

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, June 13, 2007**

**1:00 p.m.**

Date: 07/06/13

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Let us pray. We give thanks for our abundant blessings to our province and ourselves. We ask for guidance and the will to follow it. Amen.

Please be seated.

head:

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Technology.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature four members of a delegation from our sister province, Heilongjiang. They are Mr. Zhang Chunguang, member of the Urban and Rural Construction and Environmental Protection Committee; Mr. Pan Zhong, who is the deputy director general of the Heilongjiang department of science; Mr. Zhao Yiqiang, who is the division director of the Heilongjiang Department of Education; and Ms Liu Hongmei, who is the deputy division director, Europe and America division, Heilongjiang Foreign Affairs Office, and an alumna, I might add, of the University of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, this is the 26th anniversary of the very strong sister province relationship between Alberta and Heilongjiang. There are more than 108,000 Albertans of Chinese descent in our province, and it makes that bond very, very strong. We have exchanges in a number of areas in postsecondary and research and technology, and we have several co-operative agreements. We are following up with both offices and officials from both jurisdictions to ensure that those agreements generate win-wins for both jurisdictions. This delegation is in Alberta for only a short time, but it is building and strengthening that relationship. I would ask that the delegation please rise in your gallery and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Legislature.

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

**Mr. Liepert:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce 57 grade 5 students from a school in my constituency, Webber Academy. Last week the Fraser Institute released its findings on schools, and while that should not alone be a judge of a school's performance, it is one of the things that should be considered relative to quality of education. I must say that Webber Academy came out tied for first place in the Fraser Institute rankings, and I'm pleased to introduce today three teachers that are accompanying the students – Dan Mondaca, Jason Ash, Janet Adamson – and a parent, Elaine Butler. They've just arrived on the bus from Calgary, and I'd ask them to all please stand and receive the recognition of the House.

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

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce some of the brightest and best young students in my constituency and probably all of Alberta. We're joined today by a group of 18 students from the Cornerstone Christian Academy in

Kingman, which is located in the east end of my constituency. They're seated in the public gallery, and they're led today by their teacher, Mr. Rob Bowick. I would ask that they stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mrs. Ady:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege today to rise and introduce two very special people in my life. First would be my former legislative assistant who is back visiting, Cheryl Koss, and also my current leg. assistant, Berenika Kalista. If they would please rise and enjoy the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Prins:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you two groups of visitors today. First of all, from my constituency are Bill and Beryl Bale. They're here today from Lacombe. Bill moved to Canada from England in 1959 and has spent the last 40 years in Lacombe. Joining them are two daughters: Hazel Chastell and her husband from Lincolnshire, England, and Susan Bale of Leeds, England. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

It's also my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly two individuals from Lacombe that are also seated in the members' gallery. Sandra Scott and Shannon Sears are here today from Lacombe. Hon. members should know that Sandra also happens to be the daughter of the hon. minister of agriculture. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**Ms Tarchuk:** Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you two employees of Children's Services. Jamie Reid is a Grant MacEwan student and is currently doing her practicum in our communications office while she studies for her public relations diploma. Bobbi Klettke joins us from the Capital health region and brings her years of experience to Children's Services communications, working with our prevention of family violence and bullying program. Bobbi will join an already successful program that has seen great strides in bringing family violence and bullying the attention it needs to ensure that Alberta's children and families live in safe and caring communities. I ask Jamie and Bobbi to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

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

**Dr. Oberg:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly an honour on behalf of the minister responsible for the personnel administration office to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Legislature seven individuals from PAO who are here as part of the public service orientation tour. I would ask Kari Hamilton, Christina Steenberg, Rob Acker, Travis Skriver, Paul Oss, Jason Pomedli, and Dustin Lafleur to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

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

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure and honour to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly a group of caring, hard-working, and courageous social workers. They are Lori Sigurdson, Papiya Das, Grace Elliott, Roxanne Dohms,

Kathaleen Quinn, Marilyn Jeske, Deb Johansson, and Kathryn Watters. I'd ask that they rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the House.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three introductions today. I think the first group is here, and that is nine adult high school equivalency students who are currently attending CIT college in my constituency. They are accompanied today by their instructor, Joel Heidebrecht. I would ask them to please rise if they're in either gallery and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The second introduction that I have, Mr. Speaker, is part of my continuing celebration of Edmonton being named the cultural capital of Canada for 2007. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two wonderful, absolutely fabulous arts programmers. I'll start with Tony Luppino. Tony, if you would please rise. Tony, of course, is the executive director of the Art Gallery of Alberta. He is largely responsible for the new building that we will be able to enjoy, and it's on track to open in 2009. I know that he wants me to thank all the different levels of government that supported that building plus the private donors and the corporations. Very exciting exhibits are still going on at Enterprise Square, which is the old Hudson's Bay building. It's a super collaboration with the University of Alberta and shows what our city can do. Thank you, Tony.

Joining Tony today is Catherine Crowston, who is the chief curator and deputy director. It's her job to make sure that the programming continues. I think we have her to thank for exhibits like China Sensation, and of course many of you would have been able to take in the free-for-all that happened with all of the professional and amateur artists that came out to the closing show. They've also done things like the Alberta Biennial of Contemporary Art, and currently running is Capital Modern: Edmonton Architecture and Urban Design 1940-1969. Please join me in welcoming these two wonderful additions to our cultural capital.

**1:10**

My third introduction today is also involved in the visual arts, and that is Todd Janes. Todd, if you would rise, please. I've known Todd for an awfully long time. I'm delighted to be able to introduce him in the Assembly. He has been the executive director of Latitude 53 Contemporary Visual Culture for over 12 years now. He is an artist, a curator, and a cultural worker who has worked very hard to raise the profile of contemporary art. I should note that next year is Latitude 53's 35th anniversary, making it one of Canada's oldest artist-run centres and a space that's exhibited thousands of artists in many different disciplines. Welcome, Todd, and thank you very much for coming to the Alberta Assembly.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all hon. Members of this Legislative Assembly Mr. Merle Schnee. Mr. Schnee is a lifelong resident of Edmonton-Gold Bar. He is a retired firefighter, and he is very active in politics and a keen observer of all events that are public. He is in the public gallery, and I would now ask him to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Agnihotri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of 13 individuals who are the pride of my constituency. They have organized hundreds and hundreds of people, including me, to form the Munnky Krunchers, Canada's top fundraising team. They have raised 40,000-plus dollars for people suffering from MS. They have done tremendous efforts to raise the funds. The government should double their efforts to help scientists and researchers to find the cure for this disease. The group is seated in the public gallery. They are Donna Romanuik, Tanys Romanuik, Pat Semrok, Sammy Semrok, Ryan Kew, Alfred Nobert, Denise Nobert, Linda Craig, Olivia Craig, Emily Craig, Patrick Aube, Darlene Treder, Chantell Barone. I request them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Dr. B. Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great privilege for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House the brilliant, creative, hard-working staff of the Edmonton-Glenora constituency office: Jan Millson, Peter Marriott, C.D. Saint, and Craig Miller. I invite them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

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

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you two guests who are joining us here today: Krista Mitton and Richard MacKay, who are both working with the Mira facilitation agency. Both of them came to the House before, and they even participated in a rally which took place on the steps of the Legislature six or seven weeks ago. They're also here to witness me continuing to submit petitions with respect to the people who work with people with disabilities. I would like to encourage them to continue talking to us, and I would invite them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Samuel Baron. Samuel grew up in Vegreville, Alberta, and has been a musician in the local Edmonton music scene for the last four years. He's been a student for the past two years at Grant MacEwan College and will be pursuing his bachelor of arts in political science at the U of A this fall. Samuel has a great interest in progressive politics, peace, and social justice. He has also volunteered in my constituency office and is looking forward to becoming more involved in provincial politics. I would now ask that he rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly three wonderful constituents of mine who reside in Shepherd's Care in Kensington. They are Mary Coupland, Shirley Murrie, and Jo Eggen. Jo Eggen came to Canada as a British war veteran 57 years ago after volunteering for military service since 1941. Jo is a world traveller, enjoying travelling even today. She has lived in Kensington for 45 years and remains a Calder resident to this day. She also has a lifetime membership at the Calder Seniors Drop-In

Centre. Shirley Murrie lived in Kensington for over 40 years as well. She's very active in volunteering for the Calder Seniors Drop-In Centre and for the Castle Downs United church. Shirley is an active social committee member and devotes many hours in her volunteer duties. Mary originally comes from Ireland but is a long-time resident of Edmonton. Mary resides at Shepherd's Care as well, where she spends time visiting with her son and family. I would now ask for all three of them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my distinct pleasure to introduce to you and to all colleagues in the Assembly Todd Lorentz. Todd was born and raised in a farming community in central Alberta and after high school worked for eight years in the oil and gas industry. He entered the University of Alberta in '64, where he earned a bachelor of arts degree with honours in philosophy, a master of arts degree in religious studies, and received many prestigious awards and scholarships for his work in eastern philosophy and quantum physics.

In 2005 Todd had the opportunity to speak in Nairobi, Kenya on global poverty. His subsequent visit to several slums in the Nairobi area brought him face to face with the victims of poverty, and that experience provided the inspiration behind the development of an organization to help alleviate the suffering of children called One Child's Village: A Global Orphans Foundation. He is its current managing director and will be travelling next week to establish the foundation's first orphanage in Kenya. Best wishes on that project, Todd. Todd is sitting in the far corner here in the public gallery. I would ask him to now please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Members' Statements**

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

#### **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day**

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Friday, June 15, is the second annual World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, and communities across Alberta, Canada, and the world are coming together to raise awareness of elder abuse. You may have noticed that members of the House are wearing purple ribbons today. I'd like to thank the members for wearing these ribbons and taking a small but significant stand in demonstrating their support for ending Alberta elder abuse and neglect.

It is estimated that up to 10 per cent of older adults experience some form of abuse, and about 90 per cent of that is financial abuse. Seniors in these situations are often reluctant to talk about abuse; however, we can do something about it. We can watch for the signs of elder abuse and neglect, including confusion, depression or anxiety, unexplained injuries, changes in hygiene, or seeming fearful around certain people. We can also report suspected elder abuse to authorities and encourage seniors to get help when they need it. There is help available.

The government of Alberta is working with partners in the community to assist seniors and raise awareness of elder abuse. From 24-hour help lines and shelters to awareness posters and information we are working together to help vulnerable seniors. Government is always working to address abuse or safety concerns for adults in publicly funded care facilities.

The Protection for Persons in Care Act legally requires anyone who suspects abuse to report it to the toll-free reporting lines or to

local police authorities. Individually each of us has a role to play. We can watch for signs of elder abuse or neglect of the seniors we know, whether they are our neighbours, our friends, customers, or members of our family, and we can report abuse when we suspect it.

This World Elder Abuse Awareness Day we can continue to spread the message that elder abuse will not be tolerated by Albertans. Together we can make a difference in the lives of seniors.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **1:20 Surface Rights Compensation**

**Mr. Marz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to urge the government to take action on an issue of urgent importance to many rural Albertans, that being the issue of surface rights compensation. The current system has not been reviewed for over 20 years, and landowners are still being compensated on an outdated formula using farm commodity prices to pay them for land they're effectively being forced to relinquish for up to 50 years for an industrial purpose. That's correct. You heard it right. Landowners are forced to settle for a price based on farm commodity prices for land being used for industrial purposes.

Even on the open market farmland is traded at market value rates, which have more than doubled in price over the last eight years. That has nothing to do with productivity, but that's the market. However, this has no bearing on surface rights compensation rates.

Since this issue was last reviewed, farmland has also doubled production as summer fallow practices have ceased in most areas of the province. The use of more fertilizers, chemicals, and improved varieties have allowed this to happen. Yet when an energy company comes to negotiate a deal, none of these variables are considered by the Surface Rights Board or the EUB.

Mr. Speaker, we do need development of our natural resources, but we also need to treat rural Albertans fairly. Those who have their land criss-crossed with pipelines and electricity transmission lines are receiving little to nothing in annual compensation for the inconvenience of these forced developments on their property. These developments greatly restrict their future use, the market value, and the enjoyment of their land. Fair compensation would result in costing the end-use customer of the product pennies per month, yet there seems to be a reluctance to deal with this issue.

I'm not surprised, Mr. Speaker, that the perception of the EUB and the Surface Rights Board by farmers is that of being totally biased in favour of the energy companies, and that perception will continue until a total review of this issue is done. So let's get on with it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Sandra German**

**Mr. Louheed:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to recognize an individual who goes sight unseen but is pivotal in helping others see what they cannot hear. Sandra German is a broadcast captioner and real-time translation provider based in Cold Lake, transcribing events and television programming in order that the deaf and hard of hearing can visually read what they cannot hear.

Real-time captioning is not uncommon. For some time closed-captioning has been available on television. Captioning is becoming more widely used at many large-scale events and conferences, both for the hard of hearing and for better comprehension by the general public.

Sandra has been a pioneer in the field of real-time captioning. She has spent the last 18 years as a real-time translation provider and started doing broadcast captioning six years ago. Real-time captioning requires great concentration and skill, and with her years of experience Sandra types 300 words per minute. In the course of her day she captions numerous television programs and provides real-time translation for universities such as UCLA, University of Florida, and McGill. Sandra is able to do captioning from her home in Cold Lake due in part to the availability of the SuperNet, which allows her to make the connection to events around the globe.

Sandra's work is yet another Alberta success story. She is one of the very few people in this country who can teach others the trade. Her work in this field is moving the use of captioning into new areas such as for students learning English as a Second Language. Most importantly, her work is making this province a more accessible place. For that we are very grateful, and Sandra should be commended.

Thank you.

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

### Social Workers

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Social work was one of three traditional occupations for women, after nursing and teaching. It was women, including Alberta's Famous Five, who created the first social infrastructure that helped to turn a frontier society into a community, a house into a home.

Thirty-eight years ago the Social Credit government of Harry Strom renamed our public welfare department the department of social development. This was part of a proactive approach to social issues that included setting up preventative social services, or PSS, committees and offices in each region and municipality.

At that time few public servants in the department were social workers by orientation. Most had previously worked as police officers, ministers, teachers, and nurses. The emphasis inherited from public welfare days was not on serving people as much as dealing with problems, pushing paper, and enforcing policy. A friend of mine who served a few months in the department in 1970 was told: "You're doing too much social work. You're not here to be an advocate for the client but an administrator for the government to tell the client what policy will permit."

Today our official approach is a client-centred one. We hire real social workers, but we don't give them the resources or backing to do the job they trained for. In a society that puts business at the top of the food chain, social work is seen by many as something of an embarrassment. The social workers we hire bounce between putting out brush fires and conceptual models developed by a layer of middle management.

Every day we see stickers urging us to support our troops. Our social workers also deserve that kind of support. If the world had committed and properly trained social workers in areas of need, we would have less need to be sending troops to deal with failed societies. To quote a sticker in a daycare centre: we'll know our values will have changed when every child gets the budgeted funds she needs and the military has to hold a bake sale to buy a bomb.

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

### Low-carbon Fuel

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to draw my hon. colleagues' attention to the fact that, yes, Alberta may not run out of oil soon, having the second-largest oil reserve in the world, but also

highlight the possibility that we may actually run out of markets in which to sell this commodity. The world will move on and leave Alberta behind. The greatest market for Alberta oil is the United States. However, it is clear how the language and tone changed from two or three years ago when Canada was highlighted as being next door to the U.S., as being stable and friendly, producing reliable and affordable oil to now being called one of the worst polluters on the planet, to being pointed at as a culprit in worsening America's addiction to fossil fuel.

In his 2006 state of the union address President Bush announced that "America is addicted to oil," and he promised to change that. In an article published yesterday in the *Financial Post*, there was a quote from Mike Hudema, an Albertan who is now the director of the San Francisco-based Freedom from Oil Coalition. Mr. Hudema says that oil from the tar sands, unlike even conventional oil, is a lot dirtier.

People all over the world, Mr. Speaker, are starting to realize the threat to the planet and that action needs to be taken to preserve the environment. Governments and individuals of all political stripes are coming together in the fight against climate change. Take California's governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Republican who went from an environmental menace with his three gas-guzzling, exhaust-spewing Hummers to an environmental messiah using his celebrity status and political might to reduce reliance on dirty fuels and cut oil imports from places like Alberta. He was in Canada last week signing agreements committing Ontario and British Columbia to adhere to California's new low carbon fuel standard, which will cut the use of petroleum products from sources known to cause high levels of greenhouse gas emissions, sources like Alberta.

Quebec, and Manitoba, perhaps other provinces as well, and at least 12 U.S. states are expected to join the California standard, thus shrinking the market for the fast-growing Alberta oil industry. Is Alberta going to join? Will we be the last province? Is ours the only government that is in denial or that is resistant to change?

There is even an agency in the U.S., Mr. Speaker, called the Natural Resources Defense Council, which labels its 2006 annual report *Moving America Beyond Oil*.

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

### Teachers' Unfunded Pension Liability

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A mortgage, a personal debt, unfunded liability: is there a difference? I don't think so. A debt is a debt; a liability is a liability. Fancy bookkeeping doesn't change the reality of the situation. Ask shareholders of Enron, WorldCom, Nortel, or Bre-X.

A story may help here. You owe \$25,000 on personal credit and \$4,000 to a friend. Let's just say he's a teacher. You also have a leaky roof on your home from a hailstorm and no insurance to cover the cost of repair. The first thing you do is you go to the bank and discuss repayments. They agree to a 25-year plan that works for everyone. However, they will not allow you to fix your roof. You say to yourself: it doesn't rain that often. You agree with the bank that they'll okay all expenditures and will get all of your profits.

Luckily, your business takes off, and you have the ability to pay off the big debt early. You celebrate 100 years in business, and you have a mortgage-burning party to which you invite your teacher friend. Then you go on a spending spree and hire new management and spend a lot of time golfing.

In the meantime, it has been raining. You haven't increased or accelerated your payments to your friend. You are content with the deal. He was generous when he made it. He was helping make sure

your business didn't go under. Your friend is getting worried, though. He sees your lifestyle as flamboyant and riotous. You tell him how great things are, but he is concerned about your spending and whether his payments will keep coming. He begins to feel a pinch in his lifestyle and asks if you could please pay off your debt. You say that you're doing okay and ignore him. You'll pay according to the 50-year agreement you made with him.

Mr. Speaker, this government does not have a sustainable budget. Spending continues to rise with a fast lifestyle of fine dining and exclusive resorts. We are not receiving good value for our tax dollars. With our surplus top priority should be to pay off the government's portion of the teachers' unfunded pension liability. We must also address the estimated \$60 billion unfunded liability that we have to the Canada pension plan. It is way past time to pay off the \$4 billion debt to the teachers and opt out of CPP and create our own Alberta pension plan.

**head: 1:30 Oral Question Period**

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

**Calgary Concerns**

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The residents of Calgary, including those in Calgary-Elbow, are frustrated that their voices are not being heard in this government. Like other Albertans they're still waiting for a comprehensive solution to the affordable housing crisis, one that works. Funding for renters is inadequate, and the legislation is full of loopholes. Of course, we're all still waiting for the Treasury Board president's famous website that's supposed to scare gouging landlords. My question is to the Premier. What is the Premier prepared to tell the residents of Calgary, including renters in Calgary-Elbow, who know that this government's affordable housing plan is not working? When can we expect the rest of his plan?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the plan is working. Of \$285 million for affordable housing for the province, \$63 million is going directly to Calgary in the first year. The other day the mayor, taking a suggestion from what we had talked about, is now moving with city council, looking at how they can provide land for affordable housing. That is one issue that we've got to get our heads around: getting enough land for affordable housing. So the plan is moving.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Expanding the LRT system is another priority for Calgarians. It's critical to managing growth and, of course, to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but to build it, you need a commitment for sustainable, long-term funding. Calgarians know that the Premier promised one thing during his leadership race and has delivered something quite different. To the Premier: when will Calgary have the funding assurances in place that will enable the expansion of the LRT system to move ahead?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I had promised \$1.4 billion for municipalities, and we delivered on that promise. The full \$1.4 billion will be in the 2010-11 budget. We said that it would be there for 10 years. We may review it, you know, in the middle of those 10 years, depending on the growth in the economy. It's difficult to predict the kind of growth that may occur and the revenues that flow. But the \$1.4 billion is there. I promised it, and it's there.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this government is developing a bad habit of lowering expectations rather than meeting them. The latest example is the backtracking on the promise of new postsecondary spaces. Calgary desperately needs more postsecondary spaces, and Mount Royal College is prepared to deliver, but this government has not given Mount Royal the support required to meet the needs of Calgarians. Again to the Premier: if Mount Royal College's applications for new bachelor's degree programs in arts, sciences, justice studies, and business are approved, will the Premier commit to funding them and to funding them at the level they need?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the minister is reviewing where spaces will be added. In fact, yesterday's comments from the University of Lethbridge and the University of Calgary were that they're agreeing with the minister in terms of the direction taken and adding spaces where they're required, so it's further dialogue, planning with the postsecondary deliverers.

Now, with respect to Mount Royal there is a plan in place, and the minister may want to speak further to it.

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, as I've said many times in this House, we are in very close consultation with all of our postsecondaries on their role, their responsibility, and their mandate within the framework of Campus Alberta. For the first time that, I think, has been discussed, there is a pathway for Mount Royal to achieve their objectives.

**The Speaker:** Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Capital Region Municipal Planning**

**Mr. Bonko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Liberals' Bill 211, Planning for the Future of Communities Act, accomplished the very same thing as the Premier's capital region growth management plan announced yesterday, yet in Bill 211 debates the minister of the Treasury Board stated that mandatory regional planning is "code for forced amalgamation." The Member for Rocky Mountain House stated that it's imperative that "we support each municipality in its own endeavours." To the Premier. A minister and a former minister spoke harshly against regional planning. Does the Premier support their statements, or are they both just wrong?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I don't know what, you know, the member is bringing forward. All I know is that it's very clear that we're moving quickly by getting all of the 24 municipalities together, focusing on a growth management plan for the capital region. It's going to take into account not only the physical infrastructure but the social infrastructure. I'm talking about policing, ambulance services, provision of services like water and sewer, waste management, and also looking at a governance model once we've collated all this information. If we don't do it, we are at risk of losing a considerable amount of investment. Predicted investment is about \$39 billion. If we don't move very positively with leadership, we may lose tremendous investment in the province.

**Mr. Bonko:** It's taken a long time to get to this point. Bill 211 and the capital region growth management plan both create long-term growth management plans for the region. They both establish regional boards. They both have provincial representation. They both include a land-use strategy, and they both create regional growth plans. The government cannot deny – cannot deny – the similarity. To the Premier: why did your government vote against Bill 211 when they both accomplish the very same thing?

**Mr. Stelmach:** First of all, it's a private member's bill. You know, he's been in the House a few years and still doesn't understand the difference.

Very clearly, all 24 municipalities are onside. They're working towards one common goal. The other thing, which is very important here, is that this may be a model that we can use, perhaps share with other municipalities in the province of Alberta in terms of working together, planning towards much more effective delivery of public services. That's where the savings are, and that's where we can reduce a lot of the tax costs to local taxpayers.

**Mr. Bonko:** There's no legislative basis for the government to guarantee that regional planning will get things done. Despite the Premier saying that the province will have the partners, there's no mechanism to do this. The Premier does not have a legislative leg to stand on. To the Premier. On affordable housing the best solution your government could come up with to protect renters was a website listing bad landlords to shame them, not exactly a stroke of genius here. Is this Premier going to have the same tactic to force the capital region to come up with a plan if they can't agree: put their names on a website?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, one thing I will tell you is that we're not going to use the same kind of strategy as the Liberals and try to hammer the municipalities. We're going to work with them. At the end of the day we said: look, we'll come up with a governance model that's going to be fair. I talked to most of the leaders. They agree that they will come to that governance model. Part of that model is already in the municipal sustainability report.

We have consensus. We're moving forward. We're going to bring this to a close in January of 2008. We'll have all the relevant information, and then we'll be prepared next spring. If we have to change legislation or amend legislation, we'll have all that information with the support of the municipalities, and I would then ask for the support of the opposition.

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

### Safety of Human Services Workers

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Alberta health and social service workers in the human services sector are 12 times more likely to be the victims of workplace violence than workers in traditional job sectors. Too often front-line workers in the Department of Children's Services are punched, grabbed, pushed, and verbally threatened by their clients. Casework overloads caused by staff shortages and increasing poverty issues increase worker risk. While the department has protocols for reacting to an episode of violence, little is done to prevent attacks. To the Minister of Children's Services: when was the last time your staff conducted a province-wide audit of the implementation of the occupational health and safety code in the Department of Children's Services, and what were the results?

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

**Ms Tarchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of areas in there to address. The very first thing I want to say is that I agree with your member's statement that our social workers deserve our support and also to say to the House that I take this role as Minister of Children's Services – and I know that you would agree – very seriously. I see that my number one role is to ensure that this

government is placing as much effort into and value on our social infrastructure as our physical infrastructure, and I can tell you that that is the case. I can also tell you that we value the professionals who are servicing that social infrastructure. In fact, I can say that I'm very proud that most of the initiatives that I have been able to announce since the budget have been focused on valuing and respecting our staff.

*1:40*

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

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What little preventative safety measures and procedures exist in the Department of Children's Services are piecemeal, inadequate, and inconsistent between regions. For example, Children's Services sets no provincial standard on the number of hours and frequency of staff safety and violence prevention training. There are also no standards for workplace security measures like plexiglass barriers, panic buttons, for the location of visitation rooms, or for the safety of human services workers working alone after hours. To the Minister of Children's Services: when will your department develop clear and consistent workplace violence prevention standards that apply to all provincial and contracted social service workers province-wide?

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

**Ms Tarchuk:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The second thing I'd like to address is actually the comment about resources. I can tell you that I think that the Children's Services employees do a fabulous job in this province taking care of the interests of children and families. I can tell you that just this week alone I've had the opportunity of visiting staff in three different sites. When it does come to resources, I do think – and I know that you've also been taking a look at this – the casework practice model that we have started to implement in 13 sites across the province, preparing for a rollout, will make a significant difference and improvement on workload issues in this province.

**Mrs. Mather:** Last year, following the tragic death of social worker Boni Frederick, the American state of Kentucky implemented a new piece of legislation called Boni's bill. Among other things, this legislation included new standards for the creation of secure client visitation centres, provisions for social worker access to criminal records with one-hour turnaround time, and mandatory staff safety training twice a year. Also, recognizing the widespread impact of worker burnout on health and safety, the state hired an additional 100 workers. To the Minister of Children's Services. Alberta, too, has had its share of human service worker assaults and fatalities, yet little has changed. Has your department looked at these measures, and if so, why hasn't it implemented them?

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

**Ms Tarchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, there are a couple of questions there. A couple of things: if there are any particular instances that you know about, because I know that you're good at following up, if you'd like to share the information with me, I'll do due diligence as well. What I can tell you is that safety of staff is of utmost importance to us.

In Children's Services we do have a provincial occupational health and safety committee. It is their job, with representation from management and employee representatives, to recommend solutions that do address the kinds of situations that you're talking about. I

understand that the policies and guidelines are on the website. Like I say, I'll take a look at the *Hansard* and follow up with some information, but if you want to give me more details on specifics, I'll follow up with that as well.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the third party, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

#### Election Finances

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has admitted that soliciting donations from the Beaver waste management commission was unethical. The Liberals did not get any unethical money from the commission, but it was not for lack of trying. We have two parties in this province, the Liberals and the Conservatives, who appear to engage in unethical fundraising. Clearly, we need some legislation to protect Albertans from these two parties. Will the Premier finally do the right thing and introduce comprehensive changes to election finance rules in Alberta to make these types of unethical donations illegal?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, a number of times I rose in the House to say that our government's plan is to introduce legislation. We want to consult with the two leaders to build good legislation. This is more focused on legislation tied to the campaign fundraising for leadership causes. You know, I don't know what the other parties have in mind, but if we do this together, we would have good legislation in place, and we would avoid this kind of situation. It will be very clear-cut.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, these are not exceptions to an otherwise properly functioning set of election finance rules. It's just not the case. With the Liberals taking \$103,650 from big oil and gas donors last year and the Tories taking \$314,550, it's no wonder both parties have been soft-pedaling the need for royalty reform. Why won't the Premier commit right now to cleaning up Alberta politics and get big money out of politics and limit donations to individual citizens?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, we've come a long way this session in terms of opening up this Legislature to greater democracy, more openness, more transparency. Quite frankly, it came with the support of the opposition parties, and I thank them for that. We've got more to do, and we'll definitely move in that direction, again, in partnership with the two. We have the Conflicts of Interest Amendment Act, 2007, that's going to be proceeding through the House and lifted, you know, for an all-party review, which to me is an important piece of legislation. There will be other legislation coming through. I want to work together with the other two parties to ensure that we have the best legislation in place.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, we saw how transparent the government really was when they got that report from the Affordable Housing Task Force and kept it secret until they made all their decisions.

The province of Manitoba and the federal government have already limited political donations to individuals, and I would say that democracy is doing just fine in the province of Manitoba. There's a basic democratic principle here. The financial support of our political process should depend on individual citizens, not

corporations or unions or municipalities or even waste-water commissions, Mr. Speaker. When will this government follow Manitoba's lead on this matter and eliminate big money from politics?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I thought I just heard from the hon. member no acceptance of any money coming from unions. I'm quite sure he's going to bring that forward when it comes to discussion in this House in terms of the regulations with the proposed legislation.

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

#### Capital Region Municipal Planning (continued)

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In his questions a few seconds ago the Member for Edmonton-Decore clearly shows how clueless he is relative to regional co-operation and how he doesn't mind certain capital residential regions subsidizing the others. I'd love to see him explain his position in front of Mayor Mandel.

Mr. Speaker, the capital region integrated growth management plan is a monumental accord that was signed between the municipalities. I would like to ask the Premier: how will the entire capital region, all residents of the capital region benefit from this plan, which I understand makes all the mayors happy?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, there are a number of components, of course, to the value of the plan to the citizens; first of all, co-ordinated planning, and it's not only for transportation but for waste water, sewer treatment, all of those particular areas that municipalities have a common share in. Secondly, how do we ensure the social side, the social costs like policing, the social needs of the various communities? How will they be affected with this growth? How can we co-ordinate those services, reduce the costs? But the other is of course leading to environment. I believe we can reduce the footprint, certainly, on the environment by working together with all the municipalities. That's part of the action plan and a benefit to every constituent in the area.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** My first and last supplemental to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Maybe he can explain to the Member for Edmonton-Decore, who would rather blow out a candle to prove to us that it's dark out there, what we can do as legislators, including the Member for Edmonton-Decore, to make sure that this plan works, works well for all Edmontonians and works well for the entire capital region.

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

**Mr. Danyluk:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, we have had consultation with municipalities. Municipalities and this government very much believe that we need to work together as far as regionalization, as far as working together as regions. I will be meeting with the municipalities as well as an implementation team consisting of the deputy ministers and a project manager and the municipalities and municipal leaders. Industry and the federal government will be at this meeting. It will take a concentrated and a co-ordinated approach to make this happen, and I think that all leaders are committed.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

### Education Funding

**Mr. Flaherty:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, another day, another school board forced to make really difficult decisions. Last night the Edmonton public school board announced the impacts of inadequate operational funding on their school district. My questions are to the Minister of Education. Does the minister accept that this year's funding shortfalls are undoing the progress that school boards like Edmonton public have made on class sizes? Will this pattern continue across the province in Alberta schools?

1:50

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I think I read the same newspaper article that the hon. member read. What I happened to see was that the Edmonton public school board balanced their budget for this year. Here's what I also happened to read. The chairman of the public school board said: we had to use some creative, innovative thinking to balance our budget. I would suggest that maybe that's what we need, some creative, innovative thinking, which we sure aren't going to get from that group over there.

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

**Mr. Flaherty:** Thank you. I'm insulted, Mr. Speaker, terribly.

Edmonton public's budget only contains enough room to expand the teacher compensation package by 2 per cent in this year's negotiations. I will remind the minister that the cost of living in Edmonton increased by almost 6 per cent last year, and therefore a 2 per cent increase will reduce the quality of life for teachers in this province. Does the minister acknowledge that forcing teachers to fight every few years to maintain their standard of living has a negative impact on attracting young people to the profession of teaching? Yes or no, Mr. Minister?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I find it absolutely incredible that this hon. member would stand in this Legislature and falsely accuse me several times of combining and not separating negotiations from the unfunded liability issue. Now this hon. member wants me to get involved in negotiations. I will remind the hon. member that negotiations will take place over the coming months between the school districts and the locals of the ATA. The government will work with the ATA to solve the unfunded pension liability.

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

**Mr. Flaherty:** Well, thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Edmonton public did not receive an increase in their maintenance budget this year. This means they will have to continue to defer required maintenance on many of their schools. Deferred maintenance today equals an unnecessary need for new schools tomorrow. To the Minister of Education. We have been down this path before. Calgary and Edmonton need 66 new schools today because your government neglected school infrastructure in the '90s. How can you ensure that we aren't repeating the same mistakes? Do you have a plan, Mr. Minister? Tell us.

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I think I heard him say that they received no additional funding for maintenance. That's absolutely incorrect, so I'm just assuming that everything else he's saying is equally incorrect.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

### Edmonton Ring Road

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Keeping goods and services on the move and helping people get to their places of work, learning, or leisure and then back to their homes as safely and efficiently as possible requires a sophisticated, well-planned roadway system. It also requires a great deal of co-operation among cities and municipalities as well as several strategic financial and economic partnerships. Population growth and economic growth in and around Edmonton are absolutely phenomenal, and the need for ring roads, overpasses, and so on is absolutely critical. My questions are for the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. When will your ministry and our municipal partners see the southeast leg of the Anthony Henday ring road completed and at what cost?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the hon. member for the excellent question. The Anthony Henday Drive southeast is a great project that is progressing normally and is scheduled to open this fall. It'll be part of the Edmonton ring road. I'd like to add that the Anthony Henday Drive southeast project is also a very successful P3 project. The total cost over three years for construction and maintenance, which will be like a 30-year warranty, is \$494 million total. It will make traffic around Edmonton run more smoothly and efficiently and is also a very good deal for the Alberta taxpayer.

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

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is indeed great news, particularly for my constituency because it borders that particular leg. I'd also like to know something about the roadway connections elsewhere. What are your plans, Mr. Minister, for the northern sections of this capital ring road system here in our area?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, the 2001 functional planning study for the north ring road is being updated to reflect current traffic projections and provide a plan for 30 years and beyond. When it's complete, the northern leg of the ring road will stretch from the western edge of Edmonton all the way across the top of the city, then across the North Saskatchewan River and link to the Yellowhead near Sherwood Park. The timing for the design or construction of the north ring road is not set, but the 2005 goal was to have it all completed within 10 years.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it appears some good news is coming.

Yesterday's announcement of good news, in fact, with reference to the terms of reference for the capital region integrated growth management plan is extremely important and is very well supported by all 24 capital region municipalities, as we've just heard. I'd like the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, however, to please explain how these plans relate to the overall transportation plan for the Industrial Heartland in our area, where about \$46 billion worth of construction projects are already planned or under way.

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the plans for the ring road fit very well with the overall transportation plans for the Industrial Heartland area because transportation of goods will be done more efficiently around the capital region. The Industrial Heartland area will definitely benefit from the construction of the ring road around Edmonton because of a better access to transportation routes. My overall objective is to make sure that all the areas around Edmonton take advantage of the benefits of the ring road now and into the future.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River will follow the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, who I'll now call upon.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, remember the rule. If you choose to wear an identifiable piece of clothing, logos and what have you, you must provide one to every member of the Assembly. So by tomorrow would you ensure that every member has the right-fitting tee-shirt, compliments of the hon. member?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Mr. Agnihotri:** What's your size, Mr. Speaker?

### Arts Funding

**Mr. Agnihotri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta needs to get serious about diversifying the economy. This government must move away from dependence on the oil industry and take advantage of the opportunities in other sectors, including book publishers and the film industry. They aren't receiving the support they need. The province has already lost six publishers, and only 30 per cent of the remaining publishers received provincial funding last year. To the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture: why isn't the minister doing more to support this very important sector?

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, certainly over the last couple of months I've had an opportunity to meet with the book publishers, and I've assured them that through the AFA, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, we would continue to provide them with support. As part of the overall review that we're doing this year on the AFA, we will include the comments that the hon. member has indicated to me, and we're doing that in light of seeing if we can provide them additional support.

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

**Mr. Agnihotri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. Failure to plan for the future has resulted in an extremely high cost of living and in shortages of workers in all areas. Because of this, Alberta is having a hard time remaining competitive with other jurisdictions when it comes to attracting filmmakers. Has the minister considered removing caps on incentives offered to filmmakers?

**Mr. Goudreau:** Well, certainly, Mr. Speaker, we are wanting to also grow the film industry in the province of Alberta. Again, I have met with that particular industry. We did some very specialized funding last year where we gave an additional \$12 million to support the film industry. We are presently looking at a couple of pilot projects that we think might come forward here in the very, very short while. They're pilot projects that we're anticipating to be successful and will give us direction as to how we might fund the film industry in the future.

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

**Mr. Agnihotri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. The Alberta Liberals recognize the value of arts and the culture sector. Will the minister adopt the Alberta Liberal plan and immediately increase funding to the Alberta Foundation for the Arts so that cultural industries are able to remain competitive and thrive in Alberta?

2:00

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite will know that in our budget we did increase the funding to the arts community in

the province of Alberta. I need to indicate that Albertans and this particular government really value the arts community. We recognize that they are a very important and integral part of the quality of life for all Albertans. We will move forward to supporting that.

Thank you.

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

### Mountain Pine Beetle Control

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Critics of forest management and forest harvesting in Kananaskis Country continue to downplay the mountain pine beetle threat to the region. My question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Why not do as the critics request and leave the infestations to manage themselves as they say was done to good effect during an earlier beetle attack in Waterton national park?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of visiting Waterton national park on June 2, and I inspected the pine beetle killed area there. You can see that in the absence of any intervention there has been virtually no reforestation: certainly no lodgepole pine, a few spruce, but mostly scrub willow. The ground is covered with deadfall, which of course will stunt further growth and also put wildlife at great risk. The Waterton solution may work for the national parks, given their priorities, but it's certainly not what Albertans want.

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

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer. My first supplemental, again to the same minister: is this just theory or can he point to specific examples that suggest that the current strategy really will result in healthier forests in the future?

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By complete coincidence, I can point to a specific example. On that same trip to Waterton I had an up-close view of the West Castle Valley, where pine beetle also occurred in the 1960s. We inspected some blocks that were salvage harvest there, and I'm happy to report that they have been reforested, replanted, and are doing very well. We also had the opportunity further down the valley to see some commercial harvest that was from the 1960s, and it is now prime 40-foot lodgepole pine. As I've said before, if we truly want healthy forest in Alberta, doing nothing is not an option.

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

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, thank you to the minister, and I'm really impressed that he has specific examples that he can just whip out.

My second supplemental to the same minister: how will Alberta's approach to mountain pine beetle differ from what was done in Waterton?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, national parks and the province of Alberta have different management priorities and different management techniques. We manage our forested lands for multiple uses.

Parks Canada has different priorities and has a policy of minimal intervention. What works for them is fine. But, as I've explained in here, what hasn't worked in Waterton, particularly the lack of reforestation after pine beetle, simply is not acceptable in Alberta.

Thank you.

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

#### **Speaker's Ruling**

#### **Interjections by a Member**

**The Speaker:** But first of all, does the hon. member have any idea what this might be? Can he see this? This is a piece of paper. The first time today that the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity's voice was heard over everybody else's, I wrote down two. I was going to interject and say: look, let's have some more decorum. Then I went to three and I crossed it off; then I went to four and I crossed it off; then I went to five and I crossed it off; then I went to six and I crossed it off; then seven and I crossed it off; eight and I crossed it off; nine and I crossed it off; 10 and I crossed it off; 11 and I crossed it off; and 12 and I crossed it off. Thirteen times today. If the hon. member has any more energy, use it now with your questions, okay?

#### **Commercial Vehicle Inspection**

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At random roadside vehicle inspections the commercial trucking industry fails at a rate of approximately 35 per cent. Commercial truck operators are legislated to have mechanical inspections completed on their equipment annually. School buses at random roadside inspections achieve a pass rate of approximately 95 per cent. School bus operators are required to submit their vehicles to mandatory mechanical inspections every six months. At an additional cost of approximately \$1.5 million annually commercial vehicle inspection program administration and audit duties have been contracted to Transtrue Vehicle Safety. This upstart firm is reportedly unable to meet the program and audit requirements due to personnel shortages. My questions are to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. What guarantee do Albertans have that the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation and Transtrue are meeting their obligations in CVIP goals?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, this ministry is very committed to traffic safety, as I've been saying all along here. We're always working on innovative things and implementing more things in traffic safety. Just this week I was out at the Leduc safety inspection station. We're using a new image camera that actually can take a picture of a truck going by. It can check their weights, it can check whether their wheel bearings are overheating, it can check whether their brakes are even working, which ones are coming on or not, just by driving by the thermal image camera. That's the type of innovation that we're working on all the time.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My unbridled enthusiasm today comes from having a fourth amigo in Calgary.

Although CVIP-related work has been contracted to Transtrue Vehicle Safety, fully capable people remain in the employ of Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation. Will the government commit to an investigation to determine why the CVIP is not administered utilizing government employees still working for the ministry? What's the point of this Transtrue outfit, that can't deliver?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of different private contractors that work through Infrastructure and Transportation on all different aspects of the ministry. We believe that all of our partnerships work great with us together, and whenever they have problems, we work with them to try and fix those problems.

On to his amigo problems: I just wonder. He needs every amigo he can get, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure that the minister is aware of the Transtrue section within his ministry, but I'd look forward to his evaluation of them.

Will the government commit to improving the commercial vehicle inspection program, CVIP, by requiring all Alberta-based commercial vehicles to receive and pass mechanical inspections every six months?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, everyone knows how busy we are in this province. We are always looking at innovative ways and better ways to make sure that we have the safest highways in the country. We are always looking at better ways to make sure that everybody is getting their vehicles inspected, and we will continue doing so.

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

#### **Education Funding**

*(continued)*

**Mr. Eggen:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. This Education minister is robbing our students to please the fiscal hawks. Because of this budgeting, classrooms in Edmonton public schools will be packed to capacity next year, and Edmonton Catholic will have less than half the money they need for maintenance. By starving the education budget, this minister is forcing school boards to think creatively and innovatively, I suppose: should we cut instruction, or should we cut our infrastructure? To the Premier I would ask: what has provoked the government to do this to the province's education system? Why are you putting the bottom line ahead of our children's learning?

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

**Mr. Stelmach:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Education is very important to this government and to all Albertans. In fact, if you look at the last 10 years, the funding to schools has increased by over 86 per cent, and in that same period inflation has increased less than 30 per cent, maybe 28 per cent. So we've more than kept up with inflation.

We have more things in store in terms of the government dealing with the teachers' unfunded liability. We're dealing with that as a separate issue. We want to settle that as quickly as possible. We're always working with teachers and school boards towards improving the quality of education in this province.

2:10

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Thanks. Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, you have to pay the price of what public education costs in this province. Certainly, a 3 per cent operational budget when we have upwards of 5 to 6 per cent inflation: the two just don't match

up. We're losing a lot of good recommendations from the Learning Commission. School boards are having to choose between well-maintained classrooms and proper numbers of teachers. I would like to ask the Minister of Education, please. Perhaps he has some advice for innovative and creative thinking for school trustees. Should they let their class sizes grow, or should they just let their schools fall apart?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I've stated on several occasions in this House that when the Learning Commission made its recommendation regarding class sizes, they recommended that we implement it over a period of five years. Well, this is the third year, and we have fully funded class size initiatives. The hon. member doesn't have any idea what he's talking about when he says we're not funding class sizes. Half a billion dollars in three years.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly, this budget will result in choices. Maybe schools will try to cut back so that they can maintain their class size, but it will be at the expense of something else. There's simply not enough money to be in keeping with the balance, the cost of providing public education today in this province. So I ask the minister once more. Perhaps I'm not sure what he's up to here, but certainly it feels like it's a razing of K to 12 education. What are we going to do afterwards? Are we going to have another Learning Commission to try to put it back together again, are we going to rely on private schools to come and fill up the gap, or are we going to end up going back to having emergency funding in the fall like we had to do last year?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there was a comment made by the hon. member at the beginning of his first question about starvation. I would suggest that there are many departments in this government that would gladly accept a \$5.6 billion starvation budget. The hon. member continues to talk about underfunding. The Premier has just mentioned some numbers that – I don't know if the hon. member can't add or what his problem is, but in the last 10 years education funding to school boards has gone up 86 per cent. Eighty-six per cent. They love to tie numbers to inflation. In the same time inflation has gone up 28 per cent. I suggest we do the mathematics.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

### Railway Safety

**Mr. Strang:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Some of my constituents as well as diverse organizations such as the Canadian Chemical Producers' Association, coal companies, and the Alberta Forest Products Association have expressed concerns regarding the level of service provided by CN in Alberta. My first question is to the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Can he tell this Assembly what can be done to remediate this situation?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague that there is room for improvement when it comes to CN's level of service in Alberta. I have written to the federal minister of transport to make him aware of Alberta's concerns about all rail service in western Canada. Alberta is a major source of railway shipments, with a total volume of 47 million tonnes, which is 20 per cent of all shipments originating in Canada. These CN service issues include inadequate car supply, lack of timely train service, and the recent strike at CN. That said, I understand that the newly introduced Bill C-44 will address most of Alberta's concerns regarding CN's level of service.

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

**Mr. Strang:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My first supplementary question is to the same minister. Can the minister provide more details about the immediate action that can take place to help ensure CN provides the level of service that Alberta industry has the right to expect?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that Bill C-44, that amends the Canada Transportation Act, will address most of this province's concerns. The intent is to clarify and strengthen the act's current provisions that protect rail shippers from market power by railways. I would also like to remind the hon. member and this Assembly that railways are a federal jurisdiction, which limits the province's influence. That said, my department is currently reviewing the new legislation to make sure that it improves on the situation in Alberta. We will also conduct formal public consultation with our stakeholders regarding this new legislation.

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

**Mr. Strang:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My second supplementary question is to the same minister. The American government has recently introduced a piece of legislation that would address railroad competitiveness and service improvements. Is this type of legislation something that the Alberta government should be looking at?

**Mr. Ouellette:** As I was saying before, Mr. Speaker, our goal is to ensure that goods and products can move effectively and efficiently for the benefit of the industry and Albertans in general. But, again, railways are under federal jurisdiction. My department is aware of the new proposed legislation, which is called the Railroad Competition and Service Improvement Act. I have instructed my staff to review this proposed legislation to see if there are any improvements or aspects of the legislation that the province could provide as input to the federal government. The objective is to make sure that Albertans get the best benefits from the railway industry.

### Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder

**Ms Pastoor:** Mr. Speaker, to receive government support services, an adult with fetal alcohol syndrome disorder, commonly known as FASD, must fall below a specific IQ level. However, this support system does not take into account adults with FASD who may be above the IQ level but lack basic functioning ability or for safety reasons, theirs and society's, require support. To the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. Will this government commit to reviewing available supports to ensure that these adults with FASD don't fall through the cracks?

**Mr. Melchin:** Mr. Speaker, absolutely correct. When we designed programs for persons with developmental disabilities, they were very much designed to help a certain classification of individuals, and they don't always encompass all forms of disability, FASD being one of them. In that respect we're pleased to be working very closely with Children's Services so that we can look at how we address those needs. They are ones, in particular, that don't fall under persons with development disabilities but are a group of people for whom we are very concerned about providing the right level of service.

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you for that. We've also heard from experts that treatment facilities for addictions require more training to be

able to meet the needs of the FASD clients. Again to the same minister: will the minister consult with the FASD experts and addiction agencies to develop appropriate programs that are flexible and tailored to meet the individual needs of Albertans with FASD once they turn 18?

**Mr. Melchin:** Mr. Speaker, we do actually, as I mentioned in my last comment, work very closely with Children's Services, who actually provides the lead role on behalf of a number of departments. These cross a number of issues like health from when they are children from one to 18 and certainly to becoming adults. So all of our departments are actively engaged on this issue to ensure that we consult with those other groups that you've mentioned, make sure that we find out what are the right services that should be provided at the right time to the right person in the right place, and we'll continue to do just that.

**Ms Pastoor:** Recently the Minister of Children's Services announced that \$4 million would be awarded for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder networks but has given no indication as to how or where the money will be allocated. To the Minister of Children's Services: given that the ministry recognizes that FASD is a lifelong disability, how much of this money will go towards supporting adults with FASD, and who decides the distribution of these dollars?

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

**Ms Tarchuk:** Thank you very much. I can tell you that in the next several weeks we'll have more information forthcoming. What I did announce, when I announced the additional \$4 million added on to the \$6 million that we currently spend on FASD, is that we will be establishing seven FASD service networks, and they will be responsible for providing access to very targeted prevention programs, diagnostic and assessment services, and also offering advocacy and support across the lifespan for those with FASD and for their caregivers.

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

### Budget Consultation

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta government's budget has been criticized for increasing spending too much, not lowering taxes enough, not providing enough funding for municipalities. Several of my constituents are concerned about the government's saving policy in light of the province's prosperity. To the Minister of Finance: what are you doing to ensure that Alberta's priorities and my constituents' concerns are considered as the government begins planning for the next budget?

2:20

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

**Dr. Oberg:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Included in my mandate letter, which I received on becoming Minister of Finance, was the mandate to do a prebudget consultation. Indeed, what I am very pleased to announce today is that we have launched a website, which is at [www.budgetconsultation.alberta.ca](http://www.budgetconsultation.alberta.ca), which will allow each and every Albertan the access, the ability to put in their thoughts about next year's budget. Despite the fact that we're not voting on the budget until tomorrow, work has already begun to ensure that next year's budget is going to be just as good and just as exciting as this year's.

**Mr. Johnson:** Well, I'm pleased to hear that the government is asking for input from Albertans for the next budget. Can you assure Albertans that their responses will be considered as you develop the government's next budget and not just to satisfy the demands of your mandate letter?

**Dr. Oberg:** Yes, absolutely, Mr. Speaker. That's one assurance I can definitely give. We're looking to hear what all Albertans have to say. Not only have we put it on the web, on the Internet, but we also have a toll-free line at 310-4455. Those people who do not have access to a computer can call up and receive the budget consultation document. Our intent is to use this information very much in doing the next budget.

**Mr. Johnson:** A final question. What plans, then, do you have for the results once the consultation is completed?

**Dr. Oberg:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given the compressed timelines that we have for this upcoming budget, with the budget now fixed at February 14, we're going to utilize this consultation, these results by around the end of August, the first part of September as we start to get into the finalization of our budget. They will first go to our cabinet policy committee, and that information will be made available to those committee members. It will then go on to Treasury Board and subsequently to caucus and will be put in the budget and the budget speech. This is going to be more consultation than any budget has ever had in the province of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that was 82 questions and responses.

### head: Presenting Petitions

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

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two petitions today. The first one has 123 signatures, and it reads:

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

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

The second one has 260 signatures, Mr. Speaker, and it reads:

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

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Martin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and myself to table a petition with 83 signatures on it. The petition notes the Conservatives' continued refusal to protect Alberta families from rent gouging

and urges the government to immediately introduce temporary rent guidelines. This brings the total signatures on this petition to 443.

Thank you.

head: **Notices of Motions**

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, to the best of my knowledge there are no Written Questions or Motions for Returns on the Order Paper; therefore, no notice should be required.

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to rise and table the package that was given out this morning at the Alberta mental health research partnership program launch, a very successful launch of a program of mental health research that will be provided. I was very pleased to see that and pleased to see this program go forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Martin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table copies of a letter from Bertha Clendenning. Bertha has been hit with a \$150 rent increase despite the state of disrepair her building is in. She's asking what the government will do about the situation.

I have a second tabling. On behalf of the leader of the NDP I table copies of a letter from Robert McLeod. Robert is a former journalist with CFRN. He is receiving a rent increase of 15 per cent. He's urging this government to introduce rent increase guidelines like most of Canada's other provinces.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of correspondence from a constituent, Nicole Braseth, who's noting that her rent will only go up by \$200 if she signs a one-year lease. If not, it's going to go up by \$400 a month. She would love to get a mortgage and buy a house of her own, but as a university graduate with a student loan she's required to carry as a result of this government's policy, that isn't a possibility. She notes that Saskatchewan is starting to look good.

Thank you very much.

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

**Dr. B. Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of a petition with 20 signatures urging the government

to take immediate, meaningful measures to help low-income and fixed-income Albertans, Albertans with disabilities and those who are hard-to-house maintain their places of residence and cope with the escalating and frequent increases in their monthly rental costs.

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

**Mr. Lougheed:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities I'm pleased to table five copies of the annual report, 2005-2006.

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

Minister of Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture responses to questions raised by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead, the hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie on May 30 and 31, 2007, in the Department of Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture 2007-08 main estimates debate.

On behalf of the Minister of Health and Wellness a response to Written Question 9, asked for by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona on May 7, 2007.

On behalf of the Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security pursuant to the Horse Racing Alberta Act the Horse Racing Alberta 2006 annual report.

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

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, we will call the committee to order.

#### **Bill 43** **Appropriation Act, 2007**

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

**Ms Haley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to briefly address the Appropriation Act, 2007. This is a really big budget: over \$30 billion under the expense and equipment/inventory purchases line. I like to do my own analysis of things, and with a great deal of help from my assistant Bartek – well, actually, he did the review of revenue and expense changes over the years that I've been in the Legislature. I thought it might be interesting to others to hear some of the changes.

In 1993 our revenue was \$15.4 billion. This year we've forecasted over \$35 billion. Over that period of time revenue has had some really wild fluctuations, but on average over that period of time it has grown by 6.27 per cent per year. Expenses, on the other hand, went from about \$16.7 billion in 1993 to about \$33.1 billion this year or, put another way, an average expenditure increase between 1993 and 2007 of 4.47 per cent. Inside that number is one number that stands out particularly dramatically, and that is health care. In 1993 spending on health care was approximately \$4 billion per year, and this year it's over \$12 billion, or a 300 per cent increase. Interestingly enough, I'm not sure that on a day-to-day basis the issues of health care that people worried about in 1993 are any different from the issues they worry about today: mostly wait time issues and hope that new drugs will get coverage under the provincial system.

2:30

In addition to health care concerns in 1993 people were also worried about keeping their homes. For those that don't remember, we had an unemployment rate of close to 12 per cent at that time. One of the biggest issues of the day was personal and corporate bankruptcies. We were \$28 billion in debt and had a deficit in 1992 of \$3.5 billion. We had very high provincial taxes, not just the initial tax rate, Mr. Chairman, but also at least two additional taxes stacked on top, commonly known as surtaxes on high-income earners. It is no wonder that people were leaving our province.

I experienced the boom in the late '70s and the early '80s, when the price of everything went up, and the federal Liberals at that time brought in wage and price controls on a Canada-wide basis. Inflation was running high, interest rates were high, taxes were high, and wages were literally frozen. We had rent controls which froze rents at a high level.

It took years for rent and interest rates to come down despite the increasing rise in unemployment and vacancy rates, that hit everyone hard. There were entire office buildings in both Edmonton and Calgary that were sitting empty, not to mention all the empty homes that were owned by the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation. It took years for those foreclosed and empty homes to be sold and at no small cost to the taxpayers for government intervention in the marketplace. By the time all of the addition was done, there was about \$3 billion in losses for Albertans. There was no new construction for almost a decade. That's how long it took for us to dig our way out of a marketplace intervention by both the federal and provincial governments.

One of today's biggest issues is rent increases, not to mention the rise in the cost of housing. I know that everyone would like us to be able to just fix this, but frequently the cure is worse than the illness. According to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, rental vacancy rates are the lowest in Alberta and British Columbia due to strong population growth in both provinces. The average rental vacancy rate in Canada's 35 major centres was 2.8 per cent in April. The lowest rates in April 2007 were in Calgary at .5 per cent, then Abbotsford at .6, Kelowna at .7, and Victoria at .8. All of the major centres in B.C. posted a vacancy rate lower than 1 per cent.

The highest average monthly rents for two-bedroom apartments in Canada's major centres were in Toronto at \$1,073. It was \$1,051 in Vancouver, \$1,037 in Calgary. One exception to the big-city rule was Fort McMurray, and it was the highest in the country at \$1,681. It's interesting to note that at the end of April, as opposed to the beginning of April, vacancies went up to 1.8 per cent, and that's no doubt due to the universities and colleges both ending their semesters in Edmonton and Calgary.

In British Columbia when house prices went up like they are going up here now, the pressure to not have houses with basement suites for rent was reversed. All of a sudden people needed to be able to rent out basement suites to help them make their mortgage payments. I believe that the same situation is actually occurring in Alberta and that residents of major centres in Alberta should be pressuring their municipal governments not to ban basement suites but to allow people to renovate and rent out units, a situation that I hope will change soon for the benefit of renters, with more suites available, but also for homeowners finding their mortgage payments a bit of a struggle with the upswing in housing prices.

Another interesting note is that of the 229,000 housing starts between May 2006 and May 2007 in Canada, 46,300 of them were here in Alberta, more than double what it would normally be for our population. One of the innovative things that the British Columbia government has done recently is to buy up some older hotel properties, and they're doing some minor renovations to them and using the hotel rooms to help people who have a problem finding a home or even a bed on a short-term basis. I wonder if there is merit, perhaps, in a Super 8 concept, that municipal, provincial, and federal governments working together on a short-term project idea could alleviate some of the stress that people are under with a short-term rental stay. I admire the people who built the Super 8 motels. They are prolific and seem to have one design, and they build it fast. I think it's an idea worth looking at.

Another interesting statistic is that Albertans have the highest percentage of home ownership in Canada. The average across the

country is about 67 per cent, but in Alberta it's over 75. We also have the highest weekly wages in the country at \$825 per week, about \$70 more than British Columbia, \$100 more per week than Quebec, and \$200 more than Prince Edward Island. Combine that with the lowest overall taxes in the country, and it makes a little more sense why so many people are moving here. I'm sure it is also why retail sales continue to go up here more than other places, with a year-over-year increase this past year of 11 per cent. While I know that people are feeling pressured right now with rising costs, I also know that most people are pretty happy to be here.

The Conference Board of Canada is forecasting an overall growth rate of 4.1 per cent for Alberta this year, compared to 2.7 for Canada. I hope that we'll all keep an eye on the dollar because if it hits par with the American dollar, I think that there will be major problems in our country, particularly in Ontario. The rising dollar is a wake-up call to everyone to improve their productivity, something many manufacturers in Canada didn't worry about when the dollar was trading at 70 cents. Truthfully, as Canadians we are not very competitive as to where our productivity should be. However, as Albertans we have much to be proud of as Alberta has, by any measure, the most productive workforce in the country.

I think our budget is a reflection of the growth in our province, and I believe that we have tried to address many of the issues created by such a vibrant economy. There is still and, I'm sure, always will be a little bit of fear inside of me of a repeat of the decline that we went through following the imposition of the national energy program. I saw what can happen, and I hope we guard against anything like that happening again.

I think we need to be careful not to get too far ahead of ourselves on program spending. I believe it is time for a thorough review of program line spending to ensure that money is being allocated to the highest priorities. I for one do not believe that the taxpayers of the province can afford to do everything for everyone all of the time. We need to constantly be reviewing programs. When a new idea comes along, I firmly believe that an old one must drop off if we are to keep things in balance.

I do support economic diversification. I think that value-added for agriculture, forestry, and oil and gas is essential. I also support commercialization of technology here in the province. I think, further, that we need to look at using our tax policy to ensure that some of those things get done. A tax credit, possibly, for a family looking after an aging relative, or a tax credit concept for renovating a basement to accommodate a renter, flow-through shares for mining technology, commercialization of technology: these are things that a provincial government can look at, and I really hope that we take the time to do so.

My last comments, Mr. Chairman, would be about the performance measures that we are using. While some of them are very good, I think we missed the point on some to do with health care or education, just as an example. I think Albertans should be able to understand, if we are spending an additional billion dollars on health care, what they are actually getting for it. Will more hips and knees be done, or will we be only paying everyone more? I think it's very sad that statistics about health care are so far out of date, particularly in light of all of the money being spent on computer systems for the electronic health records. How will we ever get to some kind of outcome management of the system if we don't know what we are doing on an annual and rapid basis?

For education I think the dropout rate is something that is important to Albertans. We all seem to know that thousands of young people could not access the University of Calgary last year, but I would hazard a guess that few, if any, know how many kids have dropped out of school at the high school level. I believe that

outcome measurements do matter. While we may well indeed have one of the best performance measurement systems in North America, as is evidenced by the Auditor General's comments, I honestly think that it speaks more about the lack of performance measures other provinces or states have rather than how good ours are. But that's just me, Mr. Chairman. I think that when you spend \$30 billion, you really should have a better idea of what you've accomplished with it.

Like I said, it's a really big budget, with no end in sight to the pressures that continue to build. But if I had to choose, Mr. Chairman, about going back to 1993 and deal with all the problems that we had then versus what we're dealing with now, I would pick today every day and twice on Sunday.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to put a few comments on the record in regard to Bill 43, the Appropriation Act, which is our budget and outlines a fairly large expenditure. I was very interested to hear the historical vignette that the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere put on the record. Indeed, the first year I was here, in 1997, I think the budget was \$17 billion, and now we're looking at considerably more than that. So it's been an interesting time.

2:40

Since I mostly concentrated my earlier remarks on the area of Health and Wellness, for which I am the shadow minister, I'd like to take this opportunity to talk about some of the issues in the budget that were there or weren't there that are affecting more directly my constituents in Edmonton-Centre or are flowing from correspondence that I've had from people asking me to raise certain issues or wondering why something can't happen.

Having said that, the very first issue I have to raise is around medical error. I've spoken a couple of times to an individual out of Calgary who raises a really good point in that we're not really learning from our medical mistakes, our medical errors, because they are surrounded so much by the shadow of liability, probably stemming from the litigiousness of our neighbours to the south and what's happened with their health industry and the amount of lawsuits that they have to deal with there and, therefore, sometimes the extreme measures that they go to to try and insulate themselves from that.

But here, I mean, we can cast our minds back. There was, I think, a ruling just the other day on an individual that died from acute appendicitis in a Calgary hospital. That mirrors the Motta case from several years ago. We've had a couple of other terrible tragedies in the medical field that I think everyone truly feels really awful about and would like to see not happen, but we're not really operating with a process right now that allows for a really good, in-depth study without laying any blame. The example that's been raised with me a couple of times now is the air travel industry. They adopted, I guess when they first started out, a no-fault system with air disasters so that it wasn't about laying blame or finding fault; it was about getting to the bottom of what had gone wrong so that they could make the industry safer. I think that that is an area that we need to look to if we could. I certainly think that's still possible.

I mean, certainly, we get pushed into making choices because of our proximity to the United States, but in this case I would prefer to see us take a different route and to be able to study those medical errors or medical mistakes or adverse effects, whatever terminology

you want to use, to try and figure out what went wrong and how we can prevent it and make the system better rather than worrying so much about somebody being able to sue somebody else because the basis of that is really a punishment effort in order to have people not do it again. The other way of doing it is to say: let's figure out what went wrong here to make sure that we can correct ourselves and never do it again. So two different ways of doing it, you know, trying to achieve the same end result. I would argue that the punishment route is not really getting us the answers.

The second issue that I would like to talk about. I had raised in the debate for Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture the funding of the Winspear Centre and the inequities that are created there by the government's support for the two Jubilee auditoria, placing the Winspear in a position of, essentially, unfair competition because they receive no funding whatsoever for the centre. Now, immediately people will say: "Oh, that's not right, you know. The Edmonton Symphony gets money." That's true, but the Edmonton Symphony is not the Winspear Centre. They're two completely separate organizations. Although one of them certainly uses and has office space in the other, they are separate organizations. I think the government – I hope inadvertently – has created an unlevel playing field here, that I've raised a couple of times in trying to get it addressed.

I'm aware now that there's an additional complication in that situation in that I think the Winspear had been working on an arrangement to apply for a CIP grant and then was recently contacted and redirected that that grant had been suspended or that process had been suspended and would they please now apply under this new facilities program that the government has come up with in this budget. Well, the fact of the matter is that that's going to result in about a \$217,000 difference for the Winspear Centre, and I would like to see that difference made up.

So there is an issue here that needs to be addressed in that that level playing field needs to be achieved. I can't say restored because I don't know that it was ever there, but it needs to be achieved. There needs to be some sort of funding agreement in place that will address the Winspear because I can't see the government taking away the support for the auditoria. That's the other way to try and achieve that. But if you've got other brilliant ideas, I'm glad to hear them. Essentially, you know, we have to have a level playing field here, and we cannot disadvantage one of our not-for-profits and, frankly, our best musical space in the province because the government can't figure this out. There are enough brains there. I'm sure they can do it.

The second situation is the one that's been created by asking the Winspear's application to be moved from the CIP to this new facility program and the resulting loss in eligibility. I would propose to the minister that that difference be made up from the other initiatives fund that is at the discretion of, I suppose, the Treasury Board at this point in time. It used to be the minister of gaming. Of course, there's no limit on the amount of money that can come out of that fund. There's no application process. There are no criteria for it. It's entirely at the discretion of the minister, and I would argue that the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture should be pursuing that money to make up the difference for the Winspear Centre.

The next thing I'd like to talk about is around privacy. Increasingly I'm clipping articles out of the paper where protection of people's personal information has gone awry. Ironically, the fail point in all of this is human deliberation, not human error but human deliberation, in that someone decides that they are going to misbehave or use the system in a way that they've been told they shouldn't be using the system for, and at that point no amount of safeguards

that are in place is going to make this better. A part of that, of course, is the amount of information that the government is now holding on us and collecting on us. I argue that I think the best set-up for this that I've seen is in the Health Information Act, in which it argues that, you know, the least amount of information should be taken in all cases and that it should be the least invasive information. Absolutely true, but we don't follow that very much.

I was contacted by an individual out of Calgary raising concerns around the Calgary health region, that they have recently contracted out a portion of their human resource department to an offshoot of Telus, the Telus solutions outsourcing or something akin to that name. Essentially, this is, you know, well, obviously, human resources looking after recruiting individuals but then also setting them up with various benefit programs. So that's a lot of very personal information that's being held there. It's financial information. It's personal information, next of kin, medical information. Just about anything you could want to know about anybody is held by that department. So it is causing this individual some concern that we now have a corporation that's been contracted with all of this information.

It seems to be a new field that Telus has expanded into, and perhaps they offered the Calgary health region some sort of a deal or something to get the contract. I'm sure it was a surprise to many individuals to find out that their personal employment and health information was now held by a private company, and they had not consented to it, nor were they particularly informed about it. Perhaps that's an area that should be looked at by the Privacy Commissioner.

2:50

I think it is an issue. It's an issue for every single government department. I don't want to see this costing us money, and by that I mean lawsuits. But I think it will cost us money in other areas if either people start to catch on and start to refuse to give us personal information to work with or if it starts to cost us money in other ways. If the systems start to fail us, then that will be equally grievous.

The next issue was brought to my attention by an advocate who had sent me a copy of a letter that was directed to the Solicitor General in January in which she noted that the Traffic Safety (Seizure of Vehicles in Prostitution Related Offences) Amendment Act was to be coming into effect. Her point was that she believes that the money that's received through the fine program there would be better put into action going directly to the sex trade workers to help them with recovery and healing rather than – I think it just goes into the province's general revenue. This individual has continued to work on this – this is Sharron Nelson – and I think has been in correspondence with the Solicitor General about this issue.

It's an interesting point because I also met several months ago with Kate Quinn's group out of Edmonton. I'm not going to remember what the initials stand for. It's the Prostitution Awareness and Action Foundation of Edmonton, I think it is, PAAFE, an excellent group. Now, they get their funding from the John School, but they're also very limited in the money that they're getting and were meeting with me to look for other possible sources of funding.

It is a frustration when we've got a community-based group that's doing an excellent job, that is of great value to the government, and they're out there struggling for funding. That's not to say that the government should fund every single, you know, group that's out there. I'm not saying that, and don't try and put those words in my mouth. But I think this is a group that has proven their worth and has done particularly fine work around the issue of street prostitution. Certainly, these women have immense respect from the police.

They have immense respect from the sex trade workers. I think they've approached with great creativity the whole issue of Johns and how by using education as a tool they can help reduce the effect on our communities.

So I would ask the government and particularly the Solicitor General, since I've got him sitting here, to look at some innovative ways of assisting in the core funding of this organization. The only funding they really get at this point is through running the John School and from the fees there. I'd like to see a better, more reliable source of funding for them because certainly for the work that they're doing, they should have a larger budget to do it.

Okay. The next issue. Rent. There's been a lot said in this spring sitting of 2007 about the rent issue. We've raised dozens of different issues around it from the opposition side, you know, around all different kinds of people: seniors who are having to come out of retirement or postpone retirement because they can't afford their rent, people on fixed incomes like a pension or a social benefit that are really restricted in the kind of housing. The end result of all of this, Mr. Chairman, is that they're ending up in cheaper and cheaper accommodation in more difficult circumstances where their safety is at risk in some of the accommodations they've had to take, and that just causes a whole other set of problems, which usually ends up in the health care system.

So once again I ask the government to look at temporary rent controls. I know that this is against your philosophy, but honestly what your philosophy is getting us today is not working. Having people who are homeless or will be homeless phoning up and being told that they can put their name on a list to maybe come up with accommodation two years from now is just not addressing the problem. I think that when we're at a situation where making \$11 an hour can make you homeless because it's not enough money, this is a serious problem. I think we need temporary rent caps in place in order to get us through this anomaly, this failure of the marketplace, this catastrophe or unusual circumstance, crisis, whatever you want to call it. But just digging your feet in and saying: "No. We'll have landlords raise their rents once a year. We'll do a website to punish gouging landlords" – well, that certainly hasn't worked – is simply not working, and we're failing people that we shouldn't be failing.

I'd like to bring up one last issue about two government policies that are in existence that are pitting groups against each other. That's around the policy for new school buildings coming through the Department of Education, you know, given a utility rate or use rate – I can't remember what it's called. Really, it's encouraging the closure of inner-city schools in order to open schools in the suburbs. This pits against the municipalities' planning where in the metropolitan areas they're trying to rejuvenate and densify through in-fill housing the downtown areas. So you've now pitted these two policies absolutely against one another.

We're closing the schools. We're creating literally black holes in the centre of our downtown and inner-city communities in order to try and get schools in the suburbs. There should be schools in the suburbs. There should also be schools and use of those school buildings in the downtown areas. So I need the government to look at a policy that they've set in place on either side of this that is not working, very much not working for our students, and it's not working for our city planners and people that live in the cores of our cities and want to have a vibrant place to live.

Finally, just a word on arts education funding. I'd really like to see a reinvestment in arts education in our schools. I've just had to write support letters for a couple of my schools who are applying for grant programs all over the place, trying to buy band equipment, musical instruments for their students. This should not be happen-

ing, Mr. Chairman. This funding should be available through the school program. My constituents cannot understand how this government can be posting multibillion dollar surpluses, and we don't have enough money to buy musical instruments for students. We don't have enough money to buy schools.

You know, people walk out their door and look at the cracks in their sidewalks and the potholes in their streets. They look at their paycheque stub and how much money they're making and wonder why they're homeless or they're going to be homeless on that kind of a wage. They do not see where the financial management of this government makes sense, where the government just seems to be hoarding money, but the people are not reaping the benefit of it. Yeah, some people are, and there's great opportunity out there, and I think that's wonderful. A rising tide should lift all boats, not just the yachts. I keep seeing this government put policies in place where the tide only raises the yachts, and that's not right. It's not right at all. So we need a better government financial policy – we'd just end up with a better society for everybody – because what we've got sure isn't working.

Those are some of the issues that I wanted to raise while we were in Committee of the Whole on Bill 43, the Appropriation Act, which is essentially the budget for 2007. I look forward to additional opportunities to be speaking on this. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Martin:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to make some general comments about the appropriation bill, Bill 43, at committee stage. There's absolutely no doubt that this budget is a lot of money. When I look at it, \$33.1 billion is a lot of money. Now, the questions that one asks: is it appropriate; is it the right amount; should it be less; should it be more? But the problem is that this government has created a monster. There's no other way to explain it. We have such an overheated economy. The only way the government seems to be able to react – because clearly stated by the Premier is that they will not put the brakes on, that we are going to move ahead with the tar sands as quickly as we can, get it out as quickly as we can. That's the economic strategy of this government. Now, when you have an economic strategy like this, Mr. Chairman, then the reality is that it's not that cheap to be able to do that. We create the overheated economy. As I said before in this Legislature, it's economy on steroids.

3:00

Now, this budget. It seems to me that the government finally realizes that we have this particular problem. So what do we do? Well, gee, there's a problem here. There's a problem there. There's a problem here. Let's just grab some gobs of money and throw it at these problems and hope that maybe that's enough. Maybe it'll make the people stop complaining at least.

Again, finally admitted – and I still don't see any difference – the previous Premier said we had no plan. We were having that debate right here in the Legislature when he said it. That's the reality of what we're facing with this budget, and that's why it's hard to get a handle on it. It's catch-up, you know, with the economic strategy of booming ahead.

So what do we do? Well, let's look at some of the various problems. The Member for Edmonton-Centre was talking about housing. This is, perhaps – well, there are so many others that I won't say it's the most drastic example of lack of planning but certainly one of the major problems. Yes, the government has

reacted. As they say time and time again, there's \$285 million for housing. I was on that committee, Mr. Chairman, and it was a very good committee. When we looked at the figures of what it would take right now, if we actually wanted to do a major job as quickly as we could to bring on more housing, to look at supply, it was over about \$450 million that you would probably need.

Now, we recognized that the government probably wasn't going to do that, but we thought they should know the severity of the problem. This problem, as I've said many times, is going to get worse before it gets better. The other thing about it, Mr. Chairman, is that even if we start to use this money, the \$285 million, which I hope we do – we all want to move ahead, working with the municipalities as quickly as we can; I think we all want that – it will take time.

That's why the task force at the time said: "Okay. We know that the government can't buy rent guidelines because of their philosophy." You don't need it. To be fair and honest, you don't need it at most times. It's only during the boom economy. So we said two years in that report, Mr. Chairman. Two years would at least give time on the supply side to build some of the infrastructure that's needed, bring on basement suites, whatever else we could do to bring more housing on the market. That would give us breathing space. I think two years is probably overly optimistic, but at least it would be a start.

What was good about that is that for the time being that wouldn't cost the taxpayers any money. We could deal with the problem in the short run without having to spend millions of dollars, to allow us time to catch up. Well, Mr. Chairman, the government, because of their ideology or the influence of landlords in terms of this government, refused that.

Now we hear the horror stories. It's not just the most vulnerable, although it's an important issue for people on fixed income, seniors, the disabled, all the other people that are, as they say, one cheque away from becoming homeless, but now we're impacting thousands and thousands and thousands of people. I said this in the Legislature. One of the other things in the task force that we recommended was to at least look, as they did in the previous boom, at helping people to buy their first house. They rejected that too. We reject rent guidelines. We reject putting money in to help people buy their first home. So the reality is now that it's not just the most vulnerable, but we have, as I say, thousands of people out there, Mr. Chairman, that are struggling.

There's no hope of buying a new home with the rising house prices. We saw in Edmonton over 40 per cent increase, Calgary 27 per cent increase. Calgary was already higher, the highest in Canada, so you're not going to be able to buy a house if you have an ordinary wage. No hope there. At the same time no protection with rising rents, Mr. Chairman. So there we are. The \$285 million, hopefully, will do some good down the way, but that's down the way.

We look at the other areas. Health care, Mr. Chairman. Code burgundies in Calgary almost all the time. I don't know what they call it now in Edmonton, but it's the same thing. Emergency rooms are flooded over. They can't keep up. They say that they can't keep up. We need more hospitals. Finally, we're building one in south Calgary that's needed, but it has cost a lot more than it was meant to at the time because of the overheated economy.

Long-term care. We need some help there with some of the problems. It doesn't matter what the minister of health says; they're still out there in terms of long-term care.

We look at education, and no matter how the Minister of Education sums it up, if you're not keeping up to inflation, there are going to be some serious situations in the classrooms.

You know, Mr. Chairman, this could be – I don't know where it sits in terms of the negotiations. The minister of health is here. I know that there are big negotiations right now with the nurses, but I see the potential – and I hope that this doesn't come about – of almost a public service situation that could become extremely serious. The teachers, 90 per cent of those contracts aren't there. The nurses are demanding more money, and rightfully so. These groups are finding the rising cost of living difficult to deal with. We could be into a major public service dilemma with both nurses and teachers in the fall. I hope that that's not the case, but when I look at the funding and the money, I don't know how else we're going to get around it as these groups try to fight for cost of living at least. This is big worry. It should be a big worry to this government.

We look at the infrastructure, Mr. Chairman. Well, the minister admitted that we can only do about a third of the roads that need it, that we have probably over \$12 billion in infrastructure deficit. What are we going to do about that? The answer seems to be the quick-fix P3s. The Minister of Education – I think this is going to go into schools – is now talking about some major announcement. I think we're all speculating that there will be a raft of P3 schools, and we all know the problems there.

They're looking for quick fixes because of the problems that they have created, Mr. Chairman. That's the point. When you have a boom economy encouraged by the economic strategy that you are in, there are the other problems that you have to deal with. You cannot do it on the cheap, and that's what this government has tried to do in the past. Now, as I say, they're trying to catch up right now. Trying to catch up, so we throw a little bit of money here, there, and everywhere.

Premier Klein said there was no plan. I would suggest that there isn't particularly a plan that I can see at this particular time, certainly, not from this budget, other than spending more money on it. The other part of the plan is: don't put on the brakes; let things go as the are. So I expect that next year will be even as difficult.

**3:10**

There are some worrisome trends on the horizon. We don't know how it will play out, Mr. Chairman. One is the rising dollar. I think the Minister of Finance said that if it stayed the way it was it would cost the Alberta Treasury \$948 million. If it went to parity – and many analysts are predicting that it could go to parity with the American dollar – that would be \$1.7 billion. Well, that's a huge dent out of our treasury right at this particular time with all of the needs that we have, all of the needs that I've just talked about.

The other thing is on the royalty review, Mr. Chairman, and I think we're already being set up, saying: well, all these problems are there, and therefore the poor industry can't afford much more. I think the fix is already in on that, so we're not going to get anymore money there. We're told now that natural gas royalties, which have been a big contributor to the Alberta Treasury, have peaked and are going down. So the only alternative, if we want to keep this sort of economic strategy, is in the tar sands; therefore, we will be ploughing into the tar sands even faster and faster and faster to make up for the rising dollar and the other things that are occurring.

What do we do in the budget next year, then? Is it going to be another sort of splattering? Is it \$36 billion? Or is it that the fiscal hawks cut back, and then we have more serious problems with the infrastructure, health care, education, you name it, Mr. Chairman? The future, as I see it, looks relatively difficult.

Now, some people are doing very well. No doubt about that. The Alberta advantage for the haves is pretty good. If you're a CEO in Calgary, you like what's happening. If you have some technical skills and you're making big wages, well you're relatively happy.

But the point that I make is that the overheated economy is becoming a huge, huge disadvantage for more and more people, Mr. Chairman. If we're going to talk about the Alberta advantage and what a great economy we have, as this government talks about all the time, surely, surely then everybody, all Albertans, should be participating in the Alberta advantage. It shouldn't just be, as I say, for those that already have. That's a reality of what's happening now, Mr. Chairman.

I don't know where we go from here. I know the appropriation bill will pass. I know that the government, then, will all stand around. They'll pat themselves on the back, what a wonderful job they're doing, just as if they had discovered the tar sands and put it there themselves.

**An Hon. Member:** Mike did.

**Mr. Martin:** Mike did. Oh. I thought it was the hon. government over there. I don't know – they've been there, I guess, 35 years or so, so they would have enough time to put all that oil and gas in the ground. Right? Yeah. I think so.

But that's what they will do is say that this is a great economic strategy. We invented it. Aren't we smart? But the reality is that the problems are becoming huge.

Mr. Chairman, I know I'm just about out of time. I'm sure that that disappoints the members on the government side, but I just say that I don't know where we're going with this. We know what this budget is this year. I'll be very interested to see where they're going with the next budget, and see where the clouds start to hover over us even more and more. This fall could even be interesting, as I say.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. There are a number of things that I think are left over from, certainly, our budget discussions. One of them would be the west side school. We have the money for phase 1, but the earth hasn't even been turned yet, and it's absolutely obsolete before we've even turned the earth. We're going to have 400 to 800 students over when this building is finally built. We need the ability to at least get the dollars into the system in Lethbridge to be able to come up with the drawings for phase 2 so that we can see how that's actually going to fit into the community. This is a partnership between public 51, the Holy Spirit Catholic school district, and our public library. The object of the whole thing is that we will have a community, both residential and commercial, being built around this particular complex. We really need to know where phase 2 is going to fit in, and to be able to do that, we need the money for the architects and the discussions that have to go around those sorts of plannings.

Town squares or city squares are sort of where communities are trying to build themselves so that people can actually walk more, ride their bikes more, and have things more available to their homes and be in close proximity. Certainly, the ideal would be – unfortunately, it's not happening – that kids could actually walk to school. I'm sure there are many of us sitting in this House that realize that we have good health because we had to walk to school four times a day. They didn't have lunch programs, and you went home for lunch. So the ideal is that kids actually would be able to walk to school. Of course, the overlay on top of that is that they would be able to walk safely to school.

We don't even know in Lethbridge-West what our increased school attendance would be like because the community itself, the residential part, not just around this new complex but around the

whole of Lethbridge-West, is growing, and there will be more demand for these spaces. But the other side of the city, Lethbridge-East, both south and north, is also growing, and there will be these demands. I think one of the things that upsets me is when we see community schools, schools that actually are the core of their community, being closed down and creating megaschools.

I watched a community start to renew itself. People lived in their homes as long as they could. They died. The homes were then sold to younger families just starting out. I also watched that community lose its school, and abruptly the families that were moving into those neighbourhoods didn't go because they wanted to be closer to the schools. We end up with a marginalized society that lives in these areas. It's too bad because eventually, over time, I'm not sure what's going to happen to our communities. I think it's been mentioned that we are creating black holes, and I totally agree with that. We need kids walking on the streets to be able to create a good community.

The point is that we really need a plan, a big plan picture. We need a vision for how our west Lethbridge school will develop, and to do those visionings, unfortunately, you do need dollars. You need the people that can bring in the information. But more so, we have to at least have the footprint, and to be able to do that, you need good architectural planning.

The human services in this province also, I believe, have been neglected. What is human services? Well, I suppose it would depend on who was doing the definition. Really, it could be anybody that I would consider to be front-line workers. They could be teachers, social workers, PDD workers, social justice workers, NGO workers, people that work in food banks, people that work in soup kitchens, people that help immigrants with English as a Second Language or just learning how to actually go into a supermarket and shop. These are all valuable, valuable services that we should be providing as a society to create a better society for all. I don't see it happening.

It isn't just the money that I'm talking about. I think it's an attitude that I don't see that these services are imperative for a civil society. It's about a system that must allow time for human interaction, and that often takes time. Unfortunately, the way we think in this province, time is always money. We have to learn how to put a dollar figure on human interaction so that it can be in a budget and so that it fits into a business plan.

3:20

There is benefit in allowing people, particularly young people and particularly old, to be able to develop at a different speed than what the younger generation can handle. What the 25- to 45-, 50-year-olds are handling in their everyday fast lives isn't necessarily good for seniors as they slow down in many ways. Many of them certainly don't slow down mentally, but often there'll be slowdowns in terms of the physical ability to be able to move as quickly. Certainly, we are living longer. We're certainly living healthier, but there are many who aren't blessed to have the benefits that they get by being healthy.

It's a very complex issue, and it's not just something that we can throw money at. I think we really have to do some serious reviewing on how we're spending the dollars that we have. A lot of dollars are going towards preventive health, and I do support that concept. However, I think that we can't negate the fact that people do get sick and people do need care and it isn't necessarily their fault.

I read something in the newspaper the other day that I thought was quite frightening, that surgeons had said that they wouldn't operate on people who are smokers. That smacks just a little bit too much of Big Brother and taking away personal choices and how to live a

personal life. I think the education out there is teaching people that they certainly shouldn't smoke. However, there are seniors that have smoked all their lives.

I can use an example of a woman that I know who, granted, had multiple, multiple health problems and wanted to move into a senior citizens' home that had the ability to give her the extra care that she required. But they wouldn't accept her because she smoked, so she did try to quit smoking. I believe she tried to use patches. She had smoked for over 55 years and within two days of the stress on her body actually had a heart attack and died. Can I tie that into her trying to quit smoking? Probably I can't. However, I think the questions are there. So I think we have to have some compassion in terms of what we consider to be preventative measures and what aren't often people's fault. Things happen, and I believe that as a society we should be able to provide, certainly, for those that are vulnerable.

The municipal dollars. Certainly, over this last many years the provincial government has downloaded responsibilities onto the municipalities, many of which are the social responsibilities, without the dollars to compensate. Municipalities have been doing, actually, yeoman's budgeting in terms of handling this. But the better the municipalities do, the more creative they are and the less that they have to do without in terms of the social benefits. It does make it look like they can do the job when, in fact, they're doing a job, but they're not doing the job. They need the dollars that have been taken away, and they have to be increased. More often than not some of the social issues are right on the streets and have to be handled immediately: the normal maintenance of public buildings, public roads, public sewers, public water treatment plants, wastewater treatment plants are put aside.

We have to be able to have a balance. We've lost the balance in this province. Again, as I say, is it money? Yes, money in this particular instance, by having the dollars taken away with increased responsibilities, then, yes, dollars are the answer. I think that many of these processes of how these dollars are passed through from the federal to the provincial and the provincial to the municipal and then the municipal or the health regions, how they pass those dollars along, I believe there's a huge amount of space for review in there.

The school boards. Some school boards have managed to create a surplus, and I believe that they're being penalized because they've created that surplus when I hear comments like: well, they've got a surplus; what's their problem? Where would be the incentive to be able to look forward, to be able to put money aside for buildings that they need in the future? To me that's visioning, yet I believe that they're being penalized to be able to think in that fashion.

Also, school boards have horrendous needs not only in terms of dollars but in terms of trained teachers and trained assistants. We have an increased number of special-needs children. We certainly have an increased number of children with behavioural problems. I think I spoke earlier about FASD and certainly just FAS, children with fetal alcohol syndrome. There are huge behavioural problems, and they require a tremendous amount of support systems.

My belief is that particularly the ones that often come with criminal records or experiences with the criminal justice system, that these just aren't Education dollars. I think Justice dollars should be put in there, I think social services dollars should be put in there, and I think Children's Services should be put in there, not just Education dollars. It isn't just education when you have to work with children with huge high-risk behaviours, not only risk to themselves but risk to the rest of the school population that is trying to learn.

Some of our private schools are doing very well, but they often do not have any of those behavioural problems. So it's not fair that education dollars in some of our more private schools or even home-

schooling can go directly to the actual education of the student when, in fact, in our public systems they're struggling with all of these students that perhaps wouldn't be accepted into any of those other schools. I'd like to reiterate that I believe that the other three ministries have to be involved with the education system in terms of dollars that can look after these children that are very, very high social and behavioural needs.

One of the other things that's been drawn to my attention is the fact that the curriculum at the high school level is going to be changed: science, math, and social, I believe. The question that has been asked to me is: where's the money for the textbooks? I find it incredible that I speak to teachers who have said that they've never had a full set of textbooks for a classroom, and they've been teaching for 10 years. Now the curriculum is changing, and where are the textbooks?

I've asked the question, and I've had: they're online. I don't believe that online is a suitable answer. It certainly might be online with teachers who have small classrooms and can help these students. Online may well be for the students that can afford computers, but believe it or not, there are many, many – and this includes high school students – that do not have computers in their homes. Or if they do have computers, they're certainly an older model, and they are definitely behind. So now they're fighting being behind in the instrument, in the technology that would get them the textbook. Why aren't these textbooks available for teachers to use and be able to give out? I'm not sure how these kids do their homework when they don't have the proper computers to work with.

3:30

One of the things that my colleague brought up that to me is a very troubling phenomenon that appears to be going on is the terms of having, actually, your medical records available to insurance companies. If you're trying to get insurance to go across the border to, say, the United States, the insurance companies can have access to your medical records to see what kinds of medications you take, et cetera, to then evaluate what kind of premium or what kind of coverage you're going to have. I think that's certainly a debatable issue in terms of: if you are not prepared to share that information, should the insurance company then be able to say that they won't insure you? I think it's a discussion that has to go on. I certainly know that I'm not very happy with having my personal information anywhere in a system that we all know these young kids in high school can often access just because they're good hackers.

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

I have a constituent with a concern, whose mother died of dehydration, and he wants to get the charts because he wants to see exactly how a doctor's order was not followed or that the doctor didn't give the proper orders in the first place. The health region evidently can give permission for the doctor to release it, but if the doctor refuses, apparently his only access to these – and he has been told this – is if he goes to court. Needless to say, with a woman who was older and died of dehydration, often the children are older as well and on fixed incomes, as this particular constituent is. He's appalled that the answer is to go to court instead of actually being able to access these charts. His contention is that the death certificate was actually signed by the brother of the doctor that should have signed it and that he had never actually seen his mother. I believe that he certainly has a legitimate concern and a right to these charts, and I think there has to be a better system than having to go to court.

Some of the cultural activities or nonactivities in this province are really phenomenal. We have a province with incredible talent. We

have an amazing school in Lethbridge, St. Patrick elementary school. It's a fine arts school. There's some very fine talent that is being nurtured in all avenues of the arts, print art and certainly within the drama portion of the culture.

But what I see and have actually spoken to before is that the AMPIA awards were given out, and there were huge numbers of nominations. There were 50 categories and five people in each category. This is local talent and these are local dollars, yet we can't seem to be able to get these out to the people in Alberta to even realize exactly the talent that we have. It's an attitudinal shift that I think I would like to see, where we actually appreciate and learn in our economic culture. We have to learn to be able to say to our economic culture, "Look at the dollars that culture does bring in" because for some reason this province has a problem understanding the value of culture to a civil society. If that's the case, then let's try to put a dollar figure on it, and then maybe people would pay more attention. But I would like to see the movies, including the commercials because commercials was an area that was up for an award, distributed to the libraries in our province: the public libraries, the school libraries, the university libraries.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, the background conversations are increasing in volume and making it difficult to hear the speaker. Perhaps we could keep those down.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Mr. Agnihotri:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my great pleasure to rise and speak on the Appropriation Act, 2007. As we all know, the population increased by approximately 110,000 in the year 2006, and we all know that we have shortages of labour not only in Alberta but all over in Canada. I've talked to a few small businesspeople. It started hurting them. They are still saying that even though we have the provincial nominee program and we have temporary foreign workers, some small businesspeople can't bring some workers from overseas because of some complexities in the system. I hope this provincial nominee program works for them. The main objective for this agreement that the Alberta government made with the federal government recently is to speed up the process in the application for bringing in some more workers from overseas. But they are still complaining.

Sometimes, Mr. Chairman, the workers come to Alberta, and even though they are highly skilled or maybe semiskilled, when they come here as temporary foreign workers, they work with the employer. You know, suppose the employer runs a business like Dairy Queen or any other franchise and that skilled or semiskilled person that I'm talking about works in that restaurant or any small company because they don't come under the provincial nominee program. Sometimes after their visa expires, they have to go back to their country and apply again to come to this country.

I introduced and I'm really thankful to all the members that supported my motion on the expansion of the provincial nominee program, which was badly needed. I'm not sure when they will start, you know, implementing those suggestions in that motion. I would like to know because this is a big issue for small businesspeople nowadays. I want to know from the minister of immigration if she could speed it up a little bit more so that it helps the small businesspeople in Alberta because prosperity of the small businesses in Alberta is prosperity for all of us. We shouldn't be dependent on just oil and gas. We should look after the businesspeople, especially the small businesspeople in Alberta.

My second issue, Mr. Chairman, which is a very big issue, we all know, is affordable homes. People are complaining that they

phoned the departments, and the programs are still not helping them. There are some restrictions. If somebody has \$7,000 or \$8,000 in savings, which is nothing nowadays, they don't qualify for the program which is in place right now. It's very hard for especially the vulnerable people and the people on fixed incomes and seniors. For the time being – I don't know. Some people already have moved. They've started living with their friends or their families, but this is not the right thing. We should immediately help those people.

**3:40**

Another issue in my constituency, Mr. Chairman, is subsidized homes. I know that we all talk about affordable homes. I lived in England for 15, 16 years, and there were lots of subsidized homes owned by the city and the federal government. Lots of people, you know, whenever there's a shortages of labour, move into a subsidized home right away. I know they have a waiting list, but not a waiting list like what we have in Alberta.

One of my constituents came to my office about six months ago. She was nearly crying because even after waiting two and a half years, when her turn came and she was asked to look at the property that the department offered them, it was in such a mess. I mean, that house was not worth living in, but still she said: "Okay. I will move in." She would request some of her friends to renovate that property, and then she would move in. But one of the caretakers – I mean, maybe he didn't like her, but somehow he was the person who said: "No. She can't move in here." Then when he reported to the regional housing, they listened to him, and then they said that that was the only house available at that time. I'm talking about after two and a half years' waiting time.

You know, they put her again on the waiting list, and she is still waiting for a subsidized home. Her income is less than a thousand dollars, and her children don't allow her to live with them. I want to ask all the members and the minister: what should I tell her? How can I, you know, help her? Whenever she comes to my office, she is in tears.

I know that the minister of housing is trying his best. We had a task force and some different committees. Some people are complaining, Mr. Chairman, that out of 50 recommendations the government only implemented eight of them. People started saying that if the government doesn't implement the majority of the recommendations of the task force and the committees, what's the use of those task forces?

My office and the constituency office of the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods had a town hall meeting. So did some other members in the Official Opposition. We listened to the views. I know that we can't help them directly, but we can voice their concerns in this House. That's exactly what the job is of all the members sitting. You know, some of them came here, they met the minister, and they are still waiting for solutions.

So I request the members and the ministers to reconsider those unfortunate people who cannot afford, you know, high rent. I know that it will take lots of time to catch up with the supply. You know, building the over 11,000 houses that the ministry is talking about will take more than two years. I'm a real estate agent. I know that most of the builders are helpless. They can't find tradespeople nowadays because there is so much construction going on. For the time being, as I said, there are so many restrictions on the program, and they should make it a little bit easier for those people who are vulnerable so that they don't suffer this pressure of the boom in Alberta. We live in a have province, Mr. Chairman. If we can't do it, who else can do that?

The other issue I want to move on to is the Ministry of Solicitor General and Public Security. Mr. Chairman, I've heard the stories

in Edmonton. We have around 1,400 police officers. They are working really hard, and we all should be proud of that. I heard that they have received over 1,300 complaints. The total number of police officers is 1,400, and if the complaints are about the same number, this is not a good sign. So I think the main reason for the people who are complaining is because we have shortages of police officers. I think they can't cope with the work. Especially, we don't have many specialized police officers, for example like a special constable for gang-related crime or domestic violence or, I should say, a drug squad. You know, if they are fully trained and we have more numbers, I think we will be able to reduce the crime sooner. But it's not happening.

I want to ask a question of the minister concerned: what answers should I give to one of my constituents? Most of you might have read it in the newspaper. Sangeeta Khanna disappeared more than a year ago, and we still don't have any news about her. Whenever I try to reach the department, you know, they say that they are still working. This is not acceptable for the families and friends of my constituent.

**3:50**

This is a serious, very critical situation happening to lots of people, not only on the south side but all over in Edmonton, maybe all over Alberta. This crime issue is spreading all over Alberta, even in rural areas. Even though we put some money in this year's budget, still it's not working. I want to know why. I want to know what answer I should give to those people.

Like, one of my friends: his brother was working in a Mac's store. That was two years ago. A gunman shot him right away. He's dead, and there's no news about him. Every year they get together and mourn his death. This year I was at their residence, and they were asking me lots of questions: Why is that? Is there racism or something? And some other questions which I couldn't answer at that time. It is critical, a very critical situation, Mr. Chairman, and we should take it very seriously and do something about it.

I'm also concerned about overcrowding at the remand centre. There are lots of complaints. I know that we are building a new remand centre very soon. But how long will it take, and for the time being what are we going to do? We don't know. I'm also concerned about the safety of the corrections officers in that critical situation at the remand centre.

Mr. Chairman, my constituents – when so many vulnerable people are complaining that they can't afford high utility bills, it has started hurting them. If they have gas and heating bills – gas and petrol – and their income is fixed, it's very hard for them to survive on a fixed income. Inflation is more than 3 per cent, and it is hurting them. Whenever they call me, it's very hard for me to answer them, especially the senior people. Some people are on medication, and they don't have a car, and they phone and say: you come to my house; I have to tell you the stories. Sometimes, you know, it's very hard to listen to their very touching stories.

Now I move to the ministry of infrastructure.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, the time has elapsed, hon. member.

The next member is the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to participate this afternoon in debate at committee on Bill 43, the Appropriation Act. We had a look yesterday in second reading at this government's spending habits. The hon. Minister of Finance was talking about his next budget, next year, earlier in question period, and there are areas where I believe he could cut

spending. There are areas where he has to increase spending. There's no doubt about that. One of them is certainly in public education. But there are areas where there is luxurious extravagance. We have a government that, of course, has been in power for a very, very long time, and over that period of time there has been a culture of entitlement. I think we have to urge the government to be very careful of that culture of entitlement getting further entrenched.

When we look, Mr. Chairman, at this overall budget and we look at various departments, I have to first go to the biofuels initiative in the Department of Energy. Now, this is relatively new. Last year, 2006-07, there was a forecast of \$5 million to be spent under resource development and management at the Department of Energy. This year we're looking at \$41 million in biofuel initiatives. Earlier in the winter the minister of agriculture was quoted as having a great deal of reservation regarding this program. He thought it was going to turn out to be a windfall for the big guys and the little producers were going to be left out. Now, certainly, I would agree at this time with the minister of agriculture. When you look at his statements and you look at his reference to Cargill and Lakeside Packers and the impact that this market concentration has had on the cattle industry, the minister has every right to be concerned.

Now, what exactly is the minister of agriculture doing to ensure that this \$41 million is spent in the right place in a timely fashion? That interests me. It's in the Department of Energy. The department of agriculture had some interest in the past in this biofuels initiative, but it's now in the Department of Energy. It's a considerable sum of money, and I think we have to heed the warning from the minister of agriculture as to who is going to get this money, how much, and why they are going to get it. Are one or two big parties going to get this money, or is it going to be divided so that many small producers can also participate in this initiative? Certainly, this initiative for the development of biofuels is not reflected in the EUB's forecast well into the future.

However, there are other issues that I would like to point out as well in this budget. One of them is in what we used to call the ministry of human resources and employment, which is now EII: Employment, Immigration and Industry. Now, Mr. Chairman, that department has a lot of issues to deal with, but one that I would like to flag is the fact that – and we're going to have to look after these folks. I was listening with interest to the discussion at Public Accounts today when the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore brought up the bonuses that seem to be paid out on a routine basis annually to senior managers in Infrastructure and Transportation. Over \$2 million was spent in the fiscal year that we were discussing this morning in Public Accounts.

4:00

Senior management seems to be well looked after. I don't know who determines whether they're eligible for a bonus or not. I was left with the impression that it was themselves. I could be wrong. I could have a wrong impression, but that's what I was led to believe. The criteria seemed very open. It wasn't like they were hockey players with, you know, 20-, 30-, or 40-goal seasons and depending on what you got, you got a bonus, or if your team made the playoffs or you advanced beyond the first round, you could expect a bonus. It was just sort of: well, we got bonuses, and they came from the general revenue.

But the rest of the civil service is what I would like to focus on here, Mr. Chairman. If you look at the last report from human resources and employment 2005-06, before the name change and, you know, all the money coming from rural development into that portfolio and this focus put on immigration and whether we can

handle it or not as a province, when we look at the average age of permanent, salaried public service employees in the 2005-06 annual report, 50 per cent of the entire public service is between the ages of 45 and 59. There are 24,000 staff. That's quite a number.

Now, I would like to know what the government is going to do to recruit as these people retire. We're certainly going to have to have a good pension. We're going to have to have good benefits, and we're going to have to have good wage rates to attract people to the civil service because in these next few years we could potentially see half the civil service retire.

I know this has been a government that has been getting by on a wing and a prayer here for the last five or six years, and there has been no plan. This, in my opinion, is a question that needs to be addressed. We need an answer from the government. If 50 per cent of the civil service is between the ages of 45 and 59, what is this government doing to ensure that we attract younger people into the civil service? What do they plan on offering these young people to come into the civil service?

Certainly, we need people. Now, Mr. Chairman, it is interesting to note that in the civil service there is between the ages of 25 and 34 only 16 per cent. Only 16 per cent of the salaried civil servants are in that age category. Two per cent are under 25. Perhaps they're still getting their university degrees or their other postsecondary training. But we have to ensure that we have people to manage this government.

Now, the location of the public service employees: 60 per cent of them, Mr. Chairman, are in Edmonton – about 14,400 of the public service employees are in Edmonton – 13 per cent in Calgary, 16 per cent in other districts, 6 per cent in Red Deer, 1 per cent in Grande Prairie, 3 per cent in Lethbridge. That's quite interesting, not only where these good people work but the fact that if we don't deal with this problem, we're going to have a huge human resources issue to deal with. Again, it's symbolic of this government's absence of long-term planning that we would have this dramatic concentration of age in our 24,000-plus civil or public service. If I could have an answer to that question during the course of this debate, I also would be grateful.

Now, another issue that's coming up – and the Minister of Energy is very keen to discuss this, I'm sure – is the whole issue of royalties. I heard the New Democrats talking about royalties this afternoon. I'm unaware if they made a presentation to the royalty review commission. I don't know whether they did or whether they didn't, but I would be interested to read it if they did. But we certainly need to adjust our royalty structure in this province.

The last time – the minister is cognizant of this – in 1992, Mr. Orman and Mr. Getty had a good look at royalties and made some changes, and since 1992 there have been dramatic increases in prices for both natural gas and oil. I think it is one of the most important issues facing the province today, and I'm very disappointed that the Minister of Finance seems to have dismissed already the royalty review with: perhaps we don't need to increase royalties. The Minister of Energy has been sort of on the same page on that issue, and I'm concerned. I'm looking forward at the end of August to getting this presentation. Maybe as Energy critic I could get one in advance so I could read it before it is announced. [interjections] They're laughing at me, Mr. Chairman.

Now, do Albertans, the owners of the natural resources of this province, receive a fair share from the current royalty regime? I and many others I talk to do not feel that we do get a fair share. Similar oil and gas producing jurisdictions collect more for their resources than we do in Alberta. For example – and I'm grateful to the minister for providing some, if not all, of the stats on this – Texas collects 25 per cent in royalties. After the conclusion of session

tomorrow I'm looking forward to going up to the Department of Energy library – and I hope I don't need a permission slip from the Minister of Energy to get up there – and seeing if there's additional information on various royalty structures.

Current royalties are not meeting the Department of Energy's own modest Crown revenue share of 20 to 25 per cent. The corporate sector of oil and gas is enjoying record-breaking profits, and the public sector here, this government, is failing to meet its own standards, failing to meet its own plan. This failure to attain the government's minimum standard of 20 to 25 per cent cost Albertans at least \$16 billion – \$16 billion – in the last six fiscal years, and that's a lot of money.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

Hon. members across the way were challenging us yesterday about where the spending would end. Well, we know where the spending would end, and we know where the saving would start. The vast majority of this money would be put in the bank.

You could just ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford about that because he's very anxious to make sure that the heritage savings trust fund grows and grows and then grows some more. He has put a lot of effort and thought into a plan. I would encourage the hon. members across the way: if you want to talk to the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford or adopt his plan, I'm sure he would talk to you. Red Rover, Red Rover, he'd send it right over. Right?

**Mr. R. Miller:** I just happen to have it.

**Mr. MacDonald:** He just happens to have one there.

Now, as I said earlier, times have changed since the last royalty review was done, but the royalty regime must balance two competing interests: those of Albertans and those of industry. We've got to recognize that industry has faced significant financial risks in developing Alberta's resources, but the current royalty regime has been extremely effective in reducing these risks.

4:10

In the current international market, Mr. Chairman, an investment in Alberta's nonrenewable natural resources carries far less risk than it did 10 to 15 years ago. I would like to remind people that we are one of the most politically stable regions. Last night's by-election in Calgary-Elbow was an example of that. There was a change there, and it occurred democratically, without any force or without any fight. It was a democratic decision. That's why we're one of the most politically stable oil producing areas on the entire globe.

I suggest that the government of Alberta for once stick to its plan and collect the 25 per cent Crown revenue share that it has set out to do in the first place. If the current royalty regime is incapable of delivering 25 per cent Crown revenue shares, then immediate changes are in order. Here are some suggestions for the Minister of Energy. Now, again, in the 2005-06 annual report the Auditor General notes that there was \$948 million in reduced Crown royalties because of various incentive programs. The year before that it was \$533 million. So that's \$1.5 billion in two years, and this is at a time when commodity prices are at high levels. I would urge the minister to have a good, long look at amending or removing some of these programs.

Now, it's interesting that we can't have a cap on rent increases, but we can put a rate cap on royalties for both oil and natural gas. The minister is chewing on the edge of his glasses there. But there is a cap on that. There is a percentage cap on that, hon. minister. Again, citizens ask me: why should electricity prices be capped?

And the wholesale price, the Power Pool: that's capped at \$999. We were right up against that last July in the blackouts. By the look of that Power Pool and the action of it now – we had that hot spell here last week, and wholesale power prices were dancing upwards – I expect the same thing this summer. I hope I'm wrong, but I expect that there will be blackouts again. We can cap electricity prices, we can cap the percentage of royalty rates to be collected but not apartment rents. It just doesn't make sense. I just don't understand this government. [interjection] The hon. minister says that it makes sense, but ideologically, hon. minister, it makes no sense to cap one thing and be opposed to capping another.

Synthetic crude and bitumen royalty. It was just the other day I read in the *Globe and Mail* where the CEO of Suncor got a \$2 million bonus as part of his \$15 million compensation package. Now, the generic royalty regime was introduced at a time when bitumen or oil sands were still considered an undeveloped resource. That bonus could have been a reduction under the allowed costs that are outlined in schedule 1 and schedule 2 of the oil sands royalty regulation, 1997. Now, this should be changed. Mr. Chairman, that definitely should be changed.

By adjusting the allowed costs, investors will pay closer to the postpayout rate of 25 per cent as implied in the generic royalty regime. Those bonuses paid, corporate, schedules 1 and 2, section 2(e)(i): there is no need for those. If corporations want to give their hard-working executives bonuses, well, that's up to them, and they can deal with the shareholders on the matter. But I don't think there's any need at this time to facilitate these generous bonuses. If that's how they're calculated through our royalty structure, I'm dead set against that, and this party is dead set against that.

Now, there are a lot of allowed costs. I won't go through it in time, and I'm disappointed that I don't have more time.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. R. Miller:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Indeed, it is my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 43, the Appropriation Act, 2007, in committee. It's been interesting debate this afternoon. I have a little more that I'd like to add to it. [interjection] I hear that the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development is anxiously awaiting my comments, so I hope that he'll pay careful attention and perhaps loosen his tie. I wouldn't want him to choke on anything. There have been a few threats of choking going around lately in this province, and we don't need any of that in here today, that's for sure.

Mr. Chairman, the first thing I would like to discuss is some stuff around schools. As has been mentioned in this Assembly a couple of times in the last few days, both the Edmonton Catholic and Edmonton public schools approved budgets in the last two days, and both took the minister at his word and exercised what both he and they referred to as creative budgeting in order to come up with a balanced budget. But the message from the Catholic school board meeting the other night, which I was in attendance at, was very clear. They asked in no uncertain terms that the message be relayed to the minister and this government, however possible – and I'm happy to do that, and I'm sure that the minister will be hearing from several others as well – that this is probably the last year that they can do that. They have cut as many corners as they feel they can cut. They have shifted as much money away from the general population of students as they can to accommodate the special-needs students.

Let me be very clear, Mr. Chairman. Every time I step into a school, I'm pulled aside by a teacher or a principal who tells me: "We love these special-needs kids. We want them in our schools. We love having them. We want to teach them, but we need more

funding in order to do it.” That message was loud and clear the other night at the Catholic school meeting. They’re saying: “We did it this year. We found a way to make it work. But if they ask us to do it again next year, it’s not going to happen.”

In fact, Mr. Chairman, one of the Catholic school trustees, who has indicated publicly that she’s going to be seeking the nomination for the Conservative Party, indicated that the previous year’s budget was one where they felt that they had done the best they could do and that this year stretched them to the absolute maximum, and she’s not sure that they can handle it again next year. I would suggest that if this trustee finds herself elected, the government will have someone on the inside that’s going to be expressing the same concern that those of us on this side have been expressing for so many years.

Now, yesterday in this Assembly in response to a question from the shadow minister for Education, the Member for St. Albert – and it was a question regarding funding in particular to the Grande Prairie-Wapiti region but, I think, in general was discussing funding for education across the province – the Minister of Education’s response was this, and I’ll quote from page 1687 of *Hansard*. He said, “We will not be coming forward with additional funds unless there are some circumstances around the unallocated surplus going forward.” This is where we get into the same old good-news/bad-news cycle that we’ve seen from this government for so many years.

Mr. Chairman, you’ll know, I’m sure, that I’ve been one of the loudest opponents to the off-budget spending that we’ve seen take place in the two and a half years that I’ve been a member of this Assembly. I’m a strong proponent of making a budget and sticking with it, and I’ve gone on the record as saying that I hope this government does that this year. That, I suppose, is good news if the government sticks to their budget.

The second part to that, obviously, has to be responsible budgeting and making sure that the proper priorities are budgeted for. I don’t think too many people in this province would disagree that the priorities really have to be education and health care. If we’re not budgeting properly for education – and certainly everywhere I go across this province, that is the message I’m hearing not only from teachers and administrators but also from parents and students – then there’s a problem. Now we have a minister who, it would appear to me, is opening the door at least a crack for additional funding off budget, and while I certainly recognize the need in the case of the Education budget, Mr. Chairman, at the same time I have a concern that we’re going to be falling back into old habits.

4:20

Here’s a concern that I’ve raised before. I’m particularly cognizant of it given the fact that we had a couple of by-elections last night, and certainly all indications are that we could very well be having a general election next year. That is the fact that the sustainability fund, which, I might point out, is an idea that a former member of the Liberal opposition and a former leader of the Liberal opposition first talked about in this Assembly, is currently mandated by legislation to hold a minimum of \$2.5 billion, and it is at this state, I believe, somewhat in excess of \$7 billion. I have not been made aware of any public plans that the government has made for using those extra dollars. I would be perfectly happy, quite frankly, Mr. Chairman, if the Finance minister or the minister of the Treasury Board were to come forward with legislation saying that we should up that mandatory amount to maybe \$4 billion or \$5 billion. Given that times have changed and with the rate of inflation and everything else, maybe 2 and a half billion dollars isn’t enough.

But my fear is that we currently have about 4 and a half billion dollars sitting there unallocated, and we’re likely to be less than a

year away from a general election. We now have at least one minister talking about using unallocated dollars to address situations like we’ve discussed here, a very clear need for extra dollars in the Education budget.

**Ms Blakeman:** Off-budget spending.

**Mr. R. Miller:** Exactly as I had mentioned a minute ago, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre is suggesting off-budget spending. Despite the words from some members on the front bench on the other side that we’re not going to see that this year, now we’re starting to see that door open a little bit. You know, in my mind, it’s probably not too long before we start seeing some of that again, and particularly as we inch closer to an election, I’ll be surprised if I don’t see it. Quite frankly, I’ll be surprised if I don’t see it.

Mr. Chairman, I’d also like to just touch on a couple of other things regarding education and, in particular, a school in my constituency, St. Stan’s. The great news – again, another good-news/bad-news story – is that St. Stanislaus has a portable. It was moved onto the property last week, and this is a portable that’s desperately needed because St. Stan’s has been operating for the last four years without a library. If you were to ask me why, I’d be happy to share with you and all members of this Assembly that the reason St. Stan’s has been operating without a functioning library for the last four years is because of a shortage of space. They’ve actually had to put a class of students into the library. The library, then, has been condensed into one little corner of what used to be the library and has not been functioning for four years.

Now, they were slated to have received a portable last year, and of course due to the shortage of portables they got bumped. There was a need, probably a greater need, to send those first 10 portables that were completed up into northern Alberta, and the good folks at St. Stan’s understand that, but what they don’t understand, Mr. Chairman, is how, in a province that was running, you know, probably an \$8 billion surplus this past fiscal year and nearly a \$10 billion surplus the fiscal year before, it can be that a school in Edmonton has to give up its library space to a classroom because they can’t get a portable. And that wasn’t a short-term situation. This lasted over a period of four years. So a very frustrating situation for the school, and they’re thankful that it looks like by the time schools open in the fall, they’ll have that portable up and running, and things will be back to the way they should be.

The last thing I wanted to discuss during my comments this afternoon, Mr. Chairman, is in fact the savings plan that the Official Opposition caucus put out last fall. We’ve been talking about it for several months at this point, and it’s been very well received across the province. I know I’ve spoken about it in this House before, but I want to touch on it again. The reason for that is because during the supply estimates last month when I was debating with the President of the Treasury Board, he indicated in his opening comments that he was hopeful that we would have time that evening to discuss the Liberal savings plan versus the government’s savings plan. That was a debate that I was looking forward to having. I think it’s a debate that I would like to see all Albertans involved in, so if I can help to kick that off by reminding the President of the Treasury Board and members of this Assembly about the Liberal plan, then I think that’s a valuable thing to do.

Now, this afternoon, Mr. Chairman, I know that there was a question from a government backbencher which referenced the government’s savings plan. As you will know from this budget, the government’s savings plan is not really much of a savings plan at all. It is a surplus plan which is not substantially different from the surplus plan that the Alberta Liberals had in our policy in the 2004

election. Certainly, it's better to have some sort of a savings plan than none, which is the way this government has operated for the last many years with literally billions and billions of dollars of surplus over the last several years. Not having had any savings plan, it is a step forward. Unfortunately, the way this is set up right now, there will be no money allocated to savings unless we realize a surplus larger than what is currently predicted in this budget, and then at that, only a percentage would actually be put into savings.

Now, I understand that for the first time in my memory of watching Alberta politics, we have Finance ministry officials, the President of the Treasury Board, and the Finance minister all openly conceding that this government has been overly cautious in the past in its revenue predictions, particularly as it comes to predicting the price of oil and natural gas. I'm on record in the past as saying that it's good to find yourself at the end of the year in a situation where you have a surplus as opposed to a deficit. It's good to find yourself having spent less money than you perhaps thought you were going to. You know, it's a better problem to have than the reverse, so that's fair enough.

But what happens, Mr. Chairman, as we've discussed, is you find yourselves in a situation where you have billions and billions of dollars of surplus with no plan on how to save it and, in fact, leaving that money, then, up to the will of the government and in some cases the Premier of the day. We saw that with the rebate cheques of 2005-2006, where the Premier on a whim and without even the consent of his caucus decided that all Albertans would be receiving a cheque. Although that was certainly, you know, needed for some people and in many cases spent very wisely and invested wisely, to this day I still have people coming to me and questioning whether or not that was the best use of \$1.4 billion.

I started out by saying that I was going to talk about our plan, and that's really what I wanted to do, Mr. Chairman. The Alberta Liberal plan is much more than simply a surplus plan. It is, as I've discussed before, an opportunity for us to pay ourselves first, just like your parents would have taught you. Certainly, my dad told me when I got my first job: take a cut right off the top; put it aside. That's what this does. We're certainly not the first that have looked at this, but we've looked very carefully at the numbers using – and this is an important point – the government's own projections in terms of future revenue for the province, which, as we've just discussed, are admittedly very cautious, very small “c” conservative. Using those projections, we've said that we would take 30 per cent of all oil and gas revenues off the top, set them into a series of savings plans, and do this all within a balanced budget.

4:30

Now, I know that the Finance minister is listening carefully because he has spent an awful lot of time over the last couple of months reviewing this document. I've noted that he's had it on his desk several days in the Assembly, and he's spent an awful lot of time poring over it. He's probably as intimately familiar with it as I am at this point, so he would know, Mr. Chairman, that the plan calls for a full 35 per cent of all of that money that we set aside, that we take off the top, to go into the heritage savings trust fund. By the year 2021, Mr. Chairman, that fund would have grown to an astounding \$120 billion, still only a fraction of what Norway has managed to save in a short period of time but, nevertheless, a significant amount. For the first time since the fund was established, it would really establish a purpose for the fund, and that is to generate revenue that would offset the government's own projections in terms of a downfall in revenue from oil and gas.

A further 35 per cent, Mr. Chairman, would be put into a postsecondary endowment fund, and that fund would grow to \$15

billion by the year 2021. I'm sure all members have heard the Leader the Official Opposition, the Member for Edmonton-Riverview, talk about the need to elevate Alberta's postsecondary institutions to amongst the very best in the world. We believe that with this extra funding that would be provided by that endowment fund, this is entirely within the realms of possibilities.

Twenty-five per cent of that savings would go into a capital fund to address the infrastructure debt. Had things begun when this plan was first announced, Mr. Chairman, we believed we could have completed it by the year 2008. Further monies would then go into the heritage savings trust fund, and the remaining 5 per cent, Mr. Chairman, into an endowment fund to support the humanities, social sciences, and the arts. There were questions asked today about that in this House, about how strongly we believe in supporting the arts in this province.

Just a bit of an outline in terms of reminding people of how this would work. Again, Mr. Chairman, I would like to remind all members that the work that was done on this in conjunction with economists and businesspeople projects that this could be done within a balanced budget and without increasing taxes. I think that that is a very important point: the only increase in this budget would be based on population growth and inflation growth.

I know that we've been accused by some members opposite, particularly the Education minister, of sucking and blowing at the same time. I would strongly urge the Minister of Education to take up the advice of my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar and come sit down and explore this document with us.

I'm not going to suggest for one second that it perhaps doesn't have some anomalies in it. Already changes would be required to the numbers. Favourable changes would be required to the numbers based on the fact that the government's own projections have proven to be more cautious than the reality turned out to be, so this is actually even better today than it would have been last September, when it was first released. I think what that shows, Mr. Chairman, is that the principle here is right.

You know, you could argue – and we talked about this before – about whether or not the percentages into each of the various funds are exactly right. Maybe we should put a little more into the heritage savings trust fund and build it up more. Maybe we should take a 5 per cent cut off one of the other pies and put that into a fund that would sustain municipal funding over the years given all of the talk about sustainable funding for municipalities and the need that we certainly recognize there, the need that was expressed in a by-election in Calgary-Elbow last night.

There are all sorts of ideas. This is not meant to be the final version, but certainly what this is is a document of principle. It is a solid foundation for a plan that could be implemented within sound fiscal policies. All it takes, Mr. Chairman, is a little bit of fiscal discipline, and I do believe that that is what we offer.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any others? Are you ready for the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The clauses of Bill 43 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

**Bill 44****Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2007**

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

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The clauses of Bill 44 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

head:

**Private Bills  
Committee of the Whole**

**Bill Pr. 1  
CyberPol – The Global Centre for  
Securing Cyberspace Act**

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. On behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo I move that Bill Pr. 1 be amended.

**The Deputy Chair:** Do you have the amendment with you?

**Ms DeLong:** I do, and copies were provided.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, you are moving this on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Buffalo. Is that correct?

**Ms DeLong:** Well, I'm a little unsure of that because our committee recommended that it proceed as amended, so we essentially amended it in the committee. I'm a little unsure.

**The Deputy Chair:** Well, it happens to have your name, so we can have it under your name.

**Ms DeLong:** Okay. It does have my name on it. You're right: Ms DeLong to move that Bill Pr. 1 CyberPol – The Global Centre for Securing Cyberspace Act be amended as follows:

- A The title of the Bill is amended on page 1 by striking out "SECURITY" and substituting "SECURING".
- B The preamble is amended in the first recital
  - (a) by striking out "certain citizens of the City of Calgary" and substituting "Ian Wilms and Kristen Lawson, both of the City of Calgary,";
  - (b) by adding "in Alberta" after "establish".
- C Section 1 is amended by striking out clause (c).
- D Section 2 is struck out and the following is substituted:
 

2 There is hereby constituted and established a body corporate and politic under the name of "CyberPol – The Centre for Securing Cyberspace" which shall have perpetual succession and a common seal.
- E Section 3 is struck out and the following is substituted:
 

3 The of the objects of the Centre are to use the funds entrusted to it to promote and facilitate the establishment, construction and operation of an international centre for the

research, coordination and advancement of public safety, intelligence gathering and public response related to cyber-crimes such as child exploitation, financial systems fraud, threats to critical infrastructure and intellectual property and identity theft.

**4:40**

- F Section 4 is renumbered as section 4(1) and the following is added after subsection (1):
  - (2) The Centre shall be operated on a not-for-profit basis.
- G The following is added after section 5:
  - 5.1 The head office of the Centre shall be located in Alberta.
- H Section 7 is amended by adding the following after subsection (4):
  - (5) The founding Directors shall serve until replaced by action of the Board or the appointment of the 8th additional Governor under section 6(6).
- I Section 8(1) is amended
  - (a) by striking out clause (a) and substituting the following:
    - (a) a Director is in a conflict of interest if the Director takes part in a decision in the course of carrying out the Director's duties knowing that the decision might further a private interest of the Director or a person directly associated with the Director or improperly furthers the private interest of any other person, and
    - (b) in clause (b)
      - (i) in subclause (i) by adding "child," after "Director's";
      - (ii) in subclause (iv) by striking out "having not more than 20 partners".
- J Section 9 is amended
  - (a) by adding the following after clause (i);
    - (i.1) manage or supervise the management of the business and affairs of the Centre;
  - (b) by striking out clauses (m), (n), (o), and (p).
- K The following is added after section 13:
 

14 Nothing in this Act exempts the Centre from the application of any other federal or provincial statute.

These were the amendments which we discussed to great extent during the committee meetings, so they were all individually and as a whole covered quite extensively by the committee. It was quite a bit of work by the committee, by the way, to proceed with this and to recommend it as amended.

I just wanted to again thank the committee – it was an all-party committee – for hanging in there and really doing a good job on this bill in terms of examining it at great length. I encourage everyone to support this bill.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, just for the record we will call this amendment A1. The hon. member did read out the entire amendment, but should there be any discrepancy in understanding it, then the official record will reflect what has been submitted in a written format.

The hon. member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. If I could just make a small note that when we get amendments from the Private Bills Committee that are as lengthy as these ones, maybe just as a courtesy if they could have been circulated in advance. I know that the committee has already looked at them and recommended this to the Assembly, and I know that they do good work. I will do my best in accepting that they have recommended this, but it is a bit of a speed read. There are 11 different sections that are being amended. Actually, it's more than that if you look at the subclauses that are

being amended in this. It's a lot to be able to react to very quickly. I will accept the recommendation of the committee and not question them on them.

Very quickly, looking through it, some of the major questions I had about this bill have not been answered, and I understood that we would get some answers back in Committee of the Whole to questions that were asked in second reading. In particular, I was looking at the questions put on the record by my colleague the Member for Edmonton-McClung. So I was hoping that we could have had some answers back on that.

Here are the concerns that I have. Now, I notice that under section F of the amending act, section 4 is renumbered, and in fact there is a section that's inserted. It says, "The Centre shall be operated on a not-for-profit basis." But nowhere else in here does it talk about registering under the Alberta Societies Act, or perhaps registering under part 9 of the corporations act. This is looking to me like it's a private corporation that's now said that it's going to operate on a not-for-profit basis, which would mean that any surplus that they had in their proceeds, any difference between their revenue and expenses, in other words, would be reinvested back into the work of the global centre for securing cyberspace, known as CyberPol.

I'm also noting that there is an opportunity here, or at least there's no prescription against paying the directors, which is not done under the Societies Act and is not at all common practice in not-for-profits or charities or volunteer-based organizations, however you want to refer to them, in Alberta. The idea is that those directors are representing members of the public and holding the public's interest first in serving on the board.

I would say, in looking at the set-up of this organization, that they are serving the interests of the organization first or perhaps their own interests first, where we have appointees that are coming from the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and the Canadian Association of Police Boards. They may well be there to serve the interests of the groups that have appointed them to the board. I'm not saying that that's wrong, but I'm a little cautious about this organization. It's not clear to me. I've read all of the *Hansard* proceedings. I've read these amendments as best I can. I've read the act. It looks like it's a private company. It's going to operate on a not-for-profit basis. The directors can be compensated. But it's not constituting itself as a not-for-profit as we know it here in Alberta.

**Mr. MacDonald:** It's under this special one-time act.

**Ms Blakeman:** It's essentially under a special one-time act, yeah. That's why I think they've chosen the route of coming through a private member's private bill.

Some of the other issues I have that are not addressed under what I see in the amendments are the powers of a natural person. Now, I'm not recalling that it's very common to see that in a not-for-profit or charitable agency's constitution and bylaws, which is essentially what this act is. Maybe the lawyers, of whom we have more than a couple in this Assembly, could explain to me why that clause would be in there. It does raise some issues with me or some concerns about why we would need, in addition to powers vested in the Interpretation Act, to be giving the centre the powers of a natural person.

There's also a lack of clarity around reappointments. It's clear that each member of the board shall be appointed. It's a three-year term. Then it talks about removing people and the reasons for which you can remove somebody, but it is silent on reappointments or even on the number of times someone could be reappointed. In the amending act it does talk about founding directors. Okay. Well, that's the two individuals that are named, but that doesn't help us

with the rest of the directors and whether they get reappointed. I'm assuming that if it's silent, they don't. So it's a three-year term, and it's over.

A lot of stuff about conflicts of interest, which is interesting, and their meetings, bylaws, auditing. I'm concerned about whether they're collecting information that could be considered personal information, what they're going to do with that information, how they're going to protect it. For our purposes, off the top of my head, would it fall under PIPA? Likely. But, frankly, as we review PIPA, I would say that it has certainly got some loopholes in it that I'm not too keen on.

I'm really concerned that if we're on the Internet and we're looking at cybercrime and collecting information about that, what kind of information are we collecting exactly? Is this suspicion of people that have been involved in something? How do you check the accuracy of the information that you've collected? How do you monitor it and make sure that it's up to date and relevant? If you've got somebody's e-mail or personal information in there that is five years old and they've moved and changed their name, got married, changed their sex, whatever, what do they do with this information? How are they going to monitor it and make sure that it stays accurate?

4:50

Mr. Chairman, I can tell you, from having served on the Health Information Act Review Committee and on the PIPA Review Committee, that one of the key issues that's arising for me is the accuracy of that information that's held and the ability of an individual Albertan to get at that information to verify its accuracy and to correct it. I don't see any of that under this act about what's going to happen with that information.

It may well be, Mr. Chairman, that we're not worried about people's personal information here, but it's not clear to me that I'm not, that that's not part of what will be done by this organization. It's talking about, you know, operating "an international centre for the co-ordination and advancement of public safety," et cetera, related to cybercrimes. But are they only going to deal with people convicted of these cybercrimes? Okay. Then we know that we're dealing with people that, in fact, have a record and have been punished by society in some way. Are they dealing with people who have been charged with it? That's a whole other kettle of fish. You're dealing with people that are still presumed innocent at that point. At what point do you clear those records up and say, "This person was declared innocent" or "They were convicted"? Do you just let it sit in there in a big stew of information going around? Especially when I see those legal beagle terms like "all the powers of a natural person," I start thinking: "Who is being protected here? Is it going to be the public, or is it the directors? Why are they imbuing this organization with so much power?"

**Mr. MacDonald:** Do you think the Bar Association should have a representative on the board of directors?

**Ms Blakeman:** Well, my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar is suggesting that the Bar Association have somebody appointed to this board. They may not be interested in doing that, but a lot of my questions are based in legal theory, so I can see why he would be thinking that.

This act is just not sitting right with me. I'm not sure why they're doing this. I'm not sure what they're going to do with it, where their money is supposed to be coming from. A wise member of this Assembly who then went on to serve as a Senator in the Senate of Canada once told me: if you're not comfortable with it, then vote no

because your instinct is probably right that there is either something that needs to be fixed or something that's not right with this.

I increasingly read newspaper articles every day about people's privacy being breached, whether it's boxes of health information left in somebody's garbage or whether it's an individual employee who decides to search police databases for information on the home address of a newspaper reporter. You know, these are serious. When you start collecting information that's out there on the Internet, the ability to control it is very, very limited for the individual, and the information can be sent so many places so fast.

I understand that they're trying to deal with stuff that's really important to society, like, you know, luring of children and child prostitution and pornography, horrendous things that as a society we want to deal with, but that's not happening in this bill. For any parents that have been led to believe that somehow this is going to strengthen the laws and the punishments, penalties for Internet child luring and child exploitation, that's not in this bill. So far, all we have is a group of people getting together in an office somewhere in Alberta being funded through a number of sources in a private company. That's what I'm seeing here, and it doesn't ring quite true for me.

There's still an opportunity in the rest of Committee of the Whole or in third for additional answers to be supplied, and I'd be very interested in hearing them. This one is just not sitting right with me.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Oberle:** Mr. Chairman, the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow rose to answer a couple of questions, and actually maybe I can make things slightly more efficient for her by just tagging onto the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre's comments. I listened with care to those comments, and I want to thank the hon. member because it cuts what I was going to say in about half. I'm afraid I share similar concerns here.

I have some questions for the member that I think I need addressed before I could consider support for this bill. First of all, I find this to be a rather unusual avenue by which to establish a society or corporation given the legislation that we have in place in Alberta to do just that. I want to know why. What's different about this society or corporation that prevents its organizers from utilizing the legislation? Even if this is the avenue, of course, these petitioners would understand that any changes to that corporation would require another act of this Legislature. So I find that a very curious approach. I really need to understand why.

Second of all, I am very deeply concerned about the purpose of this organization. You know, the collection of information about crime is something that typically a government or an agency of a government, such as a police agency, would do, which is maybe why it's called CyberPol, which is a strange thing. If it's purely a research organization, then why wouldn't it be established under a university, as a research extension of a university? If this is a private society or corporation collecting information on the commission of crimes, either of accused people or convicted people or on the information about crimes, as in actual child pornography files or anything like that, then I have very grave concerns about where that information is. The storage of it would in fact be a violation of our legislation. I have some very, very grave concerns there. If they're not collecting such information, exactly what is it this organization is going to do?

I'm afraid that I have some very deep concerns here, and I'm unable to support this bill unless those can be addressed. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much. I guess the first thing that I need to bring up for both of these members is to point out the final section, section 14, that we're putting in here. That is that "nothing in this Act exempts the Centre from the application of any other federal or provincial statute." So all privacy laws apply. All government laws apply. All laws apply. There is nothing that sort of overrules any of the privacy concerns or anything like that.

I guess the other thing is to try to understand what we're trying to do here. What we're trying to do here is set up something that is totally separate from government – okay? – but that can be used by police forces around the world to work together on things like pedophile crimes using the Internet. There's also a very large problem in society in terms of the banks. Our whole banking system is constantly under attack from around the world by people trying to get money out of the banks.

What we're doing with this legislation is we are just creating a shell. This shell is similar to setting up, say, the UN. The UN is a totally international body, but it happens to be in New York City. We are saying: this is the shell that we are providing in Alberta to be used internationally. The request to actually form this comes from the police services. It comes from the RCMP. It comes from those organizations that right now are trying in their own little ways to be able to fight this international attack, which is essentially coming from all over the world. They're trying to each solve it in their own way, but there is no place to come together like we have with the UN, where we can come together and work together.

Essentially, what we're doing is we're just creating the shell that can then be used internationally. It would not be sort of like a separate organization that would collect information. What it would be is an organization that our existing police forces could use. In other words, the RCMP would be using the shell that we're creating to work with other organizations around the world. I know that it's a very visionary, you know, very unusual, I guess, request to be putting in here, but it's something that really needs to be done. The need has been known for years, that we need to move in this direction, and this is the actual way that we're doing it.

5:00

The other thing that I think I should also talk about is in terms of the finances. This in no way indebts or says that the government is definitely going to put money into this. It's totally separate, and there's no commitment on government's part to say that they are going to be even using this facility. But this is something that is being asked for by the police services in Canada and actually around the world.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much. This is a very interesting debate on amendment A1 on Bill Pr. 1, and I, too, have reservations about this. I as a member of this Assembly – I'm not a member of Private Bills; I was at one time but not anymore – certainly have not been contacted by any police force or representative of such a force requesting this bill. I know that we have to respect the Private Bills Committee and their recommendations, but the questions that have been asked by the hon. Member for Peace River and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre are very good questions, and I'm not satisfied that they're going to be adequately addressed here.

Now, I would much prefer to see the Solicitor General or the Minister of Justice or the Attorney General of this province – I don't understand why they can't perform this function. I'm sorry; I'm not satisfied with the discussions so far. There has been an indication that both federal authorities have been contacted, but I would like to

know what Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada stated to the committee in regard to this proposed bill. You know, Alberta Justice has indicated and everyone is aware that cybercrime is a growing concern and that we may require skills or data external to the traditional law enforcement agencies and prosecution, but I think they should consider if taking on the responsibility is necessary.

I've been told that both the Department of Justice and the Solicitor General have no substantial concerns with this bill. We are having this legislative debate, but I'm almost of the opinion after hearing the last three speakers, Mr. Chairman, that perhaps this should be referred to one of our new field committees. I'm not satisfied with our security act federally, but I don't know how this would work with that. I'm not convinced that this is a one-time global centre for securing cyberspace. Can this body that is being created by this special legislation be sold, and if it can be sold, to whom?

Now, who is going to audit this centre? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre talked about this. But who will audit this centre? How much money will be used, and where is it going to come from? You know, we're looking at this new section 3. The centre is to have funds

entrusted to it to promote and facilitate the establishment, construction and operation of an international centre . . .

This is not just for Alberta. Cyberspace is an international concern. . . . for the research, coordination and advancement of public safety, intelligence gathering and public response related to cybercrimes such as child exploitation, financial systems fraud, threats to critical infrastructure and intellectual property and identity theft.

These are all noteworthy and, unfortunately, crimes that are on the rise.

I'm just cautious about this. I don't know how this is going to work with the Interpretation Act. Perhaps the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, presenting this amendment, could explain to me the Interpretation Act, certainly section 8, which indicates, "No provision in a private Act affects the rights of any person, except as mentioned or referred to in the private Act." How is all of this going to work, then? I understand that there is reference to the Interpretation Act. Yes, there is in this proposed legislation. That is certainly under powers of the centre, section 5, Mr. Chairman. Now, I have those questions, as do others in this House, regarding this. In my time in the Assembly I cannot remember – and I could be wrong – private bills of this nature.

Before I conclude, I would also like to discuss the issue of having others on this because I'm not sure about the oversight of this board. Now, we're going to see the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police – they're going to have one member – the Canadian Association of Police Boards, but I would be much more comfortable if we had a member of the Canadian Bar Association or maybe of the local bar association here. I think oversight is needed here, and I'm not convinced that we're going to have it with this present structure.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I will cede the floor to another hon. colleague, but I at this time cannot support this bill. I don't mean to be disrespectful to the Private Bills Committee, but I, too, am going to exercise the caution that I was told to do: if I'm not sure, don't go in favour. That was from a former member of the Alberta Liberal Party for the Redwater constituency.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. First of all, I do want to make it well understood that these questions that are being raised here have been raised previously in the discussions of the committee. We took quite a bit of time with this, you know. In fact, we took extra time with this. We had the presentation, and then the

following week we had a discussion. Because of the complexities that you are dealing with here, what we did was we actually put it off a full month, and we then had another special meeting, where we spent another two hours going in great detail, really thrashing out some of these ideas. So I just want to first of all let you know that.

5:10

The next thing is the other idea that was brought up. You know, why isn't this going through the Solicitor General's office, or why isn't this going through a government office? The thing is that if the Alberta government were to move forward and set up this centre, then the Alberta government would actually be in control. It would be like the United States taking over the UN, which would make it an unworkable situation. Essentially, all we're doing is just providing the shell, just like providing the shell for the UN. We cannot be sort of heavy handed as a government, coming in and saying, "This is ours," because, then, to get the co-operation just wouldn't work. By the way, the Solicitor General's office, of course, and Justice's office did look at this in detail and gave their approval to it. They knew that if they did it, it just wouldn't work.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, sorry. I just missed the last part. I was distracted here. Were you moving an adjournment to this?

**Ms DeLong:** No.

**The Deputy Chair:** Oh. Okay.

The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll try to keep my remarks short. I thank the hon. member for her comments, but I'm afraid you've heightened my concerns rather than soothed them. First of all, the stated purpose of this organization is to collect intelligence. Now, I'm somewhat soothed, I suppose, by clause 14, which says that "Nothing in this Act exempts the Centre from the application of any other federal or provincial statute." That's good, except that effectively prevents them from collecting intelligence. They cannot store or disseminate any information relating to private individuals, nor can they under our criminal legislation collect any information about child pornography or store any information, download, intercept communications, or anything like that. So this organization is dead in the water by the application of clause 14.

Now, the member insisted that the police forces are clamouring for this. Well, then, I would suggest that this is an entirely inappropriate use of the private bills process. If they're clamouring for it, they should be going through ministers to get it established. But the member makes the point that there's a need to be independent because if Alberta were to take over this thing, then it would become unworkable. I would suggest that the public has always been responsible for law enforcement in all of its aspects, and to this point it's been rather workable. Furthermore, I would suggest, considering that this is some kind of international cyber thing, that really this is the responsibility of the federal government, who holds responsibility for international relations, international policing, co-operation with other governments, co-operation with other police forces, which further really confuses the issue.

Finally – and I'll say this in all due respect – the description of this thing as a shell is not at all a comforting one. I really believe I'm at the point where you're not going to be able to address my concerns. I'm not going to support this. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by Lethbridge-East.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thanks, Mr. Chair. I think that the hon. Member for Peace River's concerns and suspicions are very well warranted. I, in fact, was and am a member of this committee. There were a number of us who voted against this private bill, I'll let you know. I believe there were government members as well that voted against it.

You know, the confusion that we've seen is the separation between the intentions of this group and the edifice, so to speak, that we're building through private bills that they are seeking approval from this legislative body. You know, in their presentations the gentlemen that want to set up CyberPol made no bones about it. They said: this would give us some legitimacy for our institute that'll help us to, you know, sell this in different places and different jurisdictions. I thought to myself: that is not necessarily the mechanism that we're providing as a private bills committee or as a Legislature, for that matter, so in that instance I was somewhat critical of this proposal.

Another issue that brought me to be suspicious were the very tepid letters from police forces in regard to putting together this cyber centre. The letters were very tepid, indeed. You know, it made me think that there was some jurisdictional problem, really, why these gentlemen were going to start this and somehow duplicate, certainly, what the Edmonton police force does with their ICE unit and other units as well.

The whole idea of private intelligence companies is not new. We have many examples of this around the world. They can be hired by corporations to gather intelligence and to somehow do the bidding of their clients. When I see a nonprofit organization coming here for some legitimacy to do something similar in that way, I find it, again, not in keeping with the spirit or the letter of what we're intending private bills to be.

Also, I have had registered to me serious reservations and concerns by lawyers about this bill, people who have looked at this bill and had serious reservations about the governance of the nonprofit organization and, you know, the collecting of information, as was pointed out by the Member for Peace River. There's just a whole range of unanswered questions that led me to vote against this in our committee. I'm now expressing my reservations here publicly, as a number of other people have, and other members of the committee did vote against this as well.

At this point, I think it's incumbent and useful for us to adjourn debate on this issue, and we will reflect on it as we spend our evenings. Thanks.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**  
**Committee of the Whole**  
*(continued)*

**Bill 30**  
**Disaster Services Amendment Act, 2007**

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Prins:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to thank all members that supported this bill yesterday as it went into second reading. This is good legislation. There were a few comments and a few questions yesterday that were asked. I believe that the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing was able to give clarification to some of these issues. I would ask all members to support this and call for the question.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. On behalf of my colleagues in the Official Opposition we're happy at this time to support Committee of the Whole for Bill 30, Disaster Services Amendment Act, 2007. I know that my colleague from Edmonton-Decore spoke to the bill at length. As the shadow minister he is supporting it, and we will certainly follow his lead. We've had an opportunity to run through the stakeholders groups in a stakeholder loop, and it's been fairly positive feedback. It's essentially a housekeeping bill, so at this time we're happy to support it.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are you ready for the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The clauses of Bill 30 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

5:20

**Mr. Hancock:** Yes, Mr. Chairman. I move that the committee rise and report bills 43, 44, and 30.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

**Ms Haley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 43, Bill 44, and Bill 30. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill Pr. 1. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table copies of all the amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

**Hon. Members:** Concur.

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

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

**Bill 44**  
**Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2007**

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move Bill 44 for third reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 44 read a third time]

**Bill 30**  
**Disaster Services Amendment Act, 2007**

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

**Mr. Prins:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and move third reading of Bill 30, the Disaster Services Amendment Act, 2007.

I'd ask for everybody's support. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 30 read a third time]

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

**Bill 45**  
**Smoke-free Places (Tobacco Reduction)**  
**Amendment Act, 2007**

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to move Bill 45, Smoke-free Places (Tobacco Reduction) Amendment Act, 2007, for second reading.

I introduced it earlier this week. Government has agreed to a policy which will change the Smoke-free Places Act to expand the scope of protection from second-hand smoke and decrease access to tobacco promotion. The bill reflects government's belief that we need to support Albertans in improving their health status, and the bill certainly responds to the request from many Albertans. By building on the Smoke-free Places Act to extend protection from second-hand smoke by prohibiting smoking in all public places and workplaces, we advance the opportunity for Albertans to take responsibility for their own health. In order to ensure that that happens, of course, it's necessary to make sure that there's a space from windows or doorways or fresh air intakes, so that is included in the act.

The tobacco reduction act also purports to ban power walls. That's something that we know has been a very effective method for tobacco companies to promote their product and particularly promote their products to young people. I was chagrined through the whole process of putting this together to learn just how much is paid in product placement fees by tobacco companies to convenience stores and others who have power walls, particularly, as I understand it, if they're close to schools, which tells us just exactly who these products are being marketed to.

Mr. Speaker, suffice to say smoking kills. It kills 3,400 Albertans every year. We spend millions of dollars to treat disease caused by tobacco use. It's not just lung cancer; it's cancers of many forms. It's certainly lung disease. It's heart disease. It not only costs in productivity, it costs in health status and the cost to human life. And it's not as if it's a quick end to life; it's usually a very miserable end to life.

Pharmacists have long requested that we act to ban the sale of cigarettes in pharmacies, and this bill will purport to do that. Under the regulations there will be an opportunity to exempt certain places from the provisions of the act so that in a community where there is only a single source, there's an opportunity to deal with those anomalies.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important piece of legislation for health status in Alberta. We're at that time. Municipalities have asked us to level the playing field. Many others have asked us to do this. I would ask the House to support it for second reading.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Oh, my gosh, I didn't think we were going to get here, to this day, so I'm darn glad to see that we did.

**Mr. Renner:** Gosh, Laurie, all those days when you guys used to go out on the balcony and smoke.

**Ms Blakeman:** I'm being gently chided by one of my colleagues from across the way about the days when we used to go outside on the balcony and smoke. Indeed, that's true. When I first started, you could actually smoke in the rotunda around the stairwells. There were ashtrays and everything, with little nice imprints on the top like they do in the fancy hotels.

We've come a long way. I managed to quit smoking. Thank you to whoever invented Zyban; I really appreciate the help. I think it actually was the inconvenience of smoking that got me to take that extra step. There was so much time in planning where to go and how to smoke and how far outside the building you had to go. It just became too much work for my little administrative brain. It just bugged me how much time I was wasting trying to figure it out. It certainly was a factor.

Let's not kid ourselves; that wasn't easy. I'd smoked for 32 years. I started smoking as a 12-year-old. That's the time that tobacco companies are most successful in hooking young people to smoke. Once you get someone really young to smoke, boy, is it hard to break them out of that.

I think we as a society have come a long way in understanding the harm that smoking can do to individuals and the harm that it does overall to the workplace, to our productivity as a nation. This is the government showing leadership finally. Certainly, the Official Opposition was happy to support the other original smoking bill that was brought forward a couple of years ago. We were very disappointed in the amendments that, basically, had the effect of banning people or banning children rather than banning smoking. It was a very odd twist on things.

I'm pleased to see that there is a complete ban on smoking in public places and particularly in workplaces. Now we can protect all the workers, including the workers who work in bars and in bingo halls and in casinos because those workers have not been protected over the last couple of years. I'm pleased to see that we can protect a worker no matter where they are working. I think that's important.

For my purposes, I talked about becoming a smoker at a very young age, so to me the whole issue of power walls is a really important one. I think the government really has shown leadership on this one because they got out ahead of it. Bringing forward legislation that combines a smoking ban in public places and in workplaces, the banning of the power walls, and limiting where the tobacco products can be sold is indeed leadership. Putting them all together should actually catapult us ahead of many other places in Canada now for looking at the whole package, and I'm really glad to see that.

5:30

The Speaker is aware that I have worked very closely with a group of young people from one of my schools in Edmonton-Centre, and that is the Nellie McClung program for girls that is situated in Oliver school. They developed a BLAST team and started to work on the whole idea of whether they could get their hands on smoking products. Indeed, they even did a little video. They taped themselves being able to get hold of tobacco products in a local store. They also got very involved in the idea of getting power walls

banned, and they've really worked hard on this. I think they deserve a piece of the credit for helping to convince the government to take this seriously and to include banning power walls in this legislation.

They did a postcard campaign in which they went to different places and got their friends and family and others to sign postcards and send them through to the previous minister of health asking that power walls be banned. They did a conference at which they invited BLAST teams from other schools to come and join them in having a learning conference. This past winter, a couple of months ago, they came and did a rally on the steps of the Legislature. I've introduced them a couple of times in the House and tried to bring their message forward.

I'm really, really proud of those young women for sticking with this. You know, to somebody that's younger the idea that it might have taken a couple of years to change public policy just seems like forever. To me, the fact that we managed to turn this around in less than two years is very fast public policy. So I really appreciate those young women staying on this one. Special credit to their mentor and instructor Heather Jubenvill who was recognized for her work doing this with an excellence in teaching award from the Edmonton Public school board just recently. It really was very fine leadership, and I'm very proud of her and the work that she's done with those young women.

Now, is the bill perfect? Very close. The two things that I'm interested in – and maybe someone will be able to give me the answer for this. There's no proclamation date given. It comes into effect on proclamation, and that's undefined. I'm wondering if I need to bring in an amendment that actually sets a hard date on it or if there's a reason why the government doesn't want a hard date. For example, January 1, 2008, sounds darned good to me, but maybe there's a reason why there isn't a date that's given, so I'm happy to hear the reason on that.

I'm also aware that there is still a desire on behalf of people that have worked long and hard in this area, like the folks associated with the Action on Smoking and Health group, to expand the prohibition on where tobacco products can be sold. Right now the act is contemplating health facilities where anyone under the Health Professions Act would be providing services, the campus of a public postsecondary institution, a pharmacy or a retail store that has a pharmacy in it or where a pharmacy is directly connected by a hallway. Those are the places under this act where you can no longer sell tobacco products. There is a suggestion that it go further and prohibit the grounds and premises of primary and secondary schools, for example, the grounds and premises of child care facilities, and amusement establishments and facilities. That would include arts and cultural venues, theatres for example, and sport, recreation, and cultural events.

Now, for the most part in Edmonton, for example, because of the city of Edmonton bylaw we've had smoking prohibited in those places for a very long time, but this is also contemplating prohibiting tobacco sales. Somebody this morning said to me: do they still have cigarette vending machines? I haven't noticed them, but I bet you they're still out there. It would seem a little odd, I admit, to have a tobacco vending machine on a child care facility premise, but stranger things have happened.

**An Hon. Member:** There's a federal law.

**Ms Blakeman:** Oh, there's a federal law. Well, good on them.

There was a suggestion from them that we look at actually spelling that out in the bill. It may not be necessary, and I look forward to hearing from anyone that would like to supply an answer to that, as to whether it's just an oversight or, in fact, whether they are covered through other legislation.

I know that there are a number of people that want to get on the record with this, and I would like to see second reading happen this afternoon. So, although I would like to spend more time talking about this, I'm not going to, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to see the ban on smoking in public places and particularly in workplaces to protect workers, the result of a lot of hard work on banning the power walls. But I think that's particularly important if we're going to potentially convince young people to not take up smoking because it's really, really hard to knock that addiction once you start smoking when you're young.

That's, frankly, why tobacco companies spend so much time and money and attention on trying to convince younger people that smoking is cool. That's why we have power walls. Yeah, it's to remind the grownups of the colour of their pack of cigarettes, but it's really about getting the kids, to normalize smoking for kids. The fact that they could do studies and find children who had never smoked who could tell you the colour and the design of a Player's package of cigarettes tells you how pervasive and invasive that kind of tobacco advertising like power walls is. So banning the power walls and the advertising in the stores is incredibly important, and limiting where people can purchase I think is the final piece of this fairly comprehensive plan.

I'm very happy to support it at this point. I will let others speak to it. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Martin:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we will support this bill. I would give the minister of health absolute credit because two years ago we know what happened in this Legislature. This bill goes further than that bill did, and we couldn't pass it two years ago. I would have rather seen it happen two years ago because, you know, we may have saved some lives in those two years. But I think it's important, and I give all due credit to the minister and to the government members that we are coming forward with this bill today.

Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of simple reasons that I'd like to put on record. I won't go on long. One of the reasons is an economic thing. When Edmonton did it, the patchwork didn't make much sense because I had bar owners in my constituency say to me: well, it's not fair; people can go right over to Sherwood Park, you know, in 10 or 15 minutes. It never made much sense to me, the patchwork. It was much more important to do it at the provincial level, and thankfully this is happening now.

I just want to put on record a couple of things on why we need a bill like this, Mr. Speaker. First of all, according to the Lung Association, in areas where similar rules have been placed, consumption decreased by 20 to 40 per cent. Such measures denormalize smoking and prevent new smokers from lighting up. Well, a 20 to 40 per cent drop is significant. It's significant for our health care system. It's significant for what the Member for Edmonton-Centre was talking about, young people starting the habit. The bill has the potential of reducing or limiting potential new smokers from taking up the habit, curtailing serious diseases, improving the quality of life for Albertans, and reducing premature death: all the things that the minister of health was talking about.

Then the figures are startling. They got this from doing a little bit of research. From 1998 to 2004, Mr. Speaker, lung and bronchial cancer rates in California declined at a rate four times that of the rest of the U.S.A. to decreases in cigarette consumption. In other words, after California brought in a similar bill, these are the figures. Now, those are big, startling figures. That came from the California

Department of Health Services, tobacco control section, 2002. They also go on to say that in addition, 58,900 heart disease deaths were prevented during the first nine years of the California tobacco control program. Same source. These are big figures. It shows you exactly how important this bill is as the minister of health said.

5:40

The other figure that I think is interesting comes from AADAC. It says that

in 2002, approximately \$470.6 million was spent in Alberta caring for tobacco related illness. Additional societal costs arise from lost income due to premature death, disability, worker absenteeism, reduced productivity, and tobacco subsidies . . . Tobacco is often responsible for substantial loss of life and property damage accounting for one in four fire deaths in Alberta.

Again, this is a lot of money. If we're looking at saving money for the health care system, this shows that this is a very significant step forward.

Additionally, according to the Review of the Quality of Studies on the Economic Effects of Smoke-free Policies on the Hospitality Industry – that's where you get a lot of the complaints – virtually every scientifically sound study on the economic impact of smoke-free laws demonstrates that while there may be an initial adjustment period, there is no – and I repeat – no lasting negative impact of smoke-free laws on the hospitality industry.

Those are the reasons we need a bill like this. Again, Mr. Speaker, we in the NDP opposition gladly support second reading of this bill.

Thank you very much.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did want to get on record with this, and I will just make a few remarks on Bill 45, the tobacco reduction act. This is a good bill, and I think it really reflects what the majority of Albertans want and certainly believe in, but further than that it also reflects the majority of Canadians' feelings on this concept of a smoke-free atmosphere.

I just would like to make a very quick remark about what I feel is something that has to be looked at that has to go in tandem with this bill, and that's the fact that we – “we” being Albertans, the government of Alberta – own tobacco stocks, and I believe that we must divest ourselves of those stocks. The reason that I'm saying that is because I have travelled in Africa, Tunisia, and spent a lot of time in Turkey and other countries where I actually saw children as young as five and six smoking. It hasn't started to show up in statistics yet where the industry actually has seen their product sales go down. Unfortunately, it isn't happening fast enough, but it will. To make up for those loses, they are going to all of these countries. They don't need a power wall. They basically just give out free cigarettes to these young kids because there really are no laws to protect them.

That is the main reason, because I've seen what's happened, that I really believe that we have to divest ourselves of the tobacco industry stocks that are in our heritage trust fund.

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

**Dr. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to speak very briefly in favour of the passage of Bill 45, the Smoke-free Places (Tobacco Reduction) Amendment Act, 2007, in second reading. I believe it's a very progressive measure. It shows leadership on the part of our province. Eliminating the sales of tobacco in places that include

pharmacies I think is a very progressive step. For many people it means that they'll no longer be able to purchase cigarettes when they're getting their groceries. As the Member for Edmonton-Centre pointed out, when we make it less convenient for people to smoke, we often reduce the incidence of smoking, and in some cases we cause people to quit altogether. I think that's been illustrated by the experience in some very large office buildings where people have to go down the elevator and go out to the back alley in order to indulge in their habit, and in many cases they have actually quit the habit because of the inconvenience. Similarly, by prohibiting smoking in all public places and near entrances throughout the province, it makes it uniform. As I said, it will also make it more inconvenient for people to smoke in those public places and will thereby reduce the frequency and the incidence of smoking. I believe the provisions regarding the reduction of display advertising for tobacco products is also a very good measure.

I would urge all of my colleagues in the House to support Bill 45 in second reading.

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by Calgary-Mountain View.

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you. I just want to briefly address Bill 45. I am in favour of it and pleased that we're making steps forward on this, but my concern, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that the tobacco reduction bill really is just a ban on public smoking because of the effects that smokers have on those people that they're around or people that are wanting a job not having to work in that atmosphere.

I feel like we're missing out on the most vulnerable of our society. We still have passed no laws regarding smoking around children. That's my biggest concern, that there are still many parents and grandparents in other areas, where people smoke in their own homes and kids come in there. I've said this before in the House, and I'll continue to say it. We're not allowed to drive to town without putting our kids in a seatbelt; we get a fine. We're not allowed to ride our bicycles with our kids; we get a fine. Yet it's just fine for a grandparent to smoke around an infant, and the parents say: I really can't say no to my parents or grandparents.

If we were to pass a misdemeanour or a fine to say that if you're smoking around children, it's \$150, and you can't say: “Oh, who's going to enforce it? How are we going to do it?” Just by putting it in place, people can say: “Hey, you're not supposed to do that. You could get a \$75 or a \$200 fine.” We're missing out on the most vulnerable of our society: those who can't protect themselves, those who can't get away from a vehicle with their parents smoking in it or whatever else the situation is.

We need to step up the bill one more step and have an amendment to protect those who can't get away from smoke. We have lots of good steps forward here. The purpose of this is to take it away, to make it more inconvenient, to make it tougher. The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill just referred to a lot of those things, going down the elevator and having to go out in cold weather. All of those things are good, but how does a child in our society get away from an adult who's smoking a legal substance and says, “It's my right to do it in front of them,” and we have nothing in place? I feel that we need to put an amendment in there to make it an offence to smoke in the presence of children, regardless of where they are, your own home, wherever else. We should not be allowed to be smoking around children.

Thank you.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a pleasure just to speak briefly in support of this very progressive legislation. I congratulate the government. I think all of us in the House feel that this is progress. It's been called for by the citizens of Alberta for over a decade. I congratulate ASH, the people of Action on Smoking and Health, and all the tobacco groups, the health groups, the Lung Association. All have been active in trying to get us to move towards a stronger commitment to prevention, and that's what this really is.

The tax on tobacco has been an important influence. How to make the healthy choice, the easy choice, becomes the real question, and this is another layer on that to try to improve the health status of our population and reduce the impacts on our health system. There are only a couple of areas left, some of which are federal and some of which may be assisted by a provincial bill to look at more restrictions on sponsorship and a stronger commitment to education in school systems and beyond. I with my colleagues will stand in support of this Smoke-free Places (Tobacco Reduction) Amendment Act, 2007, Bill 45.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, will be very, very brief. I would like to congratulate the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud for his work on this and thank him. This is long overdue. I, too, as we discussed in caucus earlier today, had concerns about the implementation of this bill. I would like to see this bill proclaimed and be in force by the new year, 2008.

Thank you.

5:50

**The Acting Speaker:** Any others?

The hon. minister to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 45 read a second time]

head: **Government Bills and Orders**  
**Committee of the Whole**  
*(continued)*

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** We'll call the committee to order.

**Bill 17**  
**Limitation Statutes Amendment Act, 2007**

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

**Dr. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 17, Limitation Statutes Amendment Act, 2007. This legislation is intended to clarify the law for Albertans and avoid unnecessary litigation in two areas. I have spoken quite extensively on this, but to add further clarity to the bill, I'm proposing one House amendment, which I have before me and I will ask the Clerk to circulate.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, we shall refer to this amendment as amendment A1.

Hon. member, you may proceed.

**Dr. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The House amendments are with respect to section 74(1) and section 106(1)(c) of the Land Titles Act. This House amendment to those two sections will ensure that the sections continue to operate as intended under the former Limitation of Actions Act and the current Limitations Act.

The clarification that's being made has come by way of a recommendation from the Alberta Law Reform Institute, and it was done as a result of consultation with both the Alberta Law Reform Institute and Service Alberta. I believe that there's general agreement that this does not change the intent of the bill but just simply clarifies the application of those provisions.

With those comments, Mr. Chairman, I would urge the approval of the amendment to the bill.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I have conferred with my colleague the shadow minister for Justice and the Attorney General on this House amendment from the government, and he has been in discussions with both the hon. sponsoring member and the minister and, I think, staff. There's been a fair amount of talking about this. He had no objection to the proposed amendment, and I believe he had enough time to study it. So at this point I'm happy to support amendment A1.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

[The clauses of Bill 17 as amended agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

**Bill 18**  
**Judicature Amendment Act, 2007**

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

**Dr. Brown:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to rise on behalf of the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General to bring this matter before committee, Bill 18, the Judicature Amendment Act, 2007. I have one small House amendment to propose to the House with respect to this, and that is with respect to section 23(2) of the act. I will ask the pages to distribute the amendment proposed.

Mr. Chairman, section 23(2) states that "for the purposes of this section, instituting vexatious proceedings or conducting a proceeding in a vexatious manner includes, without limitation, any one or more of the following." The word "section" should be replaced with the word "Part." Bill 18 creates a new part 2.1 in the Judicature Act containing two sections, sections 23 and 23.1. The provisions in section 23(2) are applicable to the whole of part 2.1. In other words, we want to be clear that the provisions apply to both of those sections.

The second House amendment relates to section 23(2)(d), and it states "inappropriately using previously raised grounds and issues in subsequent proceedings" is a factor indicative of vexatious proceed

ings. This is directed at a tendency of some vexatious litigants to bring grounds and issues forward into subsequent lawsuits often against the lawyers who acted for or against them in earlier actions. The report on vexatious litigants done by the Law Reform Commission of Nova Scotia included this factor as an example of vexatious behaviour, and we interpreted the word “inappropriately” to include some level of persistence.

Now, in light of the comments made by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, we believe that this should be clarified, and we would propose to amend section (23)(2)(d) to state, and I quote . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but the committee has to now rise and report progress.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

**Dr. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 17. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 18. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

**Hon. Members:** Concur.

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

Hon. members, it's 6 o'clock. The House stands adjourned until 1 p.m. tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

