Alberta Augustana campus in my constituency. A groundbreaking ceremony took place on the campus for its new library and campus forum. This groundbreaking was a result of years of hard work and dedication of the Augustana community.

Driven by a desire to seek a strong and vibrant future for Augustana University College, the University of Alberta, the government of Alberta, and Augustana University College engaged in negotiations over three years ago. These negotiations resulted in the historic merger of two truly outstanding postsecondary institutions with long histories in our province.

A groundbreaking of a library has sentimental meaning for Augustana. There have been numerous attempts to raise the funds to construct a new library. These attempts were unsuccessful. With Augustana's entry into the University of Alberta family the hopes and dreams of a new library are now a reality.

The groundbreaking ceremony was also an opportunity for the Augustana campus, University of Alberta to showcase its success over the past year. Hundreds of students, faculty, staff, and community members were in attendance. I was pleased to participate in the groundbreaking ceremonies with a number of dignitaries, including the U of A president, Indira Samarasekera; the dean of the Augustana campus, Roger Epp; the U of A board chairman, Brian Heidecker; Camrose mayor, Clarence Mastel; and county of Camrose reeve, Jack Lyle.

President Samarasekera remarked that Augustana is a valuable addition to the University of Alberta and that they are engaged in a wholehearted partnership. Dean Epp stated that the groundbreaking demonstrates in a tangible manner Augustana's growth.

Camrose has moved from being a college town to a university city thanks to the presence of the University of Alberta campus. With the construction of the new library Augustana will grow and educate thousands of new students in a rural setting in the years to come.

Thank you.

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

### Emergency Preparedness

**Mr. Prins:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to ask each and every Albertan a simple but important question: are you prepared? Are you prepared for a real emergency? If flooding forces you from your home, if wildfires are raging nearby, or if a severe winter storm shuts down roads, schools, and businesses, are you prepared?

Mr. Speaker, this week, May 6 to 12, is Emergency Preparedness Week. If a disaster or emergency affected your family, could you look after your basic needs for 72 hours? Emergencies and disasters can happen anywhere at any time.

The first step to protect you and your family is to know the risks. The second step is to make a plan. Having a plan helps you and your family know what to do in case of an emergency. The final step is to assemble a 72-hour kit to cover your basic needs in case of an emergency or disaster. Your kit should include basic equipment like food, water, a small flashlight and batteries, a crank- or battery-operated radio, and a can opener.

During Emergency Preparedness Week, Mr. Speaker, all Albertans, particularly those living or working near industrial areas, should also be aware of the shelter-in-place protocols. Shelter in place is a process of staying indoors in an attempt to lessen the

effects of an emergency such as the release of a hazardous material into the air. Some of the steps involved in shelter in place include going indoors, closing doors and windows, turning off air circulation sources, picking a room to shelter in away from windows and doors, if possible, and staying in place until it's safe to leave.

Mr. Speaker, being prepared for disasters and emergencies is important, and I would ask all Albertans to take the time during Emergency Preparedness Week to make sure that they are ready. For more information on how you can be ready, visit the Municipal Affairs and Housing website.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

1:20

### Midwifery Services

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past Saturday, May 5, was the annual celebration of midwifery day. A family event was planned for the steps of the Legislature, and a number of hardy souls came out once again to encourage the government to cover midwifery services under health care. After almost 18 years of lobbying this government, I'm growing a bit weary watching this opportunity slip by us. Numerous studies have shown that midwifery services are the most cost-effective. They reduce pressure on hospitals, staff, and infrastructure.

In 1990 the Advisory Council on Women's Issues, whom I was privileged to serve as executive director, recommended to the government that midwifery services be covered under health care. A number of other agencies, including government ones, followed suit over the years. Midwives fit perfectly with the primary care model and with the prevention and wellness strategy: everything the government says it supports, but year after year the only thing that changes is the government's excuse. "There are safety concerns": well, that was long ago disproved. "You need a pilot project": we've now had several different ones. "You need doctors to show leadership": no, we need the government to show leadership. "The issue needs more study": sorry, boys, the facts are in on this one. I thought perhaps it was because all the health ministers I'd lobbied had been men and maybe they didn't get it, but then we had a female minister and still no coverage.

So here we are: another minister, another May 5, another attempt by this member to encourage the government to do the right thing. For healthier babes, healthier moms, healthier family birth experiences, and a cost savings, please, cover midwifery services under Alberta health care.

head:

### Presenting Petitions

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have a petition signed by 80 Albertans from Red Deer, Sylvan Lake, Lacombe, St. Albert, Edmonton, Beaumont, Millet, Sherwood Park, Nisku, and other communities that states:

We, the undersigned . . . [ask] the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government to introduce legislation that will ensure the following:

1. where a person who holds a graduated driver's licence is operating a motor vehicle that is involved in a collision resulting in serious injury or death, that person's licence shall be suspended immediately and notification shall be provided to the Alberta Transportation Safety Board; and
2. the Board shall immediately conduct a review of the incident to determine whether the person's licence should be reinstated, and if so, under what conditions.

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

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm rising to table 32 signatures on a petition urging the government of Alberta to complete, as soon as possible, the overpasses and interchanges at the locations where the Anthony Henday Drive (Edmonton Ring Road) intersects Lessard Road, Callingwood Road . . . and Cameron Heights Drive.

I urge the minister to pay attention to this one.  
Thank you.

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

**Mr. Flaherty:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to table five copies of the summary of school jurisdictions' statement of operations and changes in financial position.

**The Speaker:** I think, hon. member, we are not at that point in the Routine yet. I'll call you later. We're in petitions right now.

head: **Notices of Motions**

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of a motion to be brought forward tomorrow pursuant to Standing Order 4(2):

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly convene at 8 p.m. for night sittings on Tuesday, May 8, and Wednesday, May 9, 2007.

Bill 34, the Tenancies Statutes Amendment Act, has some urgency to it, and we may need to find a time to deal with that in the House.

I can assure you and the members of the House, though, that I have committed to working with the House leader of the Official Opposition and the House leader of the third party to find a way to deal with this in an appropriate manner, but I had to bring oral notice forward today to preserve the opportunity to deal with it tomorrow. I've been made aware that, for example, the Liberal Party has a leader's dinner tomorrow night, so tomorrow night may not be the most appropriate time, but we will work together and bring a solution back to the House for tomorrow, in the meantime preserving the opportunity by bringing this notice of motion forward.

Thanks.

**The Speaker:** And this motion will be debatable.

head: **Introduction of Bills**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

#### Bill 35

##### Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2007

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce two bills today, the first being Bill 35, the Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2007.

Mr. Speaker, the intent of this bill is to reflect the changes in the budget and to harmonize with some changes in the federal budget.

[Motion carried; Bill 35 read a first time]

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 35 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

#### Bill 36

##### Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, 2007

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 36, the Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment Act, 2007.

This is again reflecting proposals in the budget and some harmonization with the federal budget.

[Motion carried; Bill 36 read a first time]

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 36 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. President of the Treasury Board.

#### Bill 37

##### Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2007

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Finance I request leave to introduce Bill 37, the Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2007.

[Motion carried; Bill 37 read a first time]

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

#### Bill 38

##### Government Organization Amendment Act, 2007

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being Government Organization Amendment Act, 2007.

[Motion carried; Bill 38 read a first time]

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 38 be moved to Government Bills and Orders on the Order Paper.

[Motion carried]

head: **Oral Question Period**

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

#### Affordable Housing

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Liberal caucus believes that everyone needs a home. The Premier and his party don't. Albertans believe in fairness, compassion, and in a government that protects their interest, protects the public interest. The Premier and his party apparently do not. The Premier says rent increases of \$1,000 a month are un-Albertan, but his action or, rather, his inaction tells a different story. To the Premier: if rent gouging of this magnitude is un-Albertan, why is the Premier refusing to stop it?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, this government is compassionate, it is caring, and that is why in this budget alone: \$285 million for housing initiatives, millions more to support families, seniors, anyone that requires some assistance in housing. Those are all in the budget that's before debate in this House. I feel that we've come a long way. That \$285 million is to increase the number of housing spaces available in this province given the number of people that continually come to this province to seek their fortune.

**Dr. Taft:** Again I ask the Premier: if rent gouging of the magnitude of \$1,000 a month is un-Albertan, why is this Premier refusing to stop it?

1:30

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I think I answered in the first question what we are doing to curtail this situation in the province of Alberta. We need more spaces, and what we're bringing forward is a very good plan in terms of increasing the number of spaces. We don't want to diminish the number of spaces available for people in this province; we want to increase the number of spaces.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This issue is not just about policy; it's about people, real people. One group of people who are struggling with this issue are the families of the brave men and women fighting for peace and justice in Afghanistan. I was at the base this weekend, and I heard their concerns about the cost of housing. These are families who worry every day about losing their loved ones. They should not have to worry also about losing their homes. To the Premier: how can the Premier claim that he is looking after the interests of Albertans when military families in Edmonton are in danger of losing their homes? He has a choice, and he's letting it happen.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, this government is a government for all Albertans, all families, all members. As I said before, we're increasing the number of units in the province of Alberta. In this particular case, to the men and women that serve overseas, you know, our thoughts are with them, especially during this period of time. But to isolate and start picking one group over another is in itself un-Albertan.

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

### Financial Support for Renters

**Dr. Taft:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this government likes to pick out all kinds of particular groups. Government support, for example, for farmers demonstrates that the free market alone is incapable of protecting people from unacceptable hardships. Just ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who received \$93,000 in support payments from this government last year to help with the struggles he faced as a farmer. But when it comes to renters, the Premier and this minister say that people facing huge increases should not be protected. To the Premier: how can this Premier refuse to protect renters when they are facing such unacceptable hardships?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, once again the Leader of the Opposition shows how little he knows about agriculture in this province and the programs available. There is something called Alberta crop insurance, where farmers have to pay premiums to the program.

Obviously, they either haven't heard about it or haven't spent enough time in rural Alberta to really study the situation.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thank you. I think the Premier probably knows that we're talking about the CAIS program. When farmers face a tough time because of bad markets, they get support from this government through the CAIS program, and that's fair enough. The Premier himself got \$8,100 from this program last year. But renters need protection, too, when markets are bad in housing. To the Premier: why does the Premier refuse to accept that renters need temporary rent caps to protect them from rent gouging because of the bad market in housing?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, question period isn't where we try and give the hon. leader all of the education when it comes to the CAIS program. It's closely tied to crop insurance, and I hope he understands that it's just not simply having a cheque received from both the federal and provincial levels. It's tied to a series of criteria to support agriculture in, of course, difficult times.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Listen, the Alberta Liberals support the principles behind the CAIS program as does this government. As we've seen, both the Premier and his minister enjoy protection from market forces through CAIS, but the same Premier and minister flatly refuse to offer protection to renters in crisis, saying that they don't need temporary rent caps. Again to the Premier: can the Premier explain why Alberta renters are left to fend for themselves when he is not?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, once again the information is incorrect, and the minister responsible will identify to the House where we support renters.

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, we have a homeless and eviction prevention fund which will help us deal with all of those issues when people come forward and identify that they've had a cost imposed on them. There are 59 centres in Alberta where people can go and explain their situation, identify what their needs are, and then we can make individual responses to them. They can call the support centre at 1-866-644-5135 if they want more information on getting that support.

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

### Support for Low-income Albertans

**Dr. B. Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Thursday, as we heard, the Premier suggested that he thought 100 per cent increases in rents might be un-Albertan. The Premier is right about that but wrong about the size of the problem. Uncontrolled growth of housing costs in Alberta affects everyone and has led to the creation of an expanding class of working poor. In fact, 1 in 5 Edmonton households are unable to afford basic necessities, and many are one paycheque away from being homeless. To the Premier: do you think that it is Albertan for families that are working harder and harder and are falling further and further behind?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, all Albertans are working very hard.

In fact, we've seen tremendous economic growth in this province. It's a province leading the nation not only in all statistics but in employment as well. We have the lowest unemployment, I believe, in history, if not close to history, and the average working income of Albertans is higher than anyplace else in Canada. There are people, of course, that do need help occasionally, and that's why we're there as a government to assist them in those programs.

**Dr. B. Miller:** Mr. Speaker, lone parent families are among the hardest hit by skyrocketing housing costs. Children and lone parent families are actually worse off than they were a decade ago. It is inconceivable that in Alberta, one of the richest provinces in Canada, 1 in 8 children still lives in poverty and that this rate really is higher than the national average. To the Premier: do you think it is Albertan that these children not receive the same opportunities, not get a good head start in their life as children in other provinces?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, our social programs in this province lead the nation in support for all Albertans. We'll continue to do that. That's why there's been such a huge investment in the social fabric of this province in this budget. Given the kinds of comments across the way, I'm sure that the opposition will be supporting this government in the increases we see in our budget supporting families.

**Dr. B. Miller:** The lack of affordable housing in Alberta reflects the inability of this government to plan for the boom. Now they're refusing to take meaningful remedial action. If temporary rent regulation is an anathema to this government, the only thing left is to help working people on the income side. To the Premier: will this government at least commit here today to make work pay by increasing the minimum wage? How about increasing it to \$10 an hour?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises a good question, and it's something that we may as an Assembly want to give careful consideration to, and we may even have an opportunity to do that soon.

Thank you.

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

#### Temporary Rent Regulation

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This weekend's Tory convention confirmed what many Albertans already knew, that Tories and the Tory government don't give a darn about renters. It's now clear that this government considers rent guidelines dead despite the fact that vulnerable Alberta renters are facing economic eviction and are ending up on the street. My question is to the Premier. Why has this government turned its back on renters? Why doesn't this Premier care about people who are losing their homes?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, this weekend, as the member has mentioned, there were well over 1,400 people attending our annual general meeting. It was a meeting that discussed so many different issues. These are delegates that care about their province. They care about their fellow Albertans, and that's one reason why they turned out in such great numbers to share their thoughts, their ideas with our government caucus members and to bring those ideas forward for further policy evaluation and discussion. I feel proud of the participation that we have.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Fourteen hundred people, all of whom have homes.

The power of wealthy landlords and developers was very apparent this weekend at that Tory convention, which firmly rejected rent protection for renters. While the Premier temporarily lost his nerve on the issue, the Tory delegates were very clear: no rent guidelines. My question to the Premier: will the Premier admit what most Albertans already know, that his government cares about landlords and not about renters who are losing their homes?

1:40

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, my advice to the leader of the third party is to be careful when you challenge me in terms of whether I have nerve or not.

We listen very closely to all Albertans, and we're going to incorporate what Albertans tell us in terms of policy for what's best for the future of this province. What's best for the future of this province is to increase the number of housing units. In fact, I am proud of the direction we've taken. For 3.3 million people in the province of Alberta we've created over 51,800 starts. In Ontario with 12 million they only saw 56,000 starts. Look at other provinces: Quebec, 8 million people, only 48,000 housing starts. So we are getting the job done.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, vulnerable Albertans are not being helped by this government. It's fine to have 1,400 well-heeled Tories make decisions that will benefit landlords, but there are people who are losing their homes because they're being gouged by landlords. This government has refused to take action. Their only answer is: wait until we get some more basement suites; wait a few years until we build some more apartments and some public housing, and everything will be okay. Does the Premier really expect people to wait on the street for two years while his housing gets built?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, coupled with the \$285 million in housing, encouraging more housing starts – and, again, there will be further participation by the federal government and by municipal governments as well – we, of course, have a program in place to support renters, people that may be evicted as a result of rental increases. Again, the minister did give that information to the House, but if you so wish, she can give it again.

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

#### Municipal Sustainability Initiative Funding

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the past three weeks I've been trying to deal with three specific constituency problems that have been ongoing for over three years, and there seems to be very little movement. The conditional funding that has come out to the municipalities is not helping. It's crippling them, and it's affecting the families in those communities as well. My question and the dilemma is that this government always is upset when the federal government puts conditions on the spending but doesn't seem to follow the same on their own. Will this government stop being hypocrites and crippling our municipalities and eliminate the conditions on the additional funding that they're to receive?

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

**Mr. Danyluk:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before the budget was released, there was extensive consultation with municipalities, also the minister's council, in a discussion to have co-operation, to have regional planning, which is very necessary. If we look at when the hon. member talks about conditions, the conditions are to plan together. A core part of the budget is to plan, a community plan for the initiative.

**Mr. Hinman:** Mr. Speaker, they're out of touch, and the previous housing minister knows it. They went around that they are supposed to have unconditional funding. Because Edmonton might need a parka doesn't mean that Calgary or southern Alberta needs one. It's not working.

At the AUMA regional meeting the ag minister responded to the mayors down there saying that he wasn't aware of it. I wonder if he took that to the Premier. To the Premier: will you make a commitment to send the appropriate ministers to Taber to enable them to address their waste-water treatment plant? The funding is not addressing it.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, this is a difficult one. There is no jurisdiction in Canada that has put as much money on the table as this government to assist municipalities: currently \$600 million a year for infrastructure for municipalities, add another \$400 million this year. That's a billion dollars to support municipalities in this province. There is no other jurisdiction in Canada that's doing that much, so certainly we would be able to work out any issues in terms of getting that money out to municipalities and getting the best value for it. So if it's in water, if it's in infrastructure, or if it's in social housing, tell us. We'll be there, we'll listen to you, and we'll make those programs work.

**Mr. Hinman:** Mr. Speaker, over 50 per cent of the money going to the MD of Taber and the town of Taber will not be able to be used because of the conditions attached to it. They're short millions. It's not going to account for what they need.

There are other problems that they continue to pass off in different jurisdictions. We have a provincial bridge and we have a road that's going to get washed out, and we have a fence at Coutts that they have continued to fail to address. Will the Premier address these issues? They are simple and can be addressed, unlike some of the bigger issues that take time. It's been three years, and they haven't been addressed. Will the Premier commit to addressing these two specific problems?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, in fact, we addressed a big problem in Taber the other day. We announced support for 105 new assisted-living spaces in Taber. That's going to go a long way in supporting our seniors in that community. Over and above the billion dollars that's in both infrastructure and municipal affairs, there are millions of dollars in other programs, especially for water and sewer rehab. So there's a whole bunch more money available other than just what was indicated by the hon. member.

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

### Temporary Rent Regulation

*(continued)*

**Mr. Agnihotri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Lack of leadership by this government has many of my constituents in Edmonton-Ellerslie feeling that they will lose their home. Seniors, artists, immigrants,

single families, and people on fixed income are struggling to pay increasing rents. One of my constituents has received three rent increases in eight months totalling \$400. She's afraid of becoming part of the growing number of the working homeless in the province. To the Premier: what advice does the Premier have for this particular woman, who is one paycheque away from being homeless?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, again, as the minister responsible indicated, there are a number of dollars available to support people in difficult circumstances. Again, I'll repeat: \$285 million available for affordable housing. We're looking at other strategies in terms of increasing the number of units. If again we have to repeat how to get in contact with the right ministry to support people under difficult conditions, we'll do that.

**Mr. Agnihotri:** Mr. Premier, the taxpayers want to see you decisive. They want to see action. My question is to the Premier again. Another constituent in my constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie is being hit with a 54 per cent increase in rent. He wants answers from this government. How are hard-working Albertans supposed to maintain a home with rent escalation like this?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, as well, I believe that the House leader introduced a special motion to accelerate, of course, discussion and debate on a bill that we have before the House. This in part is in keeping with the strategy of keeping these rent increases down.

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

**Mr. Agnihotri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier again. It is un-Albertan for this government to disregard the basic needs of Albertans. When will the Premier do what's right and implement the one-time, temporary rent increase protection for tenants to reduce the risk of people losing their home?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, we don't want anybody to lose their home. That's why we're moving quickly on providing more dollars for growing the number of affordable housing units in the province of Alberta. As well, we are supporting families in need, seniors, and young families. We have the programs in place, and we'll continue to watch how the number of units increases in this province of Alberta. Really, the only way of dealing with the critical housing shortage is getting more units started and built so that families can move in.

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

### 1:50 Disclosure of Leadership Campaign Contributions

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past few months some of my constituents in Red Deer-North have asked me about disclosure of leadership financing, that is legislated in other provinces. Over this past weekend some direction was offered about how all parties should conduct themselves when selecting a new leader. I have one question, and it's to the Premier. How quickly will the government bring forward legislation governing financial contribution and disclosure rules for party leadership elections?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that what came forward was legislation to cover all parties. If there are some parties across the way that see an immediate urgency to deal with this situation because they anticipate some leadership changes, then we'll listen to

them very carefully, and we'll put it on the agenda as quickly as possible for consideration in this House.

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

The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

### Temporary Rent Regulation

(continued)

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, sadly, the term GDP in Alberta has taken on a whole new meaning. It appears it now stands for government's disposable people. I'd like to raise the cases of several of my constituents struggling with their housing. Trudy Hill is a resident renter in my constituency. She works for the Alberta Research Council, a government employee working hard to improve this province, yet because of the Tories' blind faith in a completely distorted free market, she's facing a 45 per cent rent increase. To the Premier: does Mrs. Hill have to just hold on, to keep on paying the price of prosperity?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the responsibility of the opposition and the third party is to identify concerns that come to them as MLAs, yet the member opposite has not come to my office with those individual cases. He stands up and grandstands in this House in order to try and get the media. But does he care about his constituents? No. He has not come to our office. There is responsibility in this House for leadership, and his responsibility . . .

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. Your room is going to get awfully full with the thousands of constituents that are being ripped off by your government.

My constituents accept that the growth pressures in Alberta and in Calgary mean that life will get a little tougher, that prices will rise, and that money will get tighter, but what they are actually experiencing is well beyond that reasonable assumption. What Candace Loken, another constituent, is actually experiencing is a \$400 a month rent increase while on \$700 a month disability. She's going to have to move even while suffering chronic back pain. How does this fit with the Premier's pledge to improve Albertans' quality of life? How has Mrs. Loken's life improved?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, if the hon. member opposite instead of putting those letters under his desk would forward them to us, we could deal with them because we do have the programs. We are compassionate for the situations that individuals are in, and if they were passed on to us, we could deal with them.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A third constituent, Diane Shelley, is seeing her rent go up \$425, nearly 60 per cent. She is a senior on a fixed income. She's going to have \$200 a month to live on. She certainly isn't happy with the Alberta advantage. There's the evidence. These certainly aren't isolated incidents. Across my constituency, across the province excessive rent increases are punishing Albertans. Will the Premier finally accept that we already are facing a failed marketplace and follow the lead of the Alberta Liberals and his own Affordable Housing Task Force and institute temporary rent controls?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, allow me one more time, please, to address the issue the hon. member is raising. Any day of the week when people are faced with low income, when they are faced with eviction, when they are faced with homelessness, when they are faced with tragic circumstances like a rent increase they can't afford, the Alberta government delivers. Since November we helped them with \$9 million worth of emergencies, just in the past few months. We spent a hundred million dollars over the last year in the budget helping low-income Albertans with shelter and other supports, whether they were going to school, were receiving training and needed supports, whether they had difficulties because of the marketplace, whether they had difficulties because of a lack of job opportunities. Mr. Speaker, we have programs in place, and further programs . . .

**The Speaker:** I think we have to move on now.

The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

### Pacific Northwest Labour Mobility

**Mr. Coutts:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The participating jurisdictions of the Pacific Northwest Economic Region, like Alberta, have all been dealing with a shortage of workers. While we in Alberta work diligently to solve our workforce problems, our PNWER partners and the federal government have strategies to tackle this common problem. My questions today are to the Minister of Employment, Immigration and Industry. Your policy is to have a strong workforce in Alberta. What can you do to collaborate with the northwest economic region and the federal government to participate in breaking down barriers to labour mobility between our jurisdictions?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, I think it's well known that the hon. member who presented the question had a key role in helping us with the TILMA agreement in supporting trade and labour mobility. But beyond that, PNWER delegates here today are hoping that we will support their steering committee on the issues of workforce shortage in the western regions, and we will. We will have representation, as will the minister of labour in British Columbia. Colin Hansen has already indicated support. We will examine the roles of various private stakeholders, organizations like APEGGA, who can help us with labour mobility by looking at certification and following through . . .

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

**Mr. Coutts:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Discussions at the annual PNWER summits for years have raised the awareness of these issues, and this particular problem goes beyond many borders. Those barriers need to be reviewed on a regular basis, and they have been reviewed on a regular basis as well. Can the minister advise this House and Albertans of any successes that have been happening in the past that would lead to future successes?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, the engineers and the engineering technologists are two groups where there have been some successes. We have been working with many other groups where we are seeing the removal of barriers in place, in fact the absence of barriers. We've been working with associations to make sure that they are continuing.

Further, Mr. Speaker, together with British Columbia we plan to look at an office to look at foreign credentialing in a different way so that we are confident that the people that do want to come into the

country can work more collaboratively with either province in securing employment. PNWER also with other jurisdictions is helping us become more aware of labour shortages and labour possibilities throughout the region.

**Mr. Coutts:** Mr. Speaker, the last question to the minister is: what strategies can she suggest for the future in terms of taking the workforce and what might work in one jurisdiction and having the workforce remain in that jurisdiction to help with manufacturing of component parts that could be of benefit to Alberta and to our industries here?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, one excellent example which fits very well with our new and burgeoning aerospace industry in Medicine Hat is the example of Boeing in Seattle, Washington, who have decentralized the building of component parts so that, in fact, in Everett, Washington, there are other parts being built. We can do that as well. Our manufacturing and exporter forum, which saw many groups come out of Ontario, was another example of our finding opportunities for our oil sands industry to receive building from other places and then incorporate it within industry locally. So I think that for this Pacific Northwest we can look at other jurisdictions to help us fill the gaps.

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

2:00

#### Off-reserve Housing

**Mr. Bonko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans know all too well how the government dropped the Affordable Housing Task Force suggestion on temporary rent controls, but the task force also recommended affordable off-reserve housing for aboriginals. With the federal government putting in cash, the task force said that the provincial government should match it, but the government said no. My questions are to the Premier. Why is the federal government the only one willing to put in and step up to help the people with this important issue?

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

**Mr. Boutilier:** Yeah. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Quite contrary to the comment, this government has acted very responsibly in dealing with First Nation people, Métis people relative to this. We're continuing to work with them, and the important partnership in terms of finding housing is something that is continuing on. I might add that the recommendations in the task force are very positive in terms of the work that has been done and is being done in helping Albertans.

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

**Mr. Bonko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the budget release on affordable housing spending the front page shows \$16 million this year for spending for off-reserve housing. Only when you look through the report do you realize that the release flat out rejected the recommendations the task force suggested. The \$16 million is all coming from the federal government, the federal government only. So why does this government still try and pass this money off as their own? Why aren't they doing anything for aboriginals on off-reserve housing?

**Mr. Boutilier:** Mr. Speaker, I won't have to remind the hon.

member regarding the federal responsibility as well as provincial responsibility, but what I can remind members of this House and the hon. member is this: that the relationship we have with aboriginal peoples and Métis people in this province is second to none. In fact, it has been commented that we have a gold standard that other provinces could follow relative to the leadership in dealing with aboriginal people in this province.

**Mr. Bonko:** Another vulnerable group in society ignored by this government, another group whose housing challenges don't fit with the Tory ideology, and another group that must pay for the price of prosperity, it looks like. What does the minister say to aboriginals who need this off-reserve housing funding: just wait for the federal money because we don't care about it?

**Mr. Boutilier:** Quite to the contrary, not at all. In fact, rather than the Liberal ideology, we're out there being proactive, thinking ahead rather than looking behind saying: what's all wrong in the last hundred years? We have a positive approach. I might add also that the minister of housing, heading up the task force, even had some very clear examples of how we're working forward in a positive way.

**Mr. Danyluk:** Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the \$285 million, not like the member opposite would like to have it, has no boundaries or distinctions. The \$285 million is for Albertans.

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

#### Temporary Rent Regulation

*(continued)*

**Mr. Martin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier seemed surprised Friday when he was told that Edmonton isn't the only place where there's rent gouging. Obviously, he's not reading the Calgary papers. Calgary renter Norman Burke received a notice of a \$1,000 rent increase last August. Margaret Bain, a widow in Calgary, saw her \$700 per month rent go up to \$1,445 last November. The gouging has been going on a long time in Calgary, and it's getting worse in Edmonton. My question is to the minister of municipal affairs. How could the Premier and this government not know about the rent gouging that's been going on in Calgary for almost a year?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Mr. Speaker, we have 100,000 people who have moved into Alberta in the last year. We need to have more units on the market. We cannot chase away landlords into other provinces. That is not the solution. If individuals have concerns or challenges, I would ask also the member from the third party to please send us those concerns, and we will look at them and deal with them.

**Mr. Martin:** Mr. Speaker, where are these poor little landlords going to flee to? They have rent controls almost everywhere except Alberta, and they're building affordable housing.

My question. Is the minister saying that this is the government policy, that the minister is going to sit down and talk one-on-one with all the landlords and say: please don't raise the rents? Is this the new government philosophy? Is this their strategy, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Danyluk:** Mr. Speaker, this minister has said that he needs to understand the situation from the side of the landlords that are gouging, that have had extreme rentals, and that is why I need to sit

down with those individuals and see their reasoning. We need to see the holistic side.

**Mr. Martin:** The holistic side? You've got to be kidding. The nature of the beast is this: that landlords are out there to make a profit, Mr. Speaker, and they're going to make as big a profit as they can. They're not philanthropic social organizations. My question to the minister is simply this: when is the minister going to get off this rigid ideology brought forward by well-heeled Tories and bring in some sort of rent stability so that people aren't being gouged?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, we're moving towards bringing in a form of rent stability a little later this week when we talk about the renewal of the landlord and tenancies acts. I can assure you that the MLAs that represent Calgary not only represent the housing issues. They also represent the infrastructure issues and the other cultural issues that come with the tremendous growth that we've been faced with. So there is not a void of information in this caucus from Calgary, but there may be a slight void in the third party.

### Nuclear Power

**Mr. McFarland:** Mr. Speaker, even in a southern rural riding like Little Bow nuclear power is often questioned and talked about as an alternate energy source that might generate steam and produce electricity for the province's oil sands. For some other Albertans it also raises issues about public safety. My questions today are to the Minister of Energy. I understand that much of the regulatory system is controlled by the federal government, but with that being said, I would like the minister to assure me and some of the constituents that any potential approval might take into account some of the concerns that some Albertans have around nuclear power.

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

**Mr. Knight:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Most certainly, Canada is recognized around the world as an area that has a regulatory system that's renowned for nuclear energy. Certainly, Canadian equipment is used globally, and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission addresses the health, safety, environmental, and national security issues associated with nuclear projects in Canada. There are specific approvals required in licensing phases all the way through the process . . .

**The Speaker:** Perhaps we'll get to that in the supplementary.  
The hon. member.

**Mr. McFarland:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: does the federal government have clear direction over many of these controls, or does Alberta have an opportunity for input in some of the decisions that are being made?

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

**Mr. Knight:** Well, thank you. Mr. Speaker, as I was about to say, the government will provide leadership on this issue, and most certainly the province of Alberta or any other provincial jurisdiction has a role to play. What's been stated by our leader and hon. Premier of the province of Alberta: we will go out and hear from Albertans with respect to the issue before any nuclear projects would be constructed in the province of Alberta.

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

**Mr. McFarland:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How has the minister

actually addressed the concerns about the environment, the safety, the public safety, when it comes to input from Albertans?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, they're all important issues. The issues that the member brings up are very important issues to Albertans and most certainly to this government. What will have to happen is that once there is a proposal that comes forward to the government, we will certainly address all of those issues. Under the auspices, again, of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, we'll have a role to play with respect to the licensing and permitting, and we'll be sure that Albertans are included in those discussions.

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

### Affordable Housing in Calgary

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Blind faith in the market continues to blind this government to the profound human suffering associated with the boom in this province, particularly in Calgary. One thing is clear: the government's members are not in touch with the desperate plight of average and low-income Albertans, or it does not believe their stories. The Premier last week was quoted as saying that he was not aware of anyone getting a \$1,000 increase. Such reports and worse have been in the press for over a year. To the Member for Calgary-West: what have you Calgary MLAs been doing to inform the Premier about these problems?

2:10

**The Speaker:** Well, we're going to deal with a question to a minister of the Crown. This is question period, and the member will respond as a minister of the Crown.

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I was going to inform the hon. member about completing Education Week last week and what I was doing as Minister of Education, but if that's not appropriate, then I'll wait for the next question.

**The Speaker:** That would have been appropriate, but we'll go to the next question.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of my constituents, Lynn Moran, from the Renfrew community saw a 100 per cent increase in her rent last week, from \$425 to \$850 a month plus utilities. Now she's spending half of her income on rent. Laura Snowball, another resident of my constituency, saw her rent go from \$1,300 to \$2,000 this month. To the minister of municipal affairs: why is this government ignoring Calgarians?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Mr. Speaker, we are not ignoring Calgarians. We are not ignoring Albertans. We have put forward \$285 million of new money to support affordable housing and the homeless. We are trying to encourage developers. We are trying to encourage municipalities to change zoning bylaws so that we can have more units available for Albertans. Again, I would very much encourage the member opposite to bring forward those concerns to ourselves, also through a toll-free number to Service Alberta.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that the current plan is not going to relieve this problem for months or years if at all. When will this government put citizens' basic human rights ahead of ideology?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, we're already putting the issues of Albertans in front on the agenda. Repeatedly I have given answers to questions about the capacity of this government to follow through with the programs we are currently administering and ones that under this homeless and eviction fund we'll continue to administer. We will have monies. The description of the case where a woman has spent half of her money on housing is exactly the kind of case that this ministry deals with and that this ministry will follow through with.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

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

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta/B.C. trade, investment, and labour mobility agreement, otherwise known as TILMA, is Canada's most comprehensive internal trade agreement. However, despite overwhelming positive response to this agreement its no-obstacles clause has recently come under fire from some critics. My first question is to the Minister of International, Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Relations. Will the no-obstacles clause prevent governments from regulating in the public interest; for example, by not allowing zoning bylaws or building height restrictions?

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

**Mr. Boutilier:** Yeah. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One thing is for certain: TILMA, which every other province and territory in Canada is watching, is a model for the rest of Canada to follow. Not only is it a model for the rest of Canada to follow; it's true that maybe even the Liberals and the New Democrats might be able to follow it. Furthermore, I might add that this will not only strengthen but enhance the excellent job that municipalities are doing in serving the same taxpayers, that elect both us and them.

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

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Despite the fact that during his recent visit to Edmonton the ambassador of the European Union to Canada was praising TILMA and saying that this is probably one of the best interjurisdictional agreements in the world, can the minister respond to those who contend that under TILMA governments will have to remove any rule or regulation that businesses think restricts their ability to do business?

**Mr. Boutilier:** Mr. Speaker, this is clearly about barrier busting, about bureaucratic busting, about eliminating red tape, about eliminating the duplication among governments. We're taking down the barrier, and do you know why we're doing it? To help the people of Alberta and British Columbia, 7.7 million Albertans and British Columbians. And how can anyone or any political party argue with something that will help voters?

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

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you for that answer, Mr. Speaker.

What does the same minister say to those who claim that under TILMA business will be able to sue government repeatedly for regulations that they feel interfere with their ability to do whatever they want?

**Mr. Boutilier:** Well, if someone wants to sue anyone, get in line. I mean, that's fine, and it keeps a particular profession very happy.

That being the case, I might add simply this. Let me use a quote, and I will table this. "We look forward to continuing to work with our counterparts in [British Columbia] to facilitate labour mobility between the two provinces," says Mary-Anne Robinson, the executive director of the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta. Need I say more in terms of the labour mobility that is helping Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister will be given an opportunity very momentarily to table such a source.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

#### Temporary Rent Regulation

*(continued)*

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are many seniors on a fixed income who are still willing and able to live in their own community, but their options are limited because of skyrocketing rental prices. There are seniors throughout the province who are forced to use their entire pension cheque to pay their rent. Jim Sexsmith, for example, is a senior from Edmonton on a fixed pension and cannot afford the 20 per cent rent increase in his building, which is the second increase in one year. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: what advice does the minister have for seniors whose income or government supports are not keeping up with the cost of living?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Mr. Speaker, I think we've said many times before that if there are individuals, I would very much ask the members opposite to please pass that information on to us. If there are concerns of tenants and landlords who have questions about the rights that they have, they should call Service Alberta on a toll-free number, 1-877-427-4088. Also, my colleague the Minister of Employment, Immigration and Industry has reiterated numerous times that if there are such individuals, we will look after it.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really not making up these stories.

This government has two categories for Albertans: those who benefit from the Alberta advantage and those whose circumstances are simply considered the price of prosperity. Why is the minister letting ideology get in the way of protecting seniors from double- or triple-digit percentage increases in their rent?

**Mr. Danyluk:** I'll let the minister of seniors respond, please.

**Mr. Melchin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta seniors' benefit has been designed specifically to be targeted towards the lowest income seniors. In fact, we have one of the most aggressive policies in exempting health care premiums. We also have caps so that there is no increase at all in their education property taxes. The Alberta seniors' benefit does provide a substantial benefit to the lowest. We really are trying to organize so that the programs for seniors are targeted to those with the greatest of needs, and we will continue to see that our programs match just that.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Yes. My question will go to the minister of seniors this

time. Seniors at the Holy Cross Manor in Calgary, an assisted-living facility, have faced rent increases of up to 40 per cent. Housing options for these seniors are limited given that many have limited mobility and require specially designed apartments. Does the minister still believe that these vulnerable Albertans don't deserve any special protections over and above what I have just heard over the last three-quarters of an hour?

2:20

**Mr. Melchin:** Mr. Speaker, we have acted and will continue to act in conjunction with many of the initiatives that will be going forward. Seniors are also those that can apply for the affordability assistance under the rental supplements that are there, and so be it in this case for any individual. Many times they have not even applied for the programs that do exist. So we, too, would be anxious and willing to work with those specific individuals and seniors as their needs come forward.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that was 86 questions and answers today.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to table in reference to question period this afternoon quotes on the excellent labour mobility deal between Alberta and British Columbia.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two celebratory tablings today. The first is the requisite number of copies of last Friday's program from Masala Journey, which kicked off the month-long series of ImaginAsian cultural celebration events, which include Alberta's First Nations artists and performers. One of the first celebratory events was the annual Sikh parade and celebrations that took place this past Saturday in both Calgary and Edmonton.

My second tabling is the Volunteer Quick Reference Guide for the 40th annual pathway and river cleanup that took place on Sunday. Constituents from Calgary-Mountain View, Calgary-Currie, and Calgary-Varsity were among the hundreds of volunteers. I'm proud to note that included in the 20-plus Calgary-Varsity volunteers were four generations of the Chase family.

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

**Mr. Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table a document for the leader of the NDP today. It's a copy of a letter from Margaret Stone, who at 75 years old has been informed that the owner of her apartment building is planning a condo conversion. She notes that at her age and on a fixed income she would not likely qualify for a loan.

**The Speaker:** Did the hon. member have a tabling of his own?

**Mr. Martin:** Yes, I do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table a letter sent to the Premier by 69-year-old Beverley McGowan, who is one of my constituents. In the past year Beverley's rent has increased by over \$400, and she'll have to find a new place to live by the end of the month.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased and proud today to rise in this great democratic Assembly of Alberta as an independent and conservative member to present two sets of tablings. One is the program of the Northgate Choralaires' premiere performance of their taste of Broadway. Under the talented leadership and musical genius of director Sandi Ollenberger this premier seniors' choir performed to a sold-out audience of well over 500 souls. It was held at the incomparable Northgate Lions seniors' centre, and the performance received a long standing ovation at the finale. Thank you, Choralaires.

The second tabling is a program from the Yellow Ribbon Gala Benefit Dinner and Silent Auction held at the officers' mess at the base in support of the Edmonton Garrison family resource centre. This is an important charity that I urge all Albertans to support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have one tabling this afternoon, and it is a submission made by the government of Alberta to the U.S. House Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality. This submission is titled Alberta's Dramatic Crude Oil Growth in an Environment of Conventional Crude Oil Decline, and it is dated December 7, 2005. This submission was made by our patronage appointee in Washington, a former member of this House, Murray D. Smith.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Flaherty:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and table five copies of the Summary of School Jurisdictions Statement of Operations and Changes in Financial Position from the 2005-06 Alberta Education report. On Thursday the Minister of Education challenged me to produce the document showing that 30 of Alberta's school boards are in a deficit position. This document from the current annual report of his own ministry clearly demonstrates this.

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

**Mr. Agnihotri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a tabling from my constituent Deane Purves, who is concerned about the temporary rent relief and the life of all renting citizens. He's surprised at the greed of landlords, and he's stunned to hear lots of stories about vulnerable people in Alberta. He's urging this government to recognize the rent situation in Edmonton, Alberta.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. R. Miller:** Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. Over the noon hour I had the pleasure of attending the 2007 Celebrate Mental Health Awards sponsored by the Canadian Mental Health Association. I was glad to see several of my colleagues from the Alberta Legislature there, and I am pleased to table the program from that event today. As executive director Bill Hofmeyer noted, isn't it wonderful that we refer to these as the mental health awards and not the mental illness awards?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a set of seven letters addressed to the Premier and his government. These letters were composed on the steps of this very Legislature on April 18 of this year when we had the vigil ceremony remembering and celebrating the life of Stephanie Butler, whose murder was not only tragic but preventable. They're asking for certain changes to police procedures and to look at ways to improve safety and security in our neighbourhoods and communities.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am tabling a letter with the requisite five copies on behalf of Kim Laing, who's a certified firefighter and EMT and chair of the Southern Alberta Vehicle Restraint Coalition, who feels that the present legislation restricts the sheriffs' activities that could be invaluable in helping with roadside accidents by controlling traffic and securing the scene, freeing first responders' time to do their job of saving lives.

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. Ms Evans, Minister of Employment, Immigration and Industry, pursuant to the Architects Act the Alberta Association of Architects annual report 2006.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Hancock, Minister of Health and Wellness, pursuant to the Physical Therapy Profession Act the College of Physical Therapists of Alberta 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 annual reports; pursuant to the Health Professions Act the Alberta College of Combined Laboratory and X-Ray Technologists 2006 annual report and the Alberta College of Medical Diagnostic & Therapeutic Technologists 2006 annual report.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before I call Orders of the Day, these comments are essentially addressed to the three House leaders. Last week there was very, very minor discussion with me with respect to the possibility of opposition officials being on the floor during the estimates. I've heard nothing further since that time. If this matter is to be dealt with, we have to find a process dealing with this prior to going into committee tomorrow. So I would encourage the three of you somehow to provide either written advice, written request, or something because there will have to be guidelines associated with this as well.

head:

#### **Orders of the Day**

head:

#### **Written Questions**

[The Clerk read the following written questions, which had been accepted]

#### **Supportive Housing**

Q10. Dr. Pannu:  
How many supportive living facilities, including assisted living facilities, lodges, enhanced lodges, seniors' complexes, and group homes, and related number of beds were operating in Alberta for each of the fiscal years 2001-02 to 2005-06 and for April 1, 2006, to March 19, 2007, broken down by regional health authority and by whether the

facility is owned/operated publicly, privately, or on a voluntary basis?

#### **Canadian Wheat Board Barley Plebiscite**

Q11. Mr. Eggen:  
What is the total number of barley producers whose information was sent to the accounting firm KPMG for the purpose of assembling the list of eligible voters for the 2007 barley plebiscite of the Canadian Wheat Board?

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to notice given last week I move that the remaining written questions on the Order Paper stand and retain their places with the exception of Written Question 9.

[Motion carried]

#### **Long-term Care Facilities**

Q9. Mr. Eggen asked on behalf of Dr. Pannu that the following question be accepted.  
How many long-term care facilities and beds were operating in Alberta on December 31 for the years 2001 to 2006 inclusive broken down by regional health authority and whether the facility is owned/operated publicly, privately, or on a voluntary basis, an example of which appears on page 19 of the report of the Auditor General on Seniors Care and Programs 2005?

2:30

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased on behalf of government to accept this motion if we could have the consent of the House to an amendment. The amendment is really technical to make sure that the information we give aligns appropriately. So I would move that Written Question 9 be amended as follows: (a) by striking out "December 31" and substituting "March 31" so as to align with the fiscal year reporting year; (b) by adding "and service providers" after "whether the facility"; (c) by striking out "is" after "facility" and substituting "are"; and (d) by striking out "an example of which appears on page 19 of the Report of the Auditor General on Seniors Care and Programs 2005." The written question would then read as follows if amended:

How many long-term care facilities and beds were operating in Alberta on March 31 for the years 2001 to 2006 inclusive broken down by regional health authority and whether the facility and service providers are owned/operated publicly, privately, or on a voluntary basis?

Now, Mr. Speaker, the reason for the amendment, as I indicated, is simply so that we can provide the information in the manner in which we have it, i.e. by year-end, and to clearly indicate that the information isn't broken down with respect to whether a facility is owned publicly and operated privately. So the information would be provided based on whether the service provider is public, private, or not for profit. I understand that that is the type of information that the hon. member requesting this wants to have. So just to make sure that we're not agreeing to something that we can't actually provide, we bring forward the amendment to put it in place.

The reason for removing the reference to the Auditor General's report is that the Auditor General's report actually does report on the same information but on a different basis. So that there's no

confusion as to the form in which the information would be provided, that piece would be removed. If the member bringing forward the motion is agreeable, we'd be happy to provide the information in the format that we can easily do.

**The Speaker:** We're on the amendment now, hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. We certainly appreciate the attention to detail that this amendment suggests, and we thereby also certainly support the amendment as written.

Thank you.

[Motion on amendment carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder to close debate.

**Mr. Eggen:** Just very, very briefly. This is very pertinent and useful information, that all members would be certainly welcome to use. We appreciate the amendment that actually clarifies and strengthens the original written question.

[Written Question 9 as amended carried]

head:

### **Motions for Returns**

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to notice given last week I move that motions for returns stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

head:

### **Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Third Reading**

#### **Bill 203 Service Dogs Act**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathcona. We have a 60-minute time rule.

**Mr. Lougheed:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise today and move third reading for the debate of Bill 203, Service Dogs Act.

I appreciate the support of members on both sides of this Assembly thus far, and I hope that we will be able to see this bill pass at the conclusion of third reading today. The co-operation of all members demonstrates their commitment to quality of life for persons with disabilities. This is an issue which deals with the fundamental issue of ensuring that every Albertan can fully participate in the life of this province.

Throughout the debate we've heard many stories about potential benefit of service dogs, and those stories echo what I have heard from persons with disabilities while this bill was being debated. A number of people contacted me over the past couple of months to express their support, and there are a number of Albertans who believe that a service dog will help them or a loved one to improve their abilities, independence, and also personal safety.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

People expressed their frustrations with the complaint process under the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act, and I hope that Bill 203 remedies this concern that they've expressed. I believe that many individuals will be happy about the implementation of the bill. In the future there may even be questions about uses of other service animals, but this issue will need to be considered at that time if it's found that other animals could serve appropriate and useful roles. However, that's not the issue here at hand today.

Amendments were made in Committee of the Whole, and I appreciate those who brought forward comments with respect to those amendments and who encouraged those amendments to go forward. Following those amendments, I believe that Bill 203 will serve to broaden the participation of Albertans with disabilities into the life of this province. It's an important priority for the government. It's by developing policies that reflect the varied needs of persons with disabilities that we will improve the quality of life for Albertans.

Bill 203 will also lay out the ground rules for those Albertans who currently have service dogs and wish to seek identification for their dog. This act makes it clear that only certified dogs will receive identification. If at the present time there are service dogs that are fully trained, once this act comes into force, persons with disabilities will be able to receive an identification card for their dog.

Changes to the definition of disabled person which was in the act recognized that different forms of disability could be supported through the use of service dogs. One hon. member correctly noted that there are invisible disabilities that may not be noticeable but nonetheless require support. This change will also guarantee individuals with autism, for example, the opportunity to have a service dog. This may prevent those individuals from doing such things as bolting, running away from their supervisor or their parent and running in front of cars, for example, and perhaps help to control repetitive types of behaviour.

The amendment will also support those who need memory aid dogs. These dogs are trained to assist individuals with cognitive impairments, perhaps like brain injury or Alzheimer's. The dogs will memorize the often-travelled routes such as off to work or to home, and they can also detect unsafe situations such as a stove burner left on.

There was concern expressed by the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview regarding what would occur if an individual were to lose their identification card. I want to assure the hon. member that we'll take those concerns into consideration when the regulations are developed. Currently there is a process. It's about a two-day turnaround if a guide dog's identification tags are lost. We will attempt to even improve on that rapid turnaround, but the department is to be commended for that quick turnaround in cases where certification and identification tags are lost.

On the topic of developing regulations, I want to briefly mention that the proclamation date on the bill is January 1, 2009. This should be a sufficient period to bring regulations into place that will balance the needs of service dog owners and the need to maintain public confidence in that certification process. It provides about 18 months from now for the stakeholders to communicate to Albertans the uses of service dogs and the treatment for service dogs and the rights available to the owners of those service dogs. I expect that the government will take an important role in this communication process and will seek help from the community to move that forward.

The importance of educating the public about service dogs was very clear at second reading and also the committee debates. The need to educate the general public and increase awareness is crucial. If that does not happen, there will be difficulties in gaining public

acceptance of service dogs. There'll also be challenges with public understanding around the access and legal rights of an individual to be accompanied by that service dog. Individuals with service dogs have stated that there's a general lack of understanding about service dogs, and that further underlines the need for more education. That said, Mr. Speaker, I believe that Albertans are understanding of the varied needs of persons with disabilities, but by being informed, they will be able to understand better the role of service dogs and will be accepting of the rights accorded to those individuals who use service dogs.

2:40

Mr. Speaker, I'm optimistic that the provisions of Bill 203 can be implemented in a manner that will benefit the users of service dogs and also the general public. There's a very good model in place through the Blind Persons' Rights Act with regard to identification cards used by blind persons for their guide dogs, and I think this model can be adopted by the Service Dogs Act.

Now, Mr. Speaker, before I close, I would like to recognize the staff support that I have received from the Department of Seniors and Community Supports. Certainly, the full support of the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports has been important. In addition, Reagan McCullough, the assistant deputy minister, disability supports division; Susan Bieganeck, Barbara Adamson, and Joann Blais through legislative services; Laurel Wierstra, the program development person for the people with disability initiative; Mark Nicoll, through the office of disability issues; and also Diane Bergeron, who works with the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

I'm very pleased to have sponsored this bill, Mr. Speaker, Bill 203, the Service Dogs Act. This is a good piece of legislation which will enable Albertans with disabilities to participate fully in the social, economic, and cultural life of this province, making this province a more inclusive place to live, something that each and every member of this Assembly feels is important and wishes to support, I believe.

I thank all members for their support. I would ask that you continue in your support and see this bill through to the end of third reading and into legislation.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Agnihotri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 203, Service Dogs Act. This bill prohibits discriminatory practices towards individuals with disabilities and trainers who are accompanied by a service dog, establishes an identification process for service dogs, and creates fines for offenders of the act. I commend the Member for Strathcona for introducing this bill. I'm definitely supporting this bill.

Some shops, restaurants, and other businesses sometimes object to assistance dogs being brought onto the premises. This bill, particularly, is intended to bring greater autonomy to individuals with physical disabilities and to facilitate their social integration by prohibiting discriminatory behaviour against anyone using or training a service dog. Service dogs are trained to assist people who have a wide variety of mobility impairment and other hidden disabilities such as seizures, psychiatric disorders, life-threatening medical problems, or chronic pain. These dogs provide services to disabled individuals, helping them function with a greater self-sufficiency, prevent injuries, and summon help in a crisis.

A 2001 Stats Canada survey, the most recent available, Mr. Speaker, indicated that over half of Canadians with disabilities

require service devices to help manage their disabilities and make their life easier. Service dogs can be one of those critical aids. Over half of adults with disabilities who require aids are working-age adults, while seniors make up a large proportion of individuals requiring service aids.

Alberta Liberals oppose discriminatory practices towards any group and fully support increasing accessibility to Albertans with disabilities. Every Albertan should have the ability to work, learn, and play to their fullest potential in our province. The Alberta Liberals fully support strong, effective disability accessibility legislation that would provide a greater level of independence, of enhanced quality of life.

The penalties for violating the act seem quite low. Section 1 in this bill, Mr. Speaker, provides definitions required to interpret the act. This act applies to individuals with physical disabilities excluding blindness or visual impairment who would require a service dog, which is good. Service dogs are required to have an identification card, and section 2 of this act does not have authority over the Blind Persons' Rights Act.

Section 3 defines the types of behaviour considered discriminatory and subject to the fines. Anyone who provides services, goods, facilities, or accommodations to the public cannot refuse to provide their services to a disabled person simply because the person is accompanied by a service dog. It clarifies that the act does not entitle a disabled person or a certified dog trainer to any right beyond being accommodated by a service dog. This act, Mr. Speaker, only applies if the disabled person and the dog trainer control the behaviour of the service dog.

Section 4, Mr. Speaker, outlines the requirement for a disabled person to obtain an identification card for the service dog as proof that the service dog qualifies under this act.

This bill allows the minister to make regulations outlining the qualifications for service dogs, establishes a fine of up to \$3,000 for individuals who exhibit discriminatory behaviour, establishes a fine of up to \$300 for individuals who pretend to be disabled in order to benefit from the act, and also amends the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act to include service dogs. This bill also, in section 8, repeals chapter 7, the Blind Persons' Rights Amendment Act. This bill comes into force on January 1, 2009, as the hon. Member for Strathcona just said, which is quite sufficient time.

I urge all the members of this House to support this bill. Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, before I recognize the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, may we briefly revert to Introduction of Guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

head:

### **Introduction of Guests**

*(reversion)*

**Mr. Lougheed:** Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to have in the public gallery three individuals with whom I've spoken from time to time, some of them more often than others, and several times during the development of this bill they've had input. I believe they'll also be available to help in the development of the regulations as we move forward over the next 18 months. They're up in the gallery, as I've said, and I'd like the members present to acknowledge these three folks: first of all, Larry Pempeit, who is the director of community development for CPA – and he's seated in the middle of the three gentlemen on the end there – and also Tom Craig and Edgar Jackson. I appreciate their input and their support and their help.

They're active members of the community, and I thank you for your contributions to the community. I'd ask all members to please acknowledge them with a warm welcome.

head: 2:50 **Public Bills and Orders Other than  
Government Bills and Orders**  
**Third Reading**

**Bill 203**  
**Service Dogs Act**  
*(continued)*

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Marz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased today to rise in full support of this excellent piece of legislation brought forward by my colleague the hon. Member for Strathcona. Bill 203, the Service Dogs Act, prohibits discrimination towards a person with a disability who is accompanied by a qualified service dog that has an identification card issued by the minister.

This act offers new protections to service dog teams in addition to those afforded under the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act. This act reflects the values of Albertans. It says that it is recognized in Alberta as a fundamental principle and as a matter of public policy that all persons are equal in: dignity, rights and responsibilities without regard to race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income or family status. These values guide the laws and policies of this province. Albertans can file complaints with the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission if they feel they've been discriminated against.

The Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act currently protects individuals with a disability who rely on a guide dog for assistance in addition to the protection of the Blind Persons' Rights Act. Bill 203 adds reliance on a service dog to the definition of a physical disability in the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act, offering additional protection to a person with a service dog. In Alberta employers, landlords, tenants, and service providers are expected to make reasonable efforts to accommodate individuals with disabilities unless it would cause undue hardship. Well-trained service dogs are discreet and can be easily accommodated. They do not cause hardship.

The HRCMA employs the preferred method of restorative justice rather than punitive justice. It's important that punitive antidiscrimination legislation does not lead to the weakening of human rights legislation. However, punitive measures are appropriate sometimes when there is discrimination against a person with a disability using a service dog. Bill 203 defines two offences: treating a person with a service dog any differently than any other member of the public and failing to return a service dog identification card issued by the minister or claiming to be a disabled person to obtain benefits that this act offers. Enacting these offences serves the purpose of articulating a shared social value that is essential to the social order: that there should not be discrimination against a person with a disability.

This bill enshrines in law what is already accepted by society as basic etiquette and morally proper. Protecting the basic human rights of people with disabilities is simply the right thing to do. This value is of sufficient importance that it justifies the involvement of the police, Crown prosecutors, and other resources required to enforce this act. The use of punitive measures to punish persons who discriminate against persons with disabilities is not new. The offences and fines defined in the Service Dogs Act parallel those set out for the use of guide dogs in the Blind Persons' Rights Act.

The Service Dogs Act is complementary to the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act and the Blind Persons' Rights Act. This bill is an excellent piece of legislation. I'd be happy to join my colleagues to vote in favour of this act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by Edmonton-Mill Creek.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I take great pleasure in having the opportunity to speak to Bill 203 here this afternoon. I didn't actually have a chance thus far to have my two cents' worth in regard to Bill 203, and certainly I was looking forward to the opportunity.

I noted that the hon. Member for Strathcona mentioned quite a number of interested parties who assisted him with the drafting of this bill, one of them being a person that I, in fact, consulted with as well, Diane Bergeron, who is a resident of Edmonton-Calder. Her main concerns that were expressed and brought forward to me seem to be well addressed in Bill 203 to the extent that satisfied both of us.

Her main concern was that persons with visual disabilities fought long and hard to have their service dogs welcome and legally protected to serve them in all parts of our society, so by moving to extend that franchise to other persons, her first and main concern, which reflected persons with visual impairment across this province, was that, you know, the standard of training and obedience by the dogs would in fact be maintained. Of course, even now we don't see an entirely full acceptance of service dogs in our society. Perhaps we can protect persons legally, but I only have to think back as far as the problems associated with taxis still. Diane and others could attest to this, that there's this ongoing problem with getting service dogs accepted by the taxi industry, at least by individuals.

So my point is, Mr. Speaker, that while the persons with visual impairment fought long and hard for this and they're welcoming to extend that franchise to people with other requirements for service dogs, they just want to make sure that the integrity of the system, especially in regard to dog obedience and training, is maintained. I think that that's something that we will watch for, Ms Bergeron and myself and hundreds of others out there undoubtedly, to ensure that this is enshrined in the regulations. I'm glad to see and to hear that this bill is due to be proclaimed in 2009, so that gives us lots of opportunity to ensure that these concerns are in fact met.

So, again, working with the blind persons' amendment act, it is important that this Bill 203 synchronizes with those provisions, and I seem to think that it does to the best of my analysis. The whole notion of Bill 203 that I like the most is that it's extending the capacity of using service dogs to assist persons with disabilities in the broadest possible way, still hopefully maintaining a certain standard of training. You know, this is always important. Any time that we have some measure of equality being entered into our society through legislation, this is something to celebrate, and once we acknowledge the extent to which people can benefit through the acquisition and use of service dogs to our society, I think it's just one small step closer to a sense of social justice and equality to which we all should aspire.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek, followed by Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Zwodzesky:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure to join in on third reading of the Service Dogs Act, Bill 203, as brought forward by my hon. colleague from Strathcona. I have read through

the bill, and I'm pleased to add my support to it. I do that because I know from having worked in this area for a number of years how critically important this issue is and how much anticipation there is that we will resolve some significant issues with the introduction, passage, and ultimately assent to this particular bill. Bill 203, as we've heard, will in fact create a new act to help ensure that persons with disabilities have the legal right to be accompanied by an accredited service dog in all areas that are normally open to the general public and that they will be able to do so free of discrimination.

This particular bill contains some important provisions that relate to the certification process of a service dog and to the use of ID cards, identification cards, to prove that the particular person with a disability has, in fact, the legal right to be accompanied by a particular service dog into a particular public place. That having been said, Mr. Speaker, Bill 203 was amended under section 1(c) to now read: "service dog' means a dog trained as a guide for a disabled person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations."

So what does this amendment do, and what does this all mean? Well, first of all, this particular amendment clarifies the regulations. Secondly, it also clarifies the certification process regarding service dogs. Thirdly, it clarifies the identification that is to be used and issued to a person with a disability who is dependent upon his or her service dog.

3:00

I should add, Mr. Speaker, that the amendment also strengthens the definition of a service dog. Succinctly put, Bill 203 will be consistent with the approach that we took a few years ago with the Blind Persons' Rights Act. I recall, having the authority as minister responsible for that act at the time, being deeply involved in discussions with the CNIB. Bill McKeown, Ellie Shuster, of course Diane Bergeron, and a number of others who were very passionate about this brought forward very important points that we could then crystallize into a properly constructed bill, and I think the hon. Member for Strathcona has done precisely the same thing here. That similar process of public input has been observed, and I congratulate him for it.

The net result will be an act that has simplified language, that helps to ensure that the certification process will be described in the regulations in a way that's understandable by all and ensure that it broadens the range of people with disabilities who will be able to access public places while at the same time narrowing the qualification criteria for the particular dogs.

A few comments about service dog training are warranted because I know that during the committee stage of debate on this bill some concerns were raised regarding the tests and the testing procedures for certification of these service dogs. One concern, for example, was the ability to have a service dog, that particular point being contingent upon the dog being certified through a formally accredited process, a complicated and difficult process, I should stress, that would have to be gone through. On the matter of the training process it's also one that is contemplated to be rather lengthy and will be going to limit the number of individuals who would pursue this route. I would only say that there's always a danger of making things a little too complicated and too onerous, but the intention is that it be thorough. That's what is being strived for here.

Another concern that was raised was with respect to having good standards, and I want to just emphasize that good standards will be those set out by the Assistance Dogs International, or ADI, group. The Western Guide and Assistance Dog Society is currently being accredited to train service dogs. It's a five-year process, as we know, where trainers must meet certain standards related to dog

handling, to dog selection, and to compliance with relevant laws. Now, since the ADI is an internationally recognized service for training dogs, as an organization I mean, the regulations that come out of this act will reflect those that are similar to the ADI standards.

Another important concern that was raised was with respect to the potential of individuals not having ID but actually using a service dog, and of course there will be a need to consider how to grandfather in service dogs that are currently in use but don't have the specific training or the certification. I know that's a significant concern, and that will be ironed out.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, there's the issue of penalties. Yes, there will be penalties in place for those who pass off an untrained or uncertified dog as a service dog or, at least, attempt to do so.

I want to come back quickly to the issue of ID cards. This is at the heart of the success for this particular bill, in my view. The ID that persons with disabilities will be issued will provide service dog owners with a card that specifically recognizes their dog as having completed the necessary training to be the service dog we're talking about here. Service dogs will be trained. They will be tested on how to handle the responsibility of accompanying their handlers into various situations and various environments, and they will only earn the title of service dog, certified service dog, if certain standards are met.

Now, once all of that has been done and accomplished, the ID card will provide proof that service dogs have been carefully trained to accompany their owners onto buses, into stores, into washrooms, and into other public areas such as those. Having this card will prove that a service dog is required, and it will allow the owner to produce the ID when questioned about his or her service dog. That ID process will protect Albertans from being disrupted by uncertified dogs. We should also note that dog owners who do not have certified dogs will not be subject to the same accessibility as persons with disabilities who do possess the government-issued ID card.

So in wrapping up my comments here, Mr. Speaker, under the Blind Persons' Rights Act blind persons are able to apply to the Ministry of Seniors and Community Supports for a specific identification that displays their picture and the government of Alberta official symbol. A similar process will be allowed here. The ID card for persons with disabilities who are accompanied by a service dog will also be issued by the Ministry of Seniors and Community Supports, and it will likely include some of the same elements, in this particular case a picture of the service dog, a picture of the owner, and of course some accredited official government of Alberta symbol.

In conclusion, I will just say that providing access to all public places to persons with disabilities along with their accredited and trained service dogs will allow the owners to continue to receive the necessary supports provided by their service dog throughout their daily lives, whether it is in their own home or in a public place. It's good, it's fair, and it's the right thing to do. The owners will be able to produce their identification cards in instances where their access perhaps might be questioned, which will provide confidence to others and particularly to the person with disabilities that their service dog cannot be denied the right to accompany them into those public places. Providing proof that a service dog has been appropriately trained will also give peace of mind to the individual requesting the proof of an ID card.

So I applaud the direction of Bill 203. I again congratulate the hon. Member for Strathcona and the community that requires this specific service through these accredited service dogs for working together and bringing this issue into our Legislature.

With that, I am pleased to add my support, and I thank you for the gesture of time, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by Calgary-Nose Hill.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've previously indicated both in second reading and in Committee of the Whole my support for Bill 203 and my support for the Member for Strathcona. A question has arisen in my mind today, and it's probably the discussions that we've had with regard to inflation and affordable housing. Within the context of Bill 203 is there any provision for government subsidies to support owners of service dogs? The Member for Strathcona has noted how expensive the training and receiving the qualifications for the dogs is, and then of course there's the daily maintenance, the feeding of the dogs, the shots, and the vet bills that are all part of being a responsible pet owner.

The onset of a disability can be both very traumatic and very expensive. I detailed the circumstances of the young lady at the University of Calgary who I worked with who had the doubly disastrous circumstance of first being rear-ended by a truck and then suffering an industrial accident, which damaged both her spine, initially, and then her hand and required the use of a dog. She's had great difficulties getting subsidies for rent, subsidies to recognize her disability. It's thanks to the compassion of her landlord that rents her the basement suite – she also does limited maintenance responsibilities and obviously keeps an eye out on the house – that she's able to live in the community and able to access the University of Calgary.

I spoke in second reading again of my support. I recognized in Committee of the Whole my appreciation for the Member for Strathcona's amendments, thus strengthening his bill. If there is any time remaining, I would appreciate the member's response, clarification, or push towards providing government subsidies for the individuals who need the support of their service dogs, to make sure those service dogs are in place.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, followed by West Yellowhead.

**Dr. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise for third reading in support of Bill 203, the Service Dogs Act, put forth by the hon. Member for Strathcona. I'm pleased that he has seen his way to guide this legislation through the House in a most expeditious manner. This is truly a progressive piece of legislation that aims to improve the quality of life for Albertans with disabilities, particularly those who choose to utilize the talents of highly specialized and certified service dogs.

3:10

During the course of discussion on Bill 203 this Assembly has heard a number of touching stories describing individuals with disabilities who have enjoyed an enhanced quality of life as a result of using service dogs. Service dogs have helped their owners to be valuable contributors to the workforce and to society as a whole and, I might add, perhaps equally importantly, to enhance their confidence, their safety, and their enjoyment of life. Albertans with disabilities are certainly a resilient community, Mr. Speaker, and have proven that when coping with serious problems like epilepsy or paralysis or dealing with visual, hearing, or speech challenges, there are solutions that can aid them in becoming all that they can be in the workforce, in their communities, and certainly in their personal lives.

Mr. Speaker, employers sometimes are reluctant to employ anyone with a disability because of concerns that they may be an

increased health or safety hazard either to themselves or to their fellow workers on the job. I would suggest that this bill bolsters members of the Alberta disabled community who already have a service dog and also have viable skills that they can offer to the workforce. By empowering these individuals with a service dog, we are certainly assisting them to maximize their potential and, hopefully, to improve their quality of life.

The employment rate of people with disabilities in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, I know has risen from 49.4 per cent in 1999 to 54.4 per cent in 2004. This is certainly progress, but there is still much work to be done. It is to be hoped that this bill will help us to improve on those numbers for the mutual benefit of our disabled community and our workforce.

Of course, there will be the necessity of making accommodation to those with disabilities when it's necessary. In reality, we already have accommodations that are required when hiring individuals with various detriments, and service dogs or disabilities should be no different. They are not great accommodations that are required. They should be seen as a small part of encouraging inclusion in the workforce. Job accommodations are, as I said, not usually intrusive. They can be as simple as rearrangement of equipment or flexible scheduling, and it's apparent that supporting any individual with a service dog is just as manageable as other accommodations.

What is very positive about this bill and its amendments is that it will allow and help the empowerment of people with disabilities by assisting them to more fully utilize their skills and their abilities.

I'm pleased to offer my support to the hon. Member for Strathcona. He has facilitated action on a very important bill for a special segment of our society, and I encourage the support of all members of the House for this bill on third reading.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead, followed by Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Strang:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to rise today and join in the discussion on Bill 203, the Service Dogs Act, in third reading. Bill 203 will legally recognize other service dogs and extend to persons with disabilities the same protection afforded under the Blind Persons' Rights Act.

There has been significant discussion about service dogs. These animals are very important and mean a great deal to those whom they assist. A dog is considered a service dog if the animal is used by a person with a disability to avoid hazards or otherwise compensate for disabilities. The dog must be well behaved and under control. Business owners and other representatives of public accommodations have the right to exclude any dog that displays aggressive behaviour or is out of control. They may also exclude any dog whose behaviour disrupts the provision of goods and services such as a barking dog in a movie theatre.

These service dogs are not pets. They are to act as well-trained assistants to those who need their special abilities. They gain this special status through extensive training. The training for guide dogs is defined in the Blind Persons' Rights Act. For a dog to become a guide dog, a definition in the Blind Persons' Rights Act, they have to be trained by a registered member of Assistance Dogs International.

In response to a formal public review process, the Alberta government introduced Bill 4, the Blind Persons' Rights Amendment Act, 2004, on February 18, 2004. According to section 6 of the act an identification card is "proof, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, that the blind person and that person's guide dog identified in it are qualified for the purposes of this Act." The well-trained

dogs are guaranteed the right to be able to assist their owners by accompanying them to various locations.

The Blind Persons' Rights Act is only relative to guide dogs that assist people with vision impairment. Guide dogs for vision impairment are well known and quite commonly accepted within our society, providing such assistance as obstacle avoidance, signal changes in elevators, and locating objects on command. The Blind Persons' Rights Act excludes mentioning the service dog, and that assists individuals with other disabilities, such as people who are suffering from limited mobility.

There is much more that service dogs can provide to those suffering from disabilities other than from vision impairment. The role that service dogs play for those in need of assistance varies from the role of guide dogs. It is important to understand these variances in order to see just how helpful service dogs are to people with disabilities. People suffering from hearing disabilities are able to use service dogs to alert those in need of a sound inside the home, such as a doorbell or a knock on the front door, or away from the home, such as a vehicle honking.

Service dogs are able to help those with mobility issues as well in accomplishing a number of different tasks. Some of these tasks include basic tasks that accomplish such actions as fetching a wheelchair or bringing in groceries, pawing or nose-nudging, basic tasks such as closing or opening drawers and removing shoes and socks, bracing based tasks such as steadying their partner while getting out of a bathtub.

While there are many tasks available for service dogs to assist those who suffer from mobility issues, there are dogs trained to handle other cases of impairment. A service dog can learn a number of different tasks to help medical crises. They include bringing medication to ailing persons, bringing the phone to reach the proper assistance, calling 911 or the crisis line on the K-9 rescue phone, and carrying pertinent medical information for their partner.

Treatments related to psychiatric assistance for sufferers with aspects of psychiatric disabilities are numerous. For example, the service dog could provide assistance for people to cope with medical side effects, such as balancing them. Also, they can help those suffering sudden waves of terror, chest pains, respiratory distress caused by severe pain attacks by fetching antidote medication to alleviate the symptoms.

Service dogs play an integral role for many people who might otherwise be hindered in their day-to-day living. Bill 203 will ensure that people with disabilities will be allowed unrestricted access to public places in the use of a service dog. The bill will allow all Albertans who rely on service dogs to have the opportunity to participate fully in the social, economic, and cultural life of our province. I would like to thank the hon. Member for Strathcona for introducing the Service Dogs Act, and I would like to give my support to Bill 203.

Thank you.

3:20

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, you have 10 minutes.

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to stand up and address Bill 203 in third reading as I did speak to it in second reading. I was hoping there would be more amendments to come forward. For that reason, I am standing up to speak against this bill in its current state, and I'll explain a few reasons why. The idea is an excellent idea. The necessity is there to protect those people with service dogs, but the importance of human rights has been mentioned and read in a long list by the hon.

Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, that listed off those rights that we need to engage and protect the good citizens of the province here, which I agree with. But the problem under law is that whenever you start to make a list, it's never inclusive. It's exclusive. That's who I want to address this afternoon: a couple of groups that have become excluded.

The purpose of good legislation, which I don't feel this is – people got up and said: it's excellent legislation; it's good legislation; the necessity is there. But good legislation is where we actually protect our freedoms, not take them away, and we protect those who can't protect themselves. There are two areas that we fail to protect: a smaller minority group than those, and perhaps it's a larger group. I don't know the statistics on it. But there is this fear of dogs, cynophobia. If someone – perhaps their child has even been killed by a dog attack or they've lost one or they've had one personally themselves – has a severe fear, cynophobia, there's no protection here for those types of individuals who may be running a business, who may be a friend of a person who runs a business. They might have a sign up there for no dogs for very good reasons.

The other thing that's not on the list is equality for those people with allergies. We have section 4 that talks, "This section does not apply if the disabled person does not control the behaviour of the service dog," which is an excellent point that makes this better legislation. But there's no exception for those groups of individuals that have a fear of dogs or have allergies to dogs. Somehow I feel that that needs to be balanced and taken into view on this. I would encourage the good Member for Strathcona – I spoke to it, and I was hoping that he would bring that forward in an amendment. I guess I should've spoken to him a little more on the side.

But because of those two items that are being missed on this, I really feel that we need to reconsider and look at this. A more excellent way or a more tolerable society is one that is educated and one that is knowledgeable and understands the situation. That's one area where we definitely want to go. We want Albertans to be more educated and understand the value of service dogs, the huge improvement in quality of life that an individual can achieve because of the use of a service dog, that we still want to protect those who can't protect themselves. This legislation missed that important aspect.

So, for that reason, I can't support it in its current state, but I hope that some amendments come forward, if not at this time then at a time in the future, that will protect those people who need protecting from the use of service dogs in whatever circumstance that may be. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any others? Hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, did you want to speak?

**Mr. Rogers:** Sure.

**The Acting Speaker:** You're recognized.

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to contribute to third reading debate of Bill 203, the Service Dogs Act. I'm happy to see this private member's bill receive so much support and that it's reached this point. I'd like to thank the hon. Member for Strathcona for his hard work on this bill. Because of his arduous efforts, tenacity, many individuals across Alberta will have an enhanced quality of life brought about by a clarification and solidification of their rights.

Mr. Speaker, the Service Dogs Act aims to solidify the rights of individuals with disabilities to be accompanied by a certified service dog in all areas open to the public without facing any discrimination.

This is a clear and noble goal which I fully support. The current situation, of course, is that the rights of individuals with service dogs are not as clear as they should be. Because of the lack of clarity regarding their rights, disabled individuals with service dogs have been wrongfully denied service or access to areas where they should've been allowed to go. Bill 203 will go a long ways to rectifying this situation.

Mr. Speaker, with any sort of new legislation it is of utmost importance to properly inform citizens and stakeholders of changes that may affect them. They must know and be comfortable with the new laws in order to abide by them. In order for the Service Dogs Act to have a smooth transition phase and a positive reaction by the public, all individuals affected by the act will have to be educated on this new legislation. It will be up to the department, nonprofit organizations, and support groups to get the word out and clearly inform the public about the rights of individuals who utilize service dogs.

Mr. Speaker, while this is a very straightforward act, its successful implementation will depend on strong communications with stakeholders and the public. I would like to briefly go through a few of the issues which still need to be thoroughly communicated.

It is important to know what a service dog is. People must be informed that service dogs, like guide dogs, are not regular pets, and therefore they cannot be treated as common dogs. They shouldn't be petted. Service dogs have specific functions and, depending on who they're assisting, will have specific qualifications, which they will have worked very hard to master during their training. Because of the wide range of persons with disabilities included within the scope of this act, these dogs will be trained to meet all kinds of special needs. Some will assist individuals with mobility, seizure detection, access, autism, and so on.

Service dogs have a job, Mr. Speaker. That job is to assist individuals with disabilities. As with individuals who are on the job, they do not have time to socialize and play. There is a time for play but not when a service dog is assisting a person with disability.

Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports and the department to inform individuals about appropriate behaviour around service dogs. A lot of hard work and money goes into the proper training of a service dog. Therefore, it will be imperative to treat a service dog as it is meant to be treated.

Mr. Speaker, if Albertans can appreciate exactly what service dogs are used for, they will be understanding and more than willing to accommodate individuals with service dogs. At the current time most people are not aware of the myriad of things service dogs can be used for and how they positively impact the lives of individuals with disabilities.

It's also important for Albertans to know who is legally able to have a service dog and how to identify them. An identification card for a service dog and the individual using it will demonstrate to the public who is legally allowed to use the dog, but first they must be able to recognize this identification. Once identification is made, Mr. Speaker, rights cannot and will not be challenged.

Third, we want the quality of life of all Albertans to be enhanced with Bill 203. This being the case, it is important that everyone be educated as to the kind of thorough training service dogs have before they can be certified. For those who are perhaps a little uncomfortable with dogs, it would be extremely reassuring to know that in order for a service dog to become certified, it would have gone through an intensive training process to meet very high standards set by the Assistance Dogs International group. Mr. Speaker, Albertans will know that when they see the proper identification on a service dog, they can be assured that dog is fully trained according to regulation and is not – I repeat not – a threat to their security.

Also, Mr. Speaker, there is currently some level of confusion about where individuals with service dogs are legally able to go. Stakeholders will have to be aware that persons with disabilities accompanied by service dogs are able and fully entitled to go wherever all Albertans go, no questions asked. As soon as this is widely known, a large barrier will be removed for people with disabilities who use service dogs. I think that this is what we are all trying to achieve.

Finally, but not . . .

3:30

**The Acting Speaker:** I'm sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allocated for debate has now run out.

The hon. Member for Strathcona to close debate.

**Mr. Lougheed:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been good to hear of the support forthcoming from members. A couple of questions were raised, and I think during previous debate and when we talked in committee, a few of these things came up and were commented on.

Mr. Speaker, in general and in conclusion, the intent of Bill 203 to provide protection for persons who use service dogs parallels the Blind Persons' Rights Act. Under that act some of these challenges have been apparent, and they have been dealt with in community and through the work of the department. The department is to be commended for doing things like helping out in situations where the person that has a dog had some extraordinary costs associated – and the odd time that does happen – and they were supported in those circumstances.

On accommodation for other persons who have problems with dogs, I found the owners of seeing eye dogs, guide dogs, to be very good at working with people they come across. If there are legitimate issues, they're always very accommodating as well because these people know what it's like not to be accommodated. Unfortunately, they have suffered many acts of discrimination as simple, from the rest of our perspective, as maybe not even having access to a cab when they want it. For us that's not a problem; there's another one that we can hail in a moment or two. But for persons with disabilities that's a real challenge.

So, Mr. Speaker, I thank those members who have spoken in support of the bill, and on behalf of the three gentlemen I introduced earlier – Larry and Tom and Edgar – and other members of the community whom they're here today representing, I would ask all members to support Bill 203, Service Dogs Act.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 203 read a third time]

head: **Public Bills and Orders Other than  
Government Bills and Orders  
Second Reading**

**Bill 205  
Environmental Protection and Enhancement  
(Conservation and Reclamation) Amendment Act, 2007**

[Debate adjourned April 30: Mr. Rogers speaking]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm privileged to pick up where we left off at the end of the last debate. I was referring at that time to the Al-Pac/Gulf Surmont project, which brought Gulf Canada Resources and Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries together in developing natural resources.

These companies, Mr. Speaker, agreed to share access roads, salvage the timber cut for the petroleum operation, and time their reclamation efforts to have maximum effect so as to have minimum impact on the land. This co-operation reduced both costs and ecological impacts. A 47 per cent savings in roads and \$3 million in total integrated services were saved by the combined actions of these two companies.

Mr. Speaker, the need to preserve our forests is greater when most scientists agree that man-made carbon dioxide is contributing to global warming. Our forests are natural sponges for reducing carbon dioxide. Oil and gas companies are working to develop technologies that reduce the amount and duration of their carbon dioxide output.

Our forests have a deep spiritual significance to the aboriginal peoples. Any effort to preserve forests should draw on the traditional culture and vast knowledge of our aboriginal communities. Bill 205 could go a long way in helping the aboriginal voice be heard when reclamation regulations are made.

Mr. Speaker, many Albertans enjoy activities in our forests: walking, biking, hunting, and camping, just to name a few. Having commercial activity in our forests helps to make them more accessible to all Albertans. I would encourage all members to vote in favour of this bill.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Prins:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm also very pleased to contribute to the debate on Bill 205, the Environmental Protection and Enhancement (Conservation and Reclamation) Act, 2007, sponsored by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead. This government has committed in many ways to strengthening Alberta's communities. We hope to make our communities more prosperous, more safe, and more vibrant. We want to ensure that our communities are the best place in the world to live.

I want to discuss the impact that Bill 205 would have on Alberta's communities. First of all, a strong community requires a sound environment, a prosperous economy, and co-operation between businesses, families, and all levels of government. I support Bill 205 because I believe that it will strengthen Alberta's communities by helping to ensure an appropriate environmental and economic policy. I'm encouraged to see the co-operation between various stakeholders and government that has gone into this bill.

It is not possible to sustain a high quality of life without a healthy environment. We must implement prudent policy today so that the environment in Alberta will remain pristine for many generations to come. The government is developing an enhanced strategy for air and water, a land-use framework, and a comprehensive strategy for Alberta's energy and forestry resources.

Section 2(2) in Bill 205 will ensure that the committee appointed by the minister will review the regulations pertaining to the practices and criteria for conservation and reclamation of these lands as specified in the act. This way we will be enabled to continually pursue the use of best practices to protect and enhance lands that have been used and are being reclaimed. As our energy industry matures, there are more and more wells that dry up or are shut down and need to be reclaimed and from time to time a well is drilled that has no commercial value or viability or is dry, so this is a fairly common occurrence.

Taken together, these initiatives will ensure the responsible stewardship of our province's environment. Mandating that well site reclamation standards are reviewed at regular intervals will ensure that the latest technologies and standards are taken into consideration. We are making tremendous strides in technology which

allows us to manage resources more prudently and minimize the impact that resource extraction has on the environment. Timely implementation of these advances will be invaluable in the efforts to maintain and enhance our environment. By protecting the environment, we can ensure that our communities remain healthy and vibrant places to live.

The energy and forestry industries employ tens of thousands of Albertans and contribute billions of dollars annually in taxes and royalties to the provincial treasury and support countless community projects. Creating a climate in which these important industries can succeed will ensure that our communities remain strong. Bill 205 will help to foster a climate of success by providing a forum where the energy and forestry industries can work together with government.

A reclamation review committee which meets consistently will provide both of these sectors with the opportunity to work together and to plan strategies in an integrated manner. Our communities thrive because of our co-operative spirit. Bill 205 continues with this great tradition of co-operation. The regular reviews will allow industry stakeholders to come together with government and the public to make decisions for the benefit of all Albertans. Each sector and individual brings their own unique perspective to this process. The review process will balance these perspectives.

So I want to strongly encourage my colleagues to consider supporting Bill 205. I believe that legislating regular reviews of well site reclamation will have a positive impact on our communities and, indeed, our province as a whole.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, did you want to participate in the debate?

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes, sir.

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that. I welcome the opportunity to speak briefly on Bill 205. I find it interesting in several ways. Certainly, just because the scope of this bill is reasonably limited, I have no trouble supporting the bill, but on some of the details regarding this conservation and reclamation bill, potentially an act, I just perhaps require some clarification. You know, under the current Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act and through conservation and reclamation regulations as they stand, any lands that have been excavated and mined have to be reclaimed and returned to their original environmental conditions anyway. So the regulations' main mandate: reclamation on a wide range of mining activities and forestry and ensuring that environmental contaminants are also removed.

3:40

This bill, in my mind – and perhaps I require some clarification here – seems to mandate that land reclamations done in areas specially designated as green areas in Alberta have to be overseen by a committee, I guess, that will review these special reclamations every five years. Reclamations under the act are conducted through what's considered to be best forestry practices, recommending changes to the regulations for the implementation of best practices, that the committee reports in a timely manner, and so forth. Certainly, you know, with that specific provision, these designated green areas getting some more timely attention in regard to land reclamation, I can't not support that, but I'm looking to see what limits these green areas and how we determine which areas are

actually requiring or getting this special attention. That's kind of some further explanation I wouldn't mind from the hon. member who has brought this forward.

You know, this is providing an additional level of oversight, which is good, for land reclamations. My only concern and, perhaps, suggestion would be that this committee should be as much as possible staffed with independent expertise that can objectively assess the progress being made in regard to land reclamation here in the province. So this is part of, I guess, potentially a larger land-use strategy, that we need so desperately in this province.

We have to look no further than the enormous excavations and tailing ponds that exist in northeast Alberta in regard to the tar sands to just see how important it is that we move forward with a land-use strategy that looks at all parts of the province and not just certain designated green areas because, of course, who's to say that one part of the province is less deserving of a proper regulation oversight to land reclamation than another. If we in fact do determine winners and losers – some areas get special attention, and others are left to the whims of industry – then certainly we can know exactly what would happen to a place that is not receiving equal protection. We're left with a legacy of, undoubtedly, one of the world's largest excavation sites in northeast Alberta with the world's largest tailings ponds that haven't been reclaimed to any degree whatsoever.

So I just would hope that the attention that is being afforded by Bill 205, which I support wholeheartedly, might also extend to other industrial areas in our province that are sadly requiring reclamation in a timely and more thorough manner.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Coumts:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak in favour of Bill 205 the Environmental Protection and Enhancement (Conservation and Reclamation) Amendment Act, 2007. I've got to commend the Member for West Yellowhead for bringing this forward. It's a thoughtful piece of legislation, something that makes us look at our obligations and responsibilities as members not only of society but also of this House.

Bill 205 will amend section 137 of the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act to ensure that when well sites are being reclaimed, proper environmental and forest management procedures are considered. Effective management of Alberta's forests is vital to ensuring that our province's natural areas continue to prosper for future generations, and that's an important component that we must keep in mind as we go forward with this bill.

When a well site is no longer active, it is essential to properly address surface reclamation issues and any subsurface contamination that may arise. This is not a small concern given that there are more than 33,000 well sites in Alberta that are no longer in production and awaiting reclamation certificates, 162,000 active well sites that will ultimately require reclamation certificates at some point in the future, and there are approximately 15,000 new wells drilled every year.

Proper reclamation procedures will improve the health of Alberta's ecosystem and have a profound environmental impact on Albertans' lives. A young, actively growing forest functions as a carbon sink, removing more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than it releases through respiration and decay. Maintaining the health of Alberta's 38 million hectares of forest is therefore beneficial from a climate change perspective.

Forests are also an essential component of the water cycle. Forests ensure that Alberta has clean water in sufficient quantities for aquatic habitat, safe drinking water for its people, and recreational opportunities for families. The vegetation in forests can

absorb up to one-quarter of the total rainfall, which is then returned to the atmosphere through evaporation. The remainder of this water will filter into the soil to recharge the underground aquifers, rivers, streams, wetlands, and lakes during dry periods. In Alberta clean, abundant water flows from the forests of the Rocky Mountains to agricultural, municipal, industrial, residential, and recreational users.

Healthy forests offer a major economic benefit as well. With 21 million hectares of productive forest lands, forestry in Alberta is the third-largest industry. Over \$616 million in forest products is produced here every single year, about 5 per cent of the annual value of manufacturing shipments. Many Albertans, especially those in rural communities, rely on the forests for their livelihoods, and other Albertans also benefit from tourism to our forests. In my constituency of Livingstone-Macleod the forests of the Crowsnest Pass region draw people seeking one of the best wildlife watching and fishing areas in Canada. Enjoying the fresh mountain air at a campsite or on a hiking trail is an experience not soon forgotten by individuals, by couples, or by families. That is why it is essential that we keep our forests in pristine condition.

Alberta's forests are a renewable resource that will keep growing as long as sustainable stewardship practices are followed. Allowing Albertans to continue to enjoy the environment and the economic benefits that our forests offer will require an adequate forest management plan that includes the very best well site reclamation procedures.

Bill 205 will ensure that our stewardship practices are reviewed and renewed on a regular basis. There must be an effective exit strategy for well sites that are no longer in production. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to support Bill 205.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Ducharme:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to the Environmental Protection and Enhancement (Conservation and Reclamation) Amendment Act, 2007. I also wish to thank the Member for West Yellowhead for bringing forward this opportunity to highlight the issue of well site reclamation.

Oil and gas activity is a driving force in our economy in terms of jobs, revenue, and great opportunity. However, petroleum is not our only natural resource. In addition to the wealth underneath Alberta, the surface of our province is covered by vast tracts of timber, lush grasslands, and fertile cropland. These are vital resources to our continued prosperity, and their responsible management is essential to our future economic and social well-being.

3:50

Mr. Speaker, the intent of Bill 205 is proposing to ensure the consideration of proper environmental and forest management procedures in the reclamation of well sites. Bill 205 attempts to improve environmental stewardship and resource management practices. Any measure designed to improve the interaction between human activity and nature and further protect the natural beauty of Alberta while encouraging responsible resource development is a good step to take.

Despite the fact that the proposals Bill 205 sets forth are desirable, I am concerned with the timing of its introduction. The Alberta government has always been committed to environmental stewardship and the responsible development of our resources. A major part of this commitment is the consideration of measures which will inspire better conservation practices and facilitate a positive relationship between the oil and gas industry and our province's natural environment. Such measures must be implemented after careful consideration of their expected impact.

Likewise, they must also be carefully reviewed after implementation to ensure that they have achieved their objectives. The rules that govern energy companies when reclaiming a well site were established between 1993 and 1995. Since then, a great deal has changed. Oil and gas activity has increased, even in areas of pristine wilderness. Reclamation of these well sites is a grave responsibility, not to be taken lightly. A complete restoration of the land to its former state is essential to preserving the environment and protecting other natural resources. The passage of more than a decade necessitates a change to the way this reclamation is regulated and carried out. There have been issues and concerns expressed from all sides regarding acceptable reclamation practices, and there is confusion as to what constitutes acceptable reclamation.

On the surface Bill 205 could facilitate necessary change. This is if we consider its proposals independently of what is already being undertaken. The departments of Energy and Environment are currently developing regulations concerning the implementation of improved well site reclamation processes.

Pros of the bill: positive environmental effects and positive economic effects. Cons of the bill: negatively impacts the development of the new regulations because the provisions of the bill are necessarily at cross-purposes with the new regulations. Developing new regulations takes a great deal of time, careful study, and consideration. One of the concerns is that this bill would legislate a review of regulations and reclamation every five years. It raises these questions: is this enough time to evaluate the effects that changes to existing practices may have? Might it hinder current redevelopment of regulations?

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development is in the process of developing a new industry directive to bring about revised reclamation standards for reforestation. This is excellent news as the issue of reforestation is one that is currently the subject of much discussion and even confusion at times amongst those in the oil and forest industries. I believe there is room to move forward in this area and a need to strengthen our existing regulatory framework to better facilitate the process of development and reclamation. The reviews mentioned will be concluded soon. No doubt the strengthened regulations and guidelines will be in place when necessary in the near future.

The impending changes have been conducted by prolonged and careful stakeholder consultation. Representatives from industry have worked with the government to reach realistic best practices acceptable to all parties concerned. Mr. Speaker, this has been a lengthy process and is nearing conclusion. We will soon see positive change in the way reclamation is conducted in Alberta. Careful evaluation of the effects of a new regulatory framework will result in a positive evolution of policies re natural resource development. As mentioned, the Department of Environment is currently moving forward with several initiatives that will address the objectives of Bill 205.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move that the motion for second reading of Bill 205, Environmental Protection and Enhancement (Conservation and Reclamation) Amendment Act, 2007, be amended by deleting all the words after “that” and substituting the following: “Bill 205, Environmental Protection and Enhancement (Conservation and Reclamation) Amendment Act, 2007, be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence.”

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, this is a hoist amendment. If members wish to participate, it's debatable.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. I'm opposing this amendment. We have a new sort of institution in place, and that's an all-party policy committee. Rather than just simply pulling this and bringing it back six months from now, I supported the government member in proclaiming this particular Bill 205, Environmental Protection and Enhancement (Conservation and Reclamation) Amendment Act, 2007. By putting it to committee instead of pulling it, the discussions could go on, the refinements could be made, and the shortcomings could be addressed.

I would much rather see this discussion taking place now because the necessity of reclamation is absolutely paramount, and putting it off another six months delays what has basically been put off by this government for years on end. The number of unclaimed wells – sorry; orphaned wells is the term I should be using – continues to grow while at the opposite end approvals for new drilling and exploration exponentially grow. There is no balance. What this Bill 205 attempted to do was provide some of that balance that is currently missing. Therefore, I would strongly speak against the hoisting of this bill and say: let's give the newly formed committees a chance to do their work, and let democracy take place.

Thank you.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to add my voice. I supported the bill in the first place and feel very strongly that it's a positive step in calling for review, and indeed it would be a very good first opportunity for our all-party committee to examine the issues and go forward.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any others?

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead to close debate.

**Mr. Strang:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At this time I'd like to close debate with these following comments on Bill 205, Environmental Protection and Enhancement (Conservation and Reclamation) Amendment Act, 2007. First of all, I'd like to thank the hon. Minister of Environment for taking a look at this act and saying that he's going to move forward right away in his department to bring it forward. I'd also like to thank the members from the AFPA and also from CAPP for sitting down with us and working this out as we started. I'd also like to thank all members that spoke on this bill to move it this far.

At this time I'd call for the question. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, as I indicated, this is a hoist amendment, and for those who are interested in reading more about it, I'd refer you to *Beauchesne* 668 and *Marleau and Montpetit*, pages 636 and 637. There's interesting reading therein.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on the amendment carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:59 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Ady	Groeneveld	Oberle
Backs	Haley	Ouellette

Brown	Herard	Prins
Cao	Horner	Renner
Cardinal	Jablonski	Rodney
Coutts	Johnston	Rogers
Danyluk	Magnus	Shariff
Doerksen	Mar	Snelgrove
Ducharme	Marz	Strang
Fritz	McFarland	VanderBurg
Griffiths	Morton	Zwozdesky

**4:10**

Against the motion:

Agnihotri	Flaherty	Pastoor
Chase	Mason	Swann
Eggen	Mather	Tougas
Elsalhy	Miller, B.	
Totals:	For – 33	Against – 11

[Motion on amendment carried]

**Bill 207****Child Care Accountability and Accessibility Act**

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

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with a combined sense of urgency, challenge, anticipation, and foreboding that I introduce Bill 207, the Child Care Accountability and Accessibility Act, for second reading.

“Urgency” because the need for accountability is great, and the need for accessibility is acute, “challenge” because a year’s consultation across the province has convinced me there is consensus among Albertans to proceed, “anticipation” because I believe the objectives set out in this initiative are achievable, and “foreboding” as I remain to be convinced that the current government is committed to making child care a priority in the midst of other needs and pressures of growth.

I have spent time with my colleagues opposite in the House, the past and current ministers of Children’s Services. I appreciate them as fellow members and have no doubt of their personal compassion, nor of their intent to better the lot of children in this province. Yet I wonder if a government that hitches its wagon so tightly to the star of economic growth can imagine the cost of these blinkers to the youngest, most promising, and vulnerable among us.

I have said in this Assembly on more than one occasion that I believe children’s well-being is too important to become a football across the floor or a turf war between levels of government. I said in my Calgary town hall meeting a few weeks ago that I would rather be discussing these issues in a circle than across the imaginary two-sword length of bygone political battles. Our children are a sacred responsibility that links us all as human beings.

Two years ago I worked with my colleagues on all sides of the House on a bill to deal with a major threat to Alberta children and youth: crystal meth addiction. The results of that collaboration were gratifying. Bill 202 was passed unanimously into law.

Now it is my opportunity to initiate another private member’s bill for Alberta’s children. This is more ambitious than Bill 202, for this one involves targets and increased government transparency and accountability. Because no concrete government action has been undertaken in this vital area, I have chosen to take an initiative myself. I ask my colleagues on the government side to look at this not as a partisan strategy but as a statement in support of a very real need by Alberta’s children. Bill 207 has two distinct goals: to

increase the number of high-quality child care spaces available across Alberta and to increase the level of government transparency and accountability regarding child care in Alberta.

Child care in Alberta, I would say, can be divided into three separate periods as follows. The 1970s to the early 1990s. During this period the Alberta government began to fund child care at rates beyond any other province in Canada, leading to rapid space creation, 200 per cent growth between 1977 and ’87. While some of this funding went towards nonprofit and municipally run child care, much of it went to for-profit child care as well as institutions such as day homes.

In the 1980s and early 1990s Alberta was the only province in Canada that had a vacancy rate in its formal care system, and care was generally affordable. Despite these successes provincial policy was criticized strongly due to inadequate monitoring, inconsistent approaches to service delivery, poor quality, and the perception that the provincial government valued profit-making more than the health and safety of children.

From the mid-1990s to 2004 is another period. By the mid-1990s the government’s approach to social programs had shifted towards neoconservatism, which emphasized retreat of the government from social issues and greater responsibility placed on individuals. During this period funding of spaces was cut, with more focus placed on subsidies. As a result, the number of spaces available declined rapidly, drastically, particularly those in nonprofit and municipal centres. While this shift has been justified through neoconservative rhetoric of empowerment and reducing dependence on government, in reality the drop in spaces has had a definite impact on child care in Alberta. Alberta is now the only province in which spaces have actually declined since the early 1990s. Many rural communities are without any formal child care and wait lists for care are growing all over this province.

The year 2005 until now is another period to look at. Recently child care in Alberta has shifted due to negotiations with the government of Canada relating to federal funding for child care. The province reached an agreement in principle with the federals on July 7, 2005, that would have seen the transfer of between \$93 million and \$153 million annually for child care provision. While the provincial government retained the right to support private care and stay-at-home parents, they did agree to follow QUAD principles, a departure from the previous lack of cohesive vision. The 2007-2008 budget has provided some increases to child care, but they are not as significant as what would have been there had the federal plan stayed in place.

Bill 207 has as its purpose the increase in accessibility and the accountability for “universal, affordable and high quality child care.”

The definitions. This section lays out the terms used in the act. The minister is defined under the Government Organization Act, and child care spaces are defined as “spaces available in licensed day care centres, approved family day homes and licensed out-of-school care centres.”

Ten-year action plan. This section instructs the minister to develop a 10-year action plan that should reasonably result in enough available child care spaces for not less than 30 per cent of children 12 years of age or younger. The bill does not specify what should be included in the plan but does require that it must be completed and made available to the public within 90 days of the coming into force of this act. This time period will allow a reasonable amount of time for government consultation and strategizing.

Ministerial review. At the end of the 10-year period the minister must conduct a review of the level of access to child care spaces that has been achieved in relation to the legislated target of 30 per cent access. At this time the minister will decide whether or not further

government initiative is required. This review must be completed and made public no later than March 31, 2018.

This act will also require annual reporting of progress towards the target of 30 per cent access in the department's annual report. The act also requires that the government provide information on how many spaces are available based on age and type of setting as well as indicators of the affordability, quality, and accessibility of spaces. The bill also requires that the amount expended by the government on child care be reported. This information must be broken down by the child and family services regions so that the information about equality of access across the province is available.

#### 4:20

Six, the public documents. This section clarifies what actions the minister can take to make documents public. If the Assembly is sitting, a document must be tabled, and if not, the document must be distributed to all members of the House and made available to the general public.

Before I go on, I would like to thank all of the stakeholders that we have consulted. Many individuals and associations throughout the province have contributed, and their feedback has been useful and helpful, and their co-operation and time has been generous for us.

The current situation in this province is that Alberta has regulated child care spaces for about 10 per cent of our children. Only Newfoundland and Saskatchewan have fewer. Quebec and Yukon can accommodate about 30 per cent of their children. Alberta is the only province where the number of daycare spaces dropped significantly between 1992 and 2004. During that same period the number of spaces country-wide more than doubled. In 2004 Alberta had Canada's lowest percentage of women with preschool children in the workforce. Many Alberta mothers simply can't return to work due to lack of child care options. If our participation had kept pace with Alberta, Alberta's economy would have 17,000 much-needed additional workers. If even half of these people decided to work, it would be hugely beneficial.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to join the debate on Bill 207, the Child Care Accountability and Accessibility Act, 2007. The intent of this bill is to increase the accessibility of child care by establishing a 10-year target for the creation of new child care spaces in Alberta and requiring that there be enough child care spaces for at least 30 per cent of Albertans who are 12 years old or younger at the end of that prescribed time period.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 207 would also require the Minister of Children's Services to report in the department's annual report on the growing progress made on meeting the placement target over the course of that 10-year time frame and calls on the same minister to conduct a final review of the level of access to child care spaces in the province after this 10-year span.

I'd just like to refer the House to Bill 4, the Child Care Licensing Act, and what Bill 4 was intended to do. This act seeks to provide the framework needed to increase access to innovative quality child care programs and also ensures that the enforcement mechanisms are in place to protect children and give them the best start in life. Mr. Speaker, this shifts the licensing focus from the facility to the program and makes better use of spaces to increase the access to child care and promotes programs which respond to a child's specific needs. The bill also gives government the ability to create new licensing categories to promote innovation in child care and

parental choice in the matter. Bill 4 is based on two years of consultation with parents, child care operators, and other interested Albertans. Bill 4 builds on our government's commitment to continue to support and create quality child care programs that meet the needs of today's families.

Mr. Speaker, I believe there are a number of overlaps between Bill 207 and Bill 4. Bill 4, the Child Care Licensing Act of 2007 thoroughly covers what Bill 207 proposes. Bill 4 proposes to increase child care accessibility by allowing the creation of new licensing categories. Operators will soon be able to make better use of existing spaces. Parents will be able to choose programs which suit their needs and lifestyles. The government must ensure that child care programs are safe and of the highest quality. Bill 4 provides for more effective monitoring to ensure that operators comply with the act.

Bill 207 calls for various reports on the progress of meeting the proposed child care space availability targets. The bill's focus on annual reporting is redundant since the government reports on the progress of child care through the annual reporting and business planning processes. Mr. Speaker, increased monitoring provides a more accurate picture of the level of care that is being offered within the increased spaces rather than simply reporting on the progress of increasing the availability.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods for her continued advocacy for superior child care in Alberta. However, I assure her that this government is taking the appropriate steps to ensure that our children are receiving the best care by allowing parents flexibility while choosing which child care system works best for them and by ensuring that the highest standards of care are always upheld. Ensuring that parents have access to quality, affordable child care options is part of the Premier's plan to improve the quality of life for all Albertans. Due to the similar goals and provisions in Bill 4 and Bill 207, I cannot lend my support to the latter bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the continued debate.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To begin with, I just want to say that this is not a case of either/or, Bill 207 or Bill 4. This is a complementary situation in which the well-being of children is being addressed. We don't want to get into a circumstance of he said/she said when it comes to providing care for children.

I'm coming from the point of view, first off, of labelling myself in my most significant role as that of a grandfather. I am the proud grandfather of Kiran, who is three years old, and Rohan, who will be soon five months old. We are fortunate in that my daughter and her husband live in Calgary, and that gives us the opportunity to be a part of the children's growth and growing up.

In fact, so that my daughter could work in the second year of my first grandson's life, my wife provided the opportunity of daily care for my grandson, Kiran. That took stress off my daughter so that she could concentrate on her job, and it gave great delight and enjoyment for my wife to watch Kiran go through the various developmental stages. Of course, I'm prejudiced, but I think that he's a brilliant young man and that my wife and my daughter contributed, with my son-in-law and my son-in-law's parents and the extended family, to that brilliance.

But what I'm pointing out is that we were in that fortunate situation whereby we had the funding in place and where my daughter had opportunities for care other than that which she could provide at home. Again, my daughter and her husband's circum-

stance is such that if they wanted at this point to go after various daycare options, they have the money so that they could look into those programs. I know, for example, that my grandson Kiran will be participating in a preschool program in September. The family is looking forward to the socialization that that program will offer, but of course, you know, as grandparents and parents we always have reservations about the out-of-sight care. However, it's because we have that fortunate circumstance.

Now, with my second grandson, Rohan, being at a tender young age, the attachment to my daughter is out of love and out of necessity. Therefore, the possibility of daycare is not something that we would consider at this time. Again, it's not an economic decision because we have the financial support to provide a series of options. My daughter, Christina, when she was growing up and in high school and also through years of university, supported her tuition and her own individual pursuits by working in a series of daycare programs caring for children from age, you know, basically, weeks to older children, and that, no doubt, helped her in her preparations for motherhood. But, again, the point I'm making is that our family had the economic well-being to be able to make a series of choices.

#### 4:30

My understanding and the reason for my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Mill Woods putting forth Bill 207, Child Care Accountability and Accessibility Act, is to recognize the fact that for the majority of parents who desire or require the necessity of working outside of the home based on our booming economy, this would provide them with an increased number of spaces to take on that pursuit that they either absolutely need for financial reasons or for personal achievement reasons. Again, I want to stress that it's not an either/or circumstance, that both of these bills, 207 and 4, can work hand in hand to achieve the best for our children.

My understanding is that Alberta provides, basically, or there is a provision for about 10 per cent of the daycare spaces that are being sought. When we have an economy that is literally out of control and needs individuals, rather than working on bringing more temporary individuals into this province and increasing the pressures on affordable housing and government support, we need to recognize the qualifications of a number thoroughly trained, dedicated, and empower these individuals who are from Alberta to be able to make the choices they need in order to find daycare that not only provides a service of guarding the child but also looks at their developmental stages and takes into account the need to provide education.

Now, the government, to its credit, and the new children's minister have recognized that there is a desperate need for retaining staff. I appreciate very much that she put forward the idea of a one-time \$5,000 incentive to attract daycare workers to remain at their position, basically to come back to the position that they had to abandon because of poor wages but to stay at that position for two years. This is a very good recommendation, but it addresses an ad hoc circumstance. It is a great idea, but it's a one-time great idea. What Bill 207 does is reach into the future for 10 years and sets out a plan, a vision, that would achieve a 30 per cent increase in the number of daycare facilities.

I had the good fortune, along with members of my Calgary caucus from Calgary-Currie and from Calgary-Mountain View, of attending two years ago one of the first public forums that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods held in my Calgary-Varsity constituency at the Banff Trail community centre. At that particular meeting there were over 45 individuals in attendance, and they came from varied child care backgrounds. Some were single dads. Some were single moms. Some were representatives of stay-at-home parents for the rights of stay-at-home parents. We had individuals from

preschool, after school. We had private. We had public. But the underlying sentiment that was expressed by all, the one that stopped the divide and conquer, that stopped the debate, was the fact that we need to place children first, and that's what Bill 207 attempts to do: put children first.

Rather than saying, "Well, I like Bill 4; it's more comprehensive in my opinion," somebody from the government side might say, "than Bill 207," well, let's consider the possibility of working with both Bill 207 and Bill 4, and if there are difficulties amongst the government members, or if they see something that needs tinkering or changing, literally, let's not throw out the child with the bill. Come forward in discussions through amending processes to deal, to strengthen whatever shortcomings that you may perceive in this bill.

I also had the opportunity quite recently to again have a public forum on child care at which the hon. shadow minister for child care from Edmonton-Mill Woods had another very good turnout and discussion with parents. This was the follow-up to the meeting the year before.

Thank you. I look forward to further discussions.

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

**Mr. Johnston:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 207 proposes to establish targets for the creation of child care spaces. Specifically, the bill wants sufficient spaces for not less than 30 per cent of children who are 12 years of age or younger by the end of a 10-year period. The intent of this bill is honourable, and I appreciate the desire of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods to ensure that children are properly cared for. The difference between the hon. member and myself is in how we believe child care should be delivered.

Mr. Speaker, child care can take many forms. Some of those forms are institutionalized care, parental care, care provided by a relative or neighbour, and regulated day homes. Every option has its positives and negatives. Parents can choose what is the most appropriate option for their situation. That is why I'm not supportive of a bill that proposes to mandate the creation of sufficient child care spaces. By mandating the number of child care spaces, we risk building another social program that would incur great cost to the public purse with dubious results. The only province that offers child care spaces to 30 per cent of its children is Quebec, which has an expensive publicly financed daycare program.

This bill reflects the typical Liberal way of handling the provisions of government services. The mindset has the government providing all the services all the time with no regard to the impact on the public purse and no regard to the outcomes. Liberals seem to doubt the ability of parents and their communities to find ground-level solutions and methods to providing child care. Liberals reject the potential for both private and not-for-profit companies to provide child care.

The government's role is to tread gently in the parenting of children. Government must protect children and assist parents in the nurturing of their children. There's no question that this government has a clear track record in the protection of children. The Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act seeks to protect the safety and well-being of children, increases involvement of parents and children in family decision-making, and increases collaboration within the community to support the growth of children. This act allows for intervention when it is clear that a parent cannot adequately protect a child or if the well-being of a child is at risk.

Another support is family and community support services, FCSS. FCSS is a joint partnership between the province and municipalities. FCSS programs are preventative in nature and enhance well-being among individuals, families, and communities. FCSS programs reflect local needs and challenges.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to protecting children, the government has provided resources to parents to support their child care options. These resources allow parents to make choices about the type of care they want for their children. It also supports the type of care they choose. Every choice has financial implications. The support provided by the government may be the difference in having one parent stay at home while the other works.

4:40

Alberta's five-point child care investment plan reflects the wants and needs of parents. It supports low- and middle-income families and stay-at-home parents. It allows families with children with disabilities to access specialized care. It provides parents with information, resources, and early intervention opportunities.

The kin child care program allows low-income families to pay relatives to care for their children. The program provides \$300 per month. It provides alternatives to low-income families with limited options for child care, such as those in rural areas or with nontraditional work hours.

Further support is provided to parents by the federal government. Families with children under six years of age receive \$100 a month per child through a universal child care benefit. Parents can use the benefit to choose the child care options that suit them best.

Mr. Speaker, I prefer that the government support the choices of parents rather than force parents to accept the choices of government. Building up a child care system could lead to the creation of a new bureaucracy to set and monitor targets. Building up child care spaces through a government program can lead to great cost to taxpayers without justification of the need or demand. Allowing different options to take shape respects the ability of parents. It also allows communities and the private sector to develop alternatives in a cost-efficient manner.

Parents have a primary role in the provision of child care. Government's role is to support parental choice. Bill 207 does not respect that balance, and I cannot support that bill as a result.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 207. I want to indicate that I'll be supporting this bill, and I want to respond, in particular, in just a few minutes to the comments of some of the government members about the creation of bureaucracies and the state dictating to parents what they can and cannot do. In fact, what this government has allowed to occur through its daycare policy over many years in this province is a significant drop in the number of spaces in child care in this province, which will not be addressed, in my view, by Bill 4.

I have to ask the question, Mr. Speaker, why it is that in a booming economy, as we have in this province, where there is a serious labour shortage, the participation of women with young children in the economy is very, very low. It is not from their choice. The hon. member suggests that this is a choice of families and that the government is allowing the choice. It is quite the opposite. The government is taking away choice from women and families about their participation because there are insufficient child

care spaces for women who wish to participate in the workforce. This may fit with the traditional family views of many members opposite, but it is not necessarily a universal view of the role of women in today's economy, and I would submit that a modern, progressive, and significant group of people and families in this province disagrees with that view.

So, Mr. Speaker, quite clearly, the government's approach forces women to stay out of the workforce because they can't find child care. And why is it that in the conditions we find ourselves in, with a booming economy and a demand for labour, we are bringing in thousands of temporary foreign workers to fill jobs that Albertans could be providing? It all comes down to the question of who is served by the economic policy of this government, and it is not the people of this province. If they really wanted to address the labour shortage in this province, if they really wanted Albertans who want to work to be able to work, they would make sure that there were sufficient child care spaces in place in order to do that.

Mr. Speaker, before I sit down, I just want to indicate that the difference between Bill 4 and this private member's bill is the whole question of accountability and reporting. The minister would be required in this bill to report back to the Assembly on the number of child care spaces and progress that was made, and that is something, I think, that the government is afraid of. The government does not want to be accountable, not to the House and certainly not to the people of this province. Their economic policies are disadvantaging many, many thousands of Alberta families. This is just one instance of the kind of negative policies that the government is pursuing.

I would urge all hon. members to support Bill 207. I think it is a step forward and, certainly, considerably more progressive in its approach than the approach that the government has taken so far and will in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, then Red Deer-North, then Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 207, Child Care Accountability and Accessibility Act, in support of this complement, I would say, to Bill 4 that the government has put forward. There isn't an exclusiveness about either bill, and they both could add significantly to quality and access to child care in this province. Many organizations have advocated for child care targets and greater accountability on this issue. It's been on and off the front burner for a decade and a half, and it's clear that it's a priority for Albertans. If it's a priority, we need to measure it, and if it's a priority, we need to show accountability on an annual if not a biannual basis to show that we are moving seriously toward making child care affordable and accessible and quality for Albertans.

Targets have been developed in many jurisdictions, including the European Commission Childcare Network, and while they don't guarantee the creation of more spaces, they do offer guidelines and timelines, which obviously gives us all more security about where we're moving in this province on these priorities. Clearly, in the boom time this has become an urgent priority. It's not only affecting the quality of child care in the early years, under 12 years of age, which has been deficient, it's also affecting the attraction of individuals into the field and their retention. It's affecting their ability to sustain themselves as workers and as young families. This is almost as urgent, Mr. Speaker, as getting clear targets and timelines in place for affordable housing itself.

This bill would increase by 30 per cent access for children under the age of 12, which is a significant increase in children between six

and 12, a 30 per cent increase in access over a 10-year period, with an annual review. The bill would increase transparency by requiring this reporting and looking specifically at the type of supports, the costs, and the locations, whether those are more accessible or not as a result of where we're building and the age group that's being covered. It would encourage creation, again, in following the four principles of quality, universality, accessibility, and a developmental focus.

As most Albertans in need of child care know, our spaces have actually declined in the last 15 years. There's a serious need to move forward on this priority. I and most of my colleagues on this side of the House will be supporting it strongly and hope that the other side will see this as a complement to their good bill, also, to move forward on this issue.

The bill does not dictate how the government will achieve the targeted spaces. It will give the government some flexibility as well as some accountability, which, again, Albertans are asking for in these difficult times. We need to also increase the workforce learning opportunities and strengthen our communities at a time when the stresses and strains on communities are significantly increased. We can do better through a more accountable and targeted approach.

I think those summarize my major points. I'll take my seat and appreciate the rest of the debate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

4:50

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to join the discussion on Bill 207, the Child Care Accountability and Accessibility Act. I also wish to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods for her dedication to children and families and for furthering discussion on this topic as I feel this is a subject worthy of attention. Our children are Alberta's most precious resource, and it remains a priority of this government to maximize the well-being of our young people with quality child care when needed and early intervention programs if needed so that they may realize their full potential.

Part of this obligation means ensuring that families have appropriate access to high-quality and affordable child care services. The government also understands that no two Alberta families are exactly alike. Each has its own circumstances and needs, and parents must be able to choose the child care that is best for them. Devising a formula for appropriate child care is not something that will be achieved with one simple policy measure.

Mr. Speaker, expanding the availability of child care spaces is an admirable goal, but I'm concerned about a 10-year deadline for creating a specified number of new child care spaces. As hon. members of the Assembly know, Bill 4, the Child Care Licensing Act, was recently tabled in this House. It addresses the desire for additional child care spaces found in Bill 207, and Bill 4 provides the ways and means for this to happen.

We all know that it takes a whole village to raise a child. Both the provincial and federal governments are engaged in a variety of measures to ensure that Alberta's parents have access to the child care options that suit them best. The government of Alberta has invested approximately \$13.5 million annually to address the issue of recruiting and retaining qualified staff to work in daycare centres and family day homes. From the federal government, for families that choose other methods of child care, some stay-at-home parents qualify for a subsidy of up to \$100 per month for each preschool-aged child who is participating in an early education program.

Mr. Speaker, since the Member for Calgary-Varsity took the time to very proudly talk about his two grandchildren, I'd also like to talk about my grandchildren. My oldest granddaughter lives with her single mom, who also attends university. Although it would be our greatest wish to be able to stay home and help look after our granddaughter, it wasn't possible, so we had to have daycare. We used the day home system. We found it to be an excellent system. My daughter was subsidized for the care of her daughter, and we actually felt that she couldn't have gotten any better care in anyone else's hands. We developed new friends, and it was a wonderful experience.

My other two grandchildren are fortunate to be able to have mom stay home most of the time, but she does have to work part-time and was not able to get any subsidy to help her with her child care, which is \$50 an hour for two children. For four hours of care she's paying \$200 a week, which is very expensive, so to have the subsidy that comes from the federal government, which is \$100 a month for each preschool child, is very helpful for her as well. So my grandchildren have been able to use both of the subsidies, from the provincial and federal governments, for very good child care that they receive from qualified daycare homes and from a caregiver who is not part of the system.

In previous years Albertans told us of their priorities for child care, and this government has responded. Albertans have indicated to us that they want assistance for low- and middle-income families in accessing affordable child care, support for stay-at-home parents, such as my other two grandchildren, assistance for families with children with disabilities, improved quality of child care through support of enhanced training for child care professionals, and more information resources and early intervention opportunities available to parents.

While increasing spaces and improving access are key initiatives being undertaken by the government, we are always seeking to not only improve . . .

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Red Deer-North, but the time limit for consideration of this item of business is now concluded.

head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

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

#### **Made-in-Alberta Energy Policy**

506. Mr. Mason moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to adopt a made-in-Alberta energy policy to be developed through public consultation and debate in the Legislative Assembly and founded on the economic and energy interests of Alberta and Canada rather than those of the United States.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If I may speak to this motion, I would just like to indicate, in the first instance, that I would think the value of this motion would be self-evident to all members of the Assembly. Of course, the question arises: why, then, would the motion be necessary? The motion is necessary because this is precisely what the Alberta government is not doing. They are developing an energy policy not through public consultation and not through debate in the Legislative Assembly and not founded on the economic and energy interests of Alberta and Canada but, rather, on those of the United States.

Mr. Speaker, this government is conducting the development of

the energy policy of this province in large part through private consultations and discussions behind closed doors with representatives of the federal government and the Energy department of the United States and with large American and other foreign oil companies. The public debate of our energy policy has been moved out of the Legislature and into the boardrooms of Houston, Washington, and other American cities.

The new royalty regime was introduced in 1997 to encourage tar sands development in Fort McMurray, and the goal was to maximize resource extraction. Alberta went from collecting \$2.20 on every barrel of oil in 1996 to collecting 8 cents per barrel in 2001. By 2004 that royalty regime had turned Canada into the largest exporter of oil to the United States. Alberta collected \$9.8 billion in resource revenues, but most of the value went to the bottom lines of the big oil companies. Still the government felt the need to encourage more development. In 2005 they aggressively began lobbying business and political decision-makers in Texas, Washington, and even Beijing. The question of the development and the vision that the government has for our energy policy is not something that is well understood by most Albertans, and I believe that that is a deliberate decision of the provincial government.

Mr. Speaker, we have done a number of things: eliminating most environmental regulations in the Fort McMurray area, bringing in a labour policy that discourages the use of unionized Alberta workers and supports temporary foreign workers, a policy that collects for most tar sands extractions 1 cent on the dollar of the value, a policy that encourages, in fact, the export of unprocessed bitumen, creating construction and other processing jobs in the United States.

Mr. Speaker, in Houston there was an oil sands expert group workshop, and I have some documents here with respect to that meeting. It's quite clear to me that despite the claims made by our current Premier and other Conservative leadership contenders during the Conservative leadership race, they did not favour the export of unprocessed bitumen to the United States. In fact, the Premier went so far as to call it scraping off the topsoil. It is pretty clear that this was a decision that had previously been made and had been made while the Premier was, as far as I can tell from the dates, the minister of intergovernmental affairs for this province, and he must very likely have been aware of this as, certainly, the government was. This particular document talks about the need for expanding pipelines and building new pipelines not only for processed crude but also for unprocessed bitumen.

5:00

Mr. Speaker, the government, through the security and prosperity partnership of North America agreement, which was signed by President Bush, Prime Minister Martin at the time, President Fox of Mexico, in which Alberta participated, certainly indicates that the strategy of expanding tar sands production for export to the United States, including a dramatic increase in the export of unprocessed bitumen, has been a done deal for well over a year.

This question has not been discussed in the Legislative Assembly. I think that the whole question of where we're going as a province has not been settled openly and through democratic discussion by the people of Alberta and their elected representatives but, rather, behind closed doors in Washington, in Houston, and in other places. This government has participated in that, and the consequences are something that the people of this province have to pick up.

The housing shortage is a direct outcome of this government's policies. It's clear that they worked very hard to set in place a framework that reduces labour costs, reduces environmental costs, and encourages the rapid exploitation of our natural resources, without doing any planning for the consequences. The shortages of

schools that we face, the lineups for emergency rooms and for ambulances, and the weaknesses in our provincial infrastructure are all things that are consequences which the government prefers to call the price of prosperity. Mr. Speaker, it's pretty clear that the government's use of that term contains considerable irony, and I want to indicate that it is, in fact, the people of Alberta, particularly middle-class families and working families, that are paying the price of prosperity. It is not the prosperous who are paying the price of prosperity in this province.

Recently the mayor of Red Deer talked about the disappearance of the middle class. This is certainly something that is a part of the government's economic development policy. Mr. Speaker, to put it in a nutshell, the provincial government has entered into agreements that affect profoundly the very future of this province, that set targets for growth industrially and eventually for population and for the export of our raw materials, yet they have not put in place plans to help the people of this province cope with that growth. It's wrong. It's wrong that this government should decide the future of this province without including the people of Alberta, who have to live here, in those discussions, yet that's exactly what they've done.

Just another example, Mr. Speaker, is the whole question of TILMA and the discussion that's taken place around that with British Columbia. Whereas the British Columbia government introduced legislation that would deal with the whole question of TILMA and allowed some democratic debate around that, this provincial government has chosen not to do so. There was a bill introduced earlier today in the House that talks about allowing penalties to be levied, I guess, for the violation of TILMA. I'm sure that the real impact of that will be felt soon.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for your time, for your patience. I urge all members to support the motion.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright, then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise today to speak to Motion 506 as proposed by the hon. member. I'm probably going to surprise a few people here by suggesting that I actually agree with parts of this motion; namely, the first part, that says, "urge the government to adopt a made-in-Alberta energy policy to be developed through public consultation." I think that's fantastic. I think that's great. In fact, the first part of the motion is exactly what we're doing with the royalty review in the province of Alberta: public consultations. That's the entire point.

I think it's critical for this province to do public consultations to ensure that something that is a key revenue generator for the province of Alberta and that supplies so many services to Albertans in general be reviewed regularly to ensure that Albertans get value for their dollar, Mr. Speaker. In fact, they do produce significant benefits. Last fiscal year the province received \$11 billion in revenue from the energy industry. That's one-third of the total revenues collected by this province. This year it'll be \$10.3 billion, a slight decline but still a significant factor in providing Albertans with benefits in general.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

One-quarter of Alberta's GDP, Mr. Speaker, is provided by the energy industry. That amounts to \$81.3 billion in exports. It's very important to note that that's exports. It's not something just generated here in Alberta. The reason why we have so many benefits is because so much of the energy industry's products are

exported around the world. One out of every six jobs in this province is directly tied to the energy industry. It's critical and, obviously, one of the foundations that this province was built on.

Mr. Speaker, that's not the only benefit. This province has the potential to sustain incredible economic growth because of its reserves. Over 175 billion barrels in proven reserve in the oil sands and 1.6 billion barrels of conventional oil still exist in the ground. Over 41 trillion – that's trillion – cubic feet of remaining established marketable gas reserves still exist in this province in the ground. Coal reserves are estimated at approximately 34 billion tonnes. Now, that's incredible reserves in this province. But they're all in the ground, and those reserves have absolutely zero value when they're still in the ground.

Mr. Speaker, there's an incredibly important principle that I think this motion fails to consider, and that's the principle of macroeconomics. Jurisdictions recognize that they cannot produce all the goods they require. If the resource or goods are in abundance, the jurisdiction will sustain their supply and market excess production on the market for profit. As a result, because in Alberta we don't produce everything we need, Alberta imports a number of products and services. Such transactions by our province benefit our other economies and allow Albertans to specialize in areas of strategic importance; for instance, the energy industry.

In 2005 alone, Mr. Speaker, Alberta imported \$53 billion worth of international products and services. These included things like cars and trucks. In fact, \$6.8 billion worth of vehicles were imported into this province in 2003, \$6.6 billion worth of machinery and equipment were imported into this province in 2003, and electronics and communication equipment amounted to \$5.2 billion. Very critical.

Now, I regret the second half of this motion – and I'm not even going to repeat it – mostly because it suggests that the energy interests of the U.S. are what we base our energy policies on. Mr. Speaker, that's a very regrettable assumption. If the member across the way who suggests this motion had any experience or understanding in the business community, he would know that a business does not exist without clients. You have to take care of your clients. But if you don't take care of the business, you have nothing left to market. That's the relationship, especially when Alberta is so dependent on exporting goods and services, particularly related to energy and gas.

We have to export those products. It helps our economy. We also have to import a lot of products. I would love to see what this hon. member across the way would do if he just raised the taxes incredibly, the royalty structure, thereby driving away the investment in the oil and gas industry. I wonder what we would have left in our economy to import those products, Mr. Speaker. Business means looking after your business and your clients. Trade secures Alberta's prosperity.

#### 5:10

Motion 506 suggests that Alberta engage in a confrontational trade relationship with the U.S., a reliable, stable customer of our energy products. Mr. Speaker, the changing trade relationship on energy can impact other industries, such as agriculture and forestry. In fact, many people, I recall, during the BSE crisis suggested that we just turn off the taps for oil and gas in order to make the United States pay attention to us. We import so many goods. The U.S. is such a critical trading partner. By turning off the oil and gas to get the U.S.'s attention, Alberta would fair far worse than the U.S. by the reduction in oil and gas.

**An Hon. Member:** It's like cutting off your nose to spite your face.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Yeah. It's kind of like cutting off your nose to spite your face. That's correct.

Mr. Speaker, it's not simple factors like turning off the oil and gas or raising the royalty structure without considering the factor about where the market is. Quite frankly, I hear it compared all the time that Finland and Norway and Sweden and countries all over the world collect more in royalty revenue than Alberta does. Those countries have immediate access to a huge economy in Europe. Our immediate access is to the huge economy in the U.S. They also have larger reserves that have bigger pools while we have smaller conventional pools that require much more work and much more drilling. One size does not fit all. The same policy that works in one country does not necessarily work in another country.

Mr. Speaker, the second half of this motion, suggesting that Alberta is basing its energy policy on what the U.S. wants, is just not true. It has to be based on what's good for Albertans, but it also has to factor in what the United States needs, just as I mentioned before. Without considering that, the U.S. might go somewhere else, and then who are we left to sell our products to? We'd be a broke business. The second half of this motion is just typical of a New Democrat attitude that suggests that you tax it when it's profitable; if it's still profitable, tax it some more; if it suddenly becomes unprofitable, then subsidize it. I'm afraid that that circumstance is what we would wind up with.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members, though the intent of the first half of this motion is noble, to realize that we are moving with the royalty review, which will make sure that Albertans get the full benefit they can out of the reserve without chasing away all of the business and investment and killing the entire industry. I encourage them as vehemently as possible to oppose this motion, that's narrow and myopic in its view.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the Minister of Energy.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to get an opportunity to rise and participate in the discussion on Motion 506 as proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Certainly, when we look at the energy industry and the energy policy, it's not that we never had a made-in-Alberta energy policy in the past. Previous Progressive Conservative governments fought to ensure that we had a made-in-Alberta energy policy, and it worked out quite well for us economically. I don't understand why people would become so anxious to so quickly criticize or ridicule the hon. member for proposing a made-in-Alberta energy policy to be developed through public consultation and debate in the Legislative Assembly. It's about time that we look after the interests of Albertans first. In my view, we haven't been doing that in the recent regime of the Tory dynasty, the Progressive Conservative party's 37-year-old dynasty.

Now, if we look at the royalty review and we look at the current royalty structure, the hon. Minister of Energy knows very well, because he was involved in the discussions in the comparison with Texas, that we are not getting enough in royalties, whether it's on coal-bed methane, whether it's on conventional oil and gas, whether it's on oil sands production. It's simply a royalty regime that was made when prices were much lower, and they're a lot higher now.

I would also remind hon. members of this Assembly that the state of Montana, our neighbours to the south, introduced legislation to increase the royalty on oil and gas on school lands by close to 20 per cent, and the oil and gas industry did not abandon that state. In fact,

the number of leases that are being developed since that royalty increase was implemented has increased significantly.

I would also like at this time to remind hon. members of a quote from the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright, who stated that, you know, there's "zero value" in the ground. That's not true because if we develop our carbon resources in stages, the value of that will increase dramatically. Crude oil is worth 70-some dollars Canadian a barrel right now. Eight years ago it was probably worth \$27 a barrel. It increases in value. We don't have to pump it all out of the ground at one time because hopefully it's going to increase in value, and there's still going to be a demand for that oil.

So to have this attitude that it has zero value in the ground – I would beg to differ. On the contrary, the longer we leave some of it in the ground, the more valuable it will become. Hopefully, after we negotiate a competitive royalty rate, even if we collect only the amount that the government targets themselves to collect, that would be appropriate, but we're not doing that. This government is failing, failing dismally, the owners of the resources, Albertans themselves.

There are other things in this whole energy debate. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood talked about the whole issue around the temporary foreign workers and how that benefits this province. Well, I don't know how it does. Certainly, those temporary foreign workers in many cases are being exploited. They are being cheated in their wages. They're driving down the wage rates in this province, and they are eroding working conditions for all Albertans because there's no enforcement.

Unfortunately, many of these temporary foreign workers – and there are now over 24,700 of them in the province – are being exploited in some cases. I have three files here that I just got over the weekend, and it's really disappointing. These people were recruited from jobs elsewhere. They got here. I am very sad to say and I'm ashamed as a Canadian that when these individuals came here, the work that they were supposed to do for the person who was recruiting them, the employer on the visa – there was no work for them. They paid megabucks to some unscrupulous middle person or recruiter, and they got here. They paid their own way here.

**An Hon. Member:** They must belong to the Liberal Party.

**Mr. MacDonald:** No. The hon. minister may make light of this and say that they were members of the Liberal Party and that they were refused work, but that is so far from the truth. They had faith in this system. The system didn't work, and now they can't find any work, and they're intimidated. They think that they're going to be picked up and deported out of this country. It's not a laughing matter, Mr. Speaker. It's not a laughing matter at all.

This government and the Minister of Employment, Immigration and Industry have a lot of answering to do because this program is simply not working. If the made-in-Alberta energy policy is to drive down wages, then we have to make sure through the temporary foreign worker program that we pay heed to the hon. minister's motion.

5:20

Now, temporary foreign workers: how far is this going to go? Well, I learned that we are now going to set up – and this is going to jeopardize the entire steel fabrication industry in this province – one of the largest steel fabrication plants in Canada in Tofield. There's a plan afoot to start a plant that will have 286,000 covered square feet of shop space. Where is the workforce for this outfit going to come from? It's not going to come from Ryley. It's not going to come from Tofield. It's not going to come from Fort Saskatchewan. It's not going to come from Camrose. It's going to come from

Malaysia, Indonesia, China, the United Arab Emirates, Italy, Australia: in fact, the total manpower requirements of this place, 2,600 and some odd workers. If this outfit gets a labour market opinion, it will mobilize its world-wide manpower resources to accommodate the shortages in Alberta, the shortages that are real or perceived. That's where the workforce is going to come from. It's not going to come from Camrose. It's not going to come from Fort Saskatchewan. It's not going to come from Edmonton. It's not going to come from Quebec, Ontario. It's going to come from these foreign countries.

Now, how does that benefit Alberta? In the past whenever we talked about Syncrude and Suncor, when we had a Better Buy Alberta program, which this Conservative government promoted at one time, parts of the work that was generated with the development of Syncrude and Suncor had to be done locally here but not anymore. We've moved away from that, and the local steel fabrication industry, whether it's in Airdrie or whether it's in the south of Edmonton, cannot compete when you've got smaller parts being fitted in yards in Malaysia and in China and being sent over here, and then they're assembled here for shipment to the oil sands projects.

Workers there are getting a dollar, maybe if they're lucky \$2 a day. There are no occupational health and safety rules for them to follow. They're running around with sandals on – with sandals on – in steel fabrication shops. They don't even have steel-toed workboots. And we're allowing that? We're allowing these sorts of laws to undermine our steel fabrication industry, which has been so vital.

If we look at the last budget and we look at the exports from this province, we will see that there was a significant amount of money coming from steel fabrication and steel-fabricated products. How is this industry to maintain itself whenever it has this unfair competition to deal with? The Chinese people openly talk about our high cost of labour . . . [Mr. MacDonald's speaking time expired]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy, followed by Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Knight:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for bringing this motion forward but only – only – because I'm always pleased whenever I get an opportunity to discuss energy and its vital importance to the province of Alberta.

The motion itself has something to do with a made-in-Alberta energy policy. Most certainly, I would suggest that we've exported oil from the province of Alberta since 1947. For 60 years the province of Alberta has had a made-in-Alberta energy policy. It has served Albertans very well, and as we continue, it will continue to serve Albertans very well.

Mr. Speaker, this also provides me with an opportunity to educate members and particularly the members opposite, although most of them aren't really that interested in being educated about energy anyway because they don't really see it as being all that important to them or to their constituents or, I suppose, to Albertans or Canadians. But I've got to say that the education piece of this is absolutely required by our members and the general public.

Energy is the future of this province, and we need to do a better job, I need to do a better job, and my colleagues here with me on this side of the bench will do a better job of educating Albertans and particularly the members across the way with respect to this. It's one part of a multifaceted approach, Mr. Speaker, that I see as part of the mandate given to me by the Premier. We have a number of strategies that fit Alberta and the made-in-Alberta energy policy, and

these strategies, that have been put in place by previous governments, will be better knit together by this government as we move ahead. There has been a lot of work done on the Alberta energy strategy. We'll continue to do that.

Our integrated energy strategy, Mr. Speaker, includes the areas that we've had some discussion about. The member opposite talked about situations where there's so much work going on, the need to import steel products, and things like that. I don't know what it's necessarily focusing on in this particular motion, but certainly that part of Alberta's future will form the base. Hydrocarbons will certainly form the base of our energy future. However, the integrated energy strategy, the made-in-Alberta strategy, will include a much broader use of and acceptance of things like renewables, alternative energy forms, biofuels, bioenergy generation. We have, certainly, an awful lot of very, very good opportunities for many Albertans and, I would suggest, for a number of people from this province, from other provinces in Canada, and perhaps from other places globally with respect to being involved in this.

Mr. Speaker, it troubles me just a little bit – just a little bit, not a lot – that the hon. member across the way would go out of his way, particularly out of his way, in his motion to malign one of Canada's and one of Alberta's very good partners and friends that we have been able to openly do business with for many, many years. I know that this member has never been a decision-maker in government and never been an administrator, but I can tell him without hesitation . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. minister, the member is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes. He's using language that is calculated to incite disorder and so on. Mr. Speaker, in actual fact, I have been a decision-maker in government. I served on Edmonton city council for 11 and a half years, and I made decisions with respect to telephone companies, airports, power companies, transit, all kinds of decisions, long before this person was ever invited into cabinet and made any government decision in his life.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, in order for the chair to consider anything as a point of order, at least we need a citation. Since there was no citation, I hope that this is just a point of clarification.

Hon. minister, you may proceed.

**Mr. Knight:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and certainly I'll just continue. I can say to the member without hesitation that each and every time I make a decision, I try to do it with honour, with integrity, and with the interest of Albertans at heart. I don't claim for a moment that I or perhaps other people inside government get it right a hundred per cent of the time, but please don't doubt that what we do here in this Assembly and in my responsibilities as a minister of the Crown of Alberta, I do for Alberta and not for any foreign entity.

Perhaps the hon. member could realize that it's in the interests of Alberta to form a strong working relationship with the United States so that we can form continental approaches to continental problems we face. Perhaps the hon. member would realize that it just might make sense for Alberta to sell energy products to the world's largest economy. Perhaps the hon. member could recognize that his anti-American bias is blinding him to one of the many opportunities presenting itself for Alberta, and as a result his actions could hurt this province.

5:30

Mr. Speaker, I'll cite a CERI report. There is a CERI report on the Internet, and in that report the indications are very, very clear that the energy policies of the province of Alberta, particularly with respect to oil sands, have been tremendously successful and benefited Albertans, Canadians, people in North America, and other folks globally.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest that it's time for the member across the way to get into the 21st century and realize that it's in the interest of Alberta to open itself to the world, and that includes the United States. We have so much to offer. As the world looks for energy, Alberta will be ready with our products, our innovation, and our talent. We will be in Asia. We will be in Europe. We will be in any other continent across the globe, but our policies will not and cannot exclude one particular country. It's time the hon. member dropped his bias against the United States and realized that we have nothing to fear when Alberta competes with the rest of the world. Nothing to fear.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much. The hon. Minister of Energy basically stood up and tried to wrap himself in as many flags as possible and tried to condemn the efforts of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, who was not talking anti-American biases; he was talking pro-Albertan. That's the nature of Motion 506: to get the best for Albertans, now and into the future, that we can have.

I thank the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for bringing forward Motion 506 because what he has done is he has brought the discussion into this Legislature, into an open and accountable circumstance where a record is being kept which can then be shared with Albertans across the province. The last discussion on royalties by the former Ministry of Energy didn't get very far. In fact, there was no written evidence that such a royalty investigation ever took place. It was a little bit along the lines of the Kelley Charlebois reports: high pay and no results.

Now, our latest royalty review was highly compromised to begin with because of former oil company executives being placed on it rather than having representation from average Albertans, who don't tend to benefit from the participation in the forum and don't bias the royalty review in the first place. This royalty review that is currently going on reminds me of the last insurance review, in which there weren't any average Albertans. There weren't any members of the public whatsoever. It was a behind-closed-doors circumstance, full of insurance salesmen and brokers and no other Alberta stakeholders, so the end result was rather guaranteed before the commission took place. I appreciate the fact that the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood provided us an opportunity to discuss Motion 506, to air it out and to consider the possibilities.

The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar indicated how much of our oil and gas support industry jobs and economy are being lost to foreign countries. Now, I'd like to have good trade relations with a variety of countries, including the United States, our nearest and dearest neighbour, but I have visions of what's going to happen when this upgrader comes down the Athabasca River. Let me give you sort of a vision, a circumstance of what it could very much end up. It could be a repeat on a grand scale of what happened in Pine Creek coulee in Stavely. In Pine Creek coulee in Stavely the government refused to provide the money initially to provide a liner for the reservoir in Pine Creek coulee. So what happened was that

the leeching from the Pine Creek coulee, because it wasn't constructed properly in the first place, ended up ruining the wells of all the surrounding farms.

Now, there was an absolute monument to stupidity in the Pine Creek coulee at Stavely. Somebody had the bright idea to put playground equipment in the Pine Creek coulee. What you saw was a submerged teeter-totter, only partially submerged. What you saw was three-quarters of the swing set that was supposed to be totally underground. What you saw was a slide that looked like it would be kind of fun if you could get to it, but the water there sort of came up halfway. The reason that happened is that by the end of the summer you could probably walk across what little water was left and participate in this playground, which was intended to be totally submerged and for divers' benefit and amusement.

Well, can you imagine what monument to stupidity will occur if we have this enormous steel upgrader stuck on a barge in the middle of the Athabasca River because of the planning process of getting several kilotonnes of equipment down the Athabasca River, which is continuously being drawn upon by the various bitumen plants that are happening up in the Fort McMurray area? I hope that in large neon lights and letters we will have, "This is the result of government planning" attached to that large piece of built upgrader instead of having it built here and parceled in pieces and adding to our economy. So that large visual stuck in my mind.

But what I would like to talk about, too, is what Motion 506 causes us to discuss. What it says is that we aren't getting the benefit from our resources. We're not getting the benefit of the offshoot of our resources. We are gung-ho to send a whole lot of our raw bitumen down the pipeline to Chicago, to Houston, where it will no doubt benefit our neighbours. You know, I want our neighbours to prosper as well but not at our expense.

I'm extremely concerned. You know, in one case this government says: "TILMA, TILMA. Wow, wow, wow. Let's go for TILMA. Let's have an agreement with B.C. Let's get rid of our trade barriers" and so on. Well, here's a thought. I'm just going to add another thing that we ship down to Chicago. We ship down our gas in a primarily raw state, and when it gets down there, they separate it. They take out the butane. They take out the methane. They take out the propane. And guess what? All these byproducts of the raw gas that we ship down to Chicago are worth considerably more than the raw product. So not only are we giving them our raw product, but we're giving them all the benefits of streaming off these other gases. It's a great concern for me that we're losing these values.

What we have failed to discuss in this House is the notion of balance. How can you balance the need to process the raw bitumen here in Alberta? How many upgraders is the right amount? What environmental precautions will we take so that if an upgrader such as the 10 that are being proposed – how can we, for the residents of the surrounding areas, be sure that the noise levels, the emissions levels, the draw on the water resources are not going to be overwhelming? I believe that through technology we could achieve a degree of balance, and through regional planning we could probably come to some kind of amicable resolution.

5:40

Here's the western Canada concept. Why are we so all fired up about building pipelines to take our raw products, bitumen or gas, down to the States? Why don't we have lateral pipelines? Why not let Saskatchewan and Manitoba be a part of our success? Saskatchewan has already got a couple of bitumen processors there. Why do we have to always send it south? Let's have a provincial western Canada consideration. Why not keep our products in Canada and support Saskatchewan and support Manitoba but in a balanced

process? We determine how much goes down the pipeline. All the provinces stand to potentially benefit from our sharing of our resources.

**An Hon. Member:** Do you want to send our cows there too, Harry?

**Mr. Chase:** By all means. Horned or otherwise.

You know, when the young and talented member – I'll take nothing away from the young and talented member – talked about the idea of exporting our values and so on, suggesting that this was a war on the United States, and what would they do if international companies pulled out? [Mr. Chase's speaking time expired]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, followed by Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to join the debate on Motion 506, presented by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. The hon. Premier has responded to the concerns of Albertans regarding the royalty regime by establishing an expert panel that will determine if Albertans are getting their fair share from resource revenues. Under the direction of the hon. Minister of Finance a royalty review committee was established in February. The review will focus on all aspects of the royalty system, including royalties from oil sands, conventional oil and gas, and coal-bed methane. This independent panel consists of individuals who are experts in academia, economics, accounting, energy research, and the resource industry.

Just to remind members, the objectives of the committee are to ensure that Albertans are receiving an appropriate and fair share from energy development through royalties, taxes, and fees. The committee will examine the royalties and formulate conclusions that will suggest an appropriate and, again, fair balance for investment and contributions. Mr. Speaker, the province of Alberta has gained significant – and I stress "significant" – economic benefits from energy development. The government of Alberta received over \$11 billion in nonrenewable resource revenues in the last fiscal year alone.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this government is taking a proactive stance by initiating a comprehensive review that will assess the royalty system. The complexities of the royalty system are immense, and the committee will offer Albertans an objective analysis of their findings. I think we should wait for their review and see how that turns out to the benefit of all Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, followed by Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. Agnihotri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and participate in Motion 506, the made-in-Alberta energy policy. I'm supporting this motion in principle only. This motion, I think, assumes only three things: one, the current energy policies of this province are not in the public interest; two, the public energy policies of this province are not developed through public consultation; and third, the current energy policies of this province are focused on serving the needs of the United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, we are not talking here about anti-America. We are talking about how we can serve the best interests of Alberta. Electricity deregulation has not benefited Alberta consumers in any identifiable way. Alberta families and business owners have paid a high price for this government's electricity deregulation experiment. On several occasions the actual posted pool price on the Electric

System Operator's website has reached its peak of \$999 per megawatt.

While electricity providers are making enormous profits, Alberta consumers are paying a huge price for a flawed policy. Since 2000 Alberta farm electricity costs have increased by an unbelievable 38 per cent due to deregulation, while in other jurisdictions such as Manitoba, Saskatchewan, B.C., the increase has been in single digits. In the past 12 months the Alberta Electric System Operator has issued several emergency energy alerts due to a lack of available power. This has resulted in blackouts. Despite the government's claim that deregulation has increased our capacity, the Department of Energy's annual report shows that our electricity generation capacity has actually decreased since the year 2003.

The royalty regime in Alberta has failed to collect a fair share of revenue for the resource owners. Over the past few years, Mr. Speaker, the royalty regime has created record-breaking profit for oil and gas companies. Meanwhile, the Crown revenue share, the percentage of royalty collected on behalf of the resource owners, has failed to meet the government's own modest target of 20 to 25 per cent.

The government has until very recently refused to conduct an open public royalty review. The validity of the 2007 royalty review is questionable given the review panel's close ties to oil and gas companies and its general lack of balance. The government's own document shows that Albertans have not received a fair share over the past few years. The government of Alberta is encouraging oil sands project owners to upgrade bitumen in other jurisdictions, in the U.S., costing Albertans value-added opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, this government's electricity policy does not serve Albertans. Nobody chooses to buy electricity. It's a necessity. The Alberta Liberal caucus has a low-cost power for Alberta plan that would serve the hard-working citizens of this province very well. This government's electricity deregulation experiment has cost Alberta consumers billions of dollars. With the Alberta Liberal's low-cost power for Alberta plan electricity rates would be based on the actual cost of production.

The government's royalty regime has cost Albertans billions of dollars in lost revenue. The government has failed to collect a fair share for the citizens of this province. The government aims to collect up to 25 per cent in Crown revenue shares. Over the past two years, Mr. Speaker, the government has failed miserably in meeting this goal, costing us billions in lost revenue. Texas collects 25 per cent for their resources, and so, too, should Alberta. This government has failed to implement an effective royalty regime.

By encouraging oil sands project owners to export bitumen for upgrading in the U.S., the government is exporting well-paying jobs, jobs that should go to the citizens of this province. The jobs that are created through value-added operations are the kind that people can count on for 20 to 25 years. Mr. Speaker, this government has failed to secure these jobs for the citizens of this province.

Once again I just want to add that this government should admit that electricity deregulation is a total failure.

Thank you.

5:50

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

**Mr. Johnston:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to join the debate on Motion 506 regarding Alberta's energy policy. The hon. member's motion calls for a made-in-Alberta energy policy. I can assure him that this government has a made-in-Alberta energy policy to build a stronger Alberta.

Part of a successful energy policy entails finding a balance

between economic development and the environment. The hon. Minister of Environment has been mandated by the hon. Premier to update Alberta's climate change plan. This plan is truly made in Alberta because the government is seeking Albertans' input on this issue. Albertans will have a voice on climate change through a series of community workshops, which are currently being held throughout the province, and questionnaires for those who are unable to take part in the workshops. Mr. Speaker, seeking input from Albertans is important because it's their environment, their resources, and their quality of life.

Alberta was the first province to introduce climate change legislation in 2002 and the first to require large industrial facilities to report their greenhouse gas emissions. With Bill 3, the Climate Change and Emissions Management Amendment Act, 2007, that's currently before the Assembly, Alberta was the first province in the country to introduce legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions intensity from large industry.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 3 is a tangible product of the hon. Premier's priority to manage growth pressures in our province. This government's action on climate change demonstrates to the rest of the world that as a global community we can achieve economic growth while being good stewards of the environment. In order to encourage companies to reduce their emissions intensity, the government has provided options such as making operating improvements, buying an Alberta-based offset to apply against their emission total, and contributing to a new government fund that will invest in technology to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the province.

The Alberta government's action to ensure the sustained health of our environment is one step towards achieving a truly made-in-Alberta energy plan. I urge all hon. members to consider the steps that are currently being taken to construct a suitable energy plan for our province before they vote on Motion 506. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood to close debate.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to close debate on this motion. I want to begin by responding to some of the comments that have been made by a couple of the members, the Member for Battle River-Wainwright and also the Minister of Energy, who have attempted to portray this motion as anti-American simply by virtue of the fact that it asks for a made-in-Alberta energy policy. At the same time, speaking from the other side of their mouths, they do claim that we already have a made-in-Alberta energy policy, Mr. Speaker. But it is not anti-American. There's nothing anti-American about asking for a made-in-Alberta policy or a fair share of the value of our natural resources, and in fact previous Conservative Premiers of this province have done exactly that.

I disagreed with Premier Lougheed on some things, but I'll say one thing: he stood up for this province, and he stood up at times against the oil industry, something that this government has never had the guts to do. The minister talks about a continental solution to continental problems and thereby has exposed himself for what he is, which is a continentalist. Mr. Speaker, Canada does not have a shortage of energy. The United States does. That's an American problem, not a continental one.

There were also some attempts to suggest that criticizing the present policy means driving away the energy business from this province and, effectively, killing the golden goose. Mr. Speaker, nothing could be farther from the truth. The current royalty regime in this province was made at a time when oil was running at about \$10 a barrel. Now it's well past \$50, and we know in the long run

that it's going nowhere but up. The United States and other consumers of energy are not going to shut down the oil and gas industry in this province if we ask for a fair share, and the government is simply engaging in fearmongering in suggesting that rather than deal with the real issues.

Mr. Speaker, the records from the oil sands expert workshop in Houston in January of 2006 show that Alberta participated in the organization of that conference in which considerable discussion about increasing the export of unprocessed bitumen to the United States took place. The government knew that. Presumably, the minister of intergovernmental affairs at the time, the current Premier, knew about that when he was promising Albertans that he would do away with the export of unprocessed bitumen. Examples of the kind of policy of not extracting full value from our resources and massively exporting them to the American market can be seen in the Celanese plant, which is currently undergoing closure just outside the city of Edmonton. That's an example of the loss of good jobs that comes about.

Our royalties are far less than the value of our resources, Mr. Speaker, and the royalty review that the government has set up is nothing but a sham. There were comments made about all the experts on there. No comments were made about the conflicts of interest that were well established in that particular body and the

lack of public consultation and any meaningful input by the province. In fact, I'm surprised that the hon. members would raise that because it's a clear example of what I'm talking about; that is, Albertans being frozen out of the fundamental decisions that affect the future of their lives and their province.

Mr. Speaker, this government is selling out Alberta on its natural resources. Whether it's bitumen or natural gas or crude, this government is selling out not only the people of this province but future generations of this province, and the kind of quality of life that our children and grandchildren are going to enjoy will be significantly reduced as a result of this government selling out the interests of the people and giving away our resources for far less than they're actually worth. This government will go down in history as the government that sold out the province of Alberta.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 506 lost]

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. members, from my vantage point the clock is just about to strike 6, so I would say that we stand adjourned until 1 p.m. tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

