

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Thursday, June 14, 2007**

**1:00 p.m.**

Date: 07/06/14

[The Speaker in the chair]

head:

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Let us pray. From our forests and parkland to our prairies and mountains comes the call of our land. From our farmsteads, towns, and cities comes the call of our people that as legislators of this province we act with responsibility and sensitivity. Grant us the wisdom to meet such challenges. Amen.

Please be seated.

head:

### Introduction of Visitors

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

**Mr. Stelmach:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature a member seated in your gallery, Mr. Jack Hayden, MLA-elect for Drumheller-Stettler. Jack has a long history of service not only to his community but to all people in the province of Alberta. His honesty, integrity, and commitment will be a very welcome addition to this Assembly. It's a very special privilege for me to ask my good friend and new colleague Mr. Hayden to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head:

### Introduction of Guests

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

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly staff members from the government of Alberta intern network. These individuals are here today as part of the public service orientation tour. It's obvious in this government that these people could do their job without us, but we could never do ours without them. I would ask them to please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Mr. Doerksen:** Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to introduce to you and to all Members of the Legislative Assembly special guests from the Gateway Christian school, which, of course, is located in the heart of Alberta, Red Deer, Alberta. I'd like to introduce their teachers that are with them – Carolyn Stolte, Jim Driedger, Tracy Beingessner – and parents Cathy Nicolay, Christine Hopkins, and Chrystal Lloyd. I invite them to stand and receive 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 make two introductions today, again. First of all, a school from Satinwood. Satinwood school is a small school out in the county of Lacombe. There are 31 students and two teachers: Mr. Ted Jardine and Mr. Chris Kooman. With them are six parent helpers: Mrs. Liana Walters, Mrs. Toni VanLanduyt, Mrs. Marlene Capton, Mrs. Bev Knopf, Mrs. Nancy Barnhill, and Mrs. Shauna Case. I would ask these visitors to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I have a further introduction to you and to all members of the Assembly, and that is my youngest sister. I have

three brothers and three sisters, and my youngest sister, Laura Prins, is with us today. I would ask her to rise and receive the warm welcome.

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

**Mr. Boutilier:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce my executive assistant, Dr. Carol Anderson. She literally runs my life. Also joining her today to my surprise – on May 11, as we know, our Premier celebrated his sixth 50th birthday, but today it's my pleasure to introduce for the first time our new son, Marc, who was born on the Premier's birthday, and my lovely wife, Gail.

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, several months ago we needed to fill a staff position in our office, so the minister of advanced education and I jointly got together and stole Ms Lauren Parker from the minister of agriculture. She has been working as the receptionist jointly for the two offices. Lauren is about to leave public service. She's travelling to the Czech Republic, where she's going to become a teacher in early childhood education. I would ask Lauren to stand and receive the welcome from all members of the House.

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

**Mr. Zwodzesky:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members in the Assembly Miss Sim Khehra, who is a constituent of mine and who is currently completing her second year of accounting at NAIT. Thereafter, she hopes to go on and complete her chartered accountant designation at the University of Alberta. Meanwhile, she's working and helping me in the constituency office as a STEP student. I'm grateful for her help, and I would ask Sim Khehra to now please rise and receive the warm welcome and thanks of our Assembly. [Remarks in Punjabi] A million congratulations. [As submitted]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Employment, Immigration and Industry.

**Ms Evans:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What a distinguished pleasure for me today to introduce some volunteers, and if I listed all of their accomplishments, it would take longer than the time allotted. These are community members that unselfishly give of themselves for all kinds of causes, sometimes political ones but very frequently for charitable works, for good works that help out in our community. They really are the backbone and strength of my community. Allow me to introduce with great pleasure Anna Gnyp, Rick McDonald, Thomas Lo, Ted Tennison, Paulette Coburn, and Maria Kuhrt. If they would rise – they are in the members' gallery – and if we would show them the warm appreciation that they so richly deserve.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Mr. Speaker, my guests are not here right now. I may request a later introduction. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three groups of introductions today, and I'd like to introduce them all individually.

Firstly, it is my great honour and pleasure to introduce to you and through you Darlene Hasinoff, the mother of Maureen Hasinoff, who is an accomplished young lady and a valued page in our Assembly, also a resident of the Hairsine community in Edmonton-Manning. Maureen's mom is a customer service representative for our great Edmonton Eskimos. Darlene is here today in the Speaker's gallery. Darlene, please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

My second introduction, Mr. Speaker, is of Todd and Brenda Molineaux, who also live in Edmonton-Manning and who have been actively involved within their community as coaches and community activists and many things. Todd is the unofficial mayor for rural north Edmonton and is a leader in many community activities, as is Brenda. Todd is a firefighter in Edmonton, and Brenda is with the Edmonton Police Service. I would also like to make a special note that on July 2 of this year Todd and Brenda will be celebrating their 25th anniversary of marriage. Todd and Brenda, please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Last but certainly not least, Mr. Speaker, is my good friend Oliver Lepps. Oliver is an accomplished heavy hoisting expert, long known as a master in his trade all over western Canada and in the north. Oliver is a leader in the Guyanese community in Alberta and is well known as a community activist to many political leaders, both past and present. Oliver and his wife, Mavis, have raised a tremendous family, many leaders in their own right. I ask all members of this Assembly to give a very warm welcome to this great Albertan, Oliver Lepps.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:10

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Pascal Ryffel. Pascal was born in Switzerland, moved to Canada with his family in 1993. He has a degree in sociology from the University of Alberta and enjoys the constantly changing political environment of Alberta. I don't know who wrote this. He was president of the University of Alberta Amnesty International chapter in 2004-05. Pascal joined our NDP caucus team this May as our sessional outreach assistant. Before joining us here at the Legislature, he spent a few years overseas travelling and working in various countries, including Russia, Kosovo, and Iraq. 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:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to rise and introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Mathieu Roy. Mathieu joined our NDP caucus team in mid-May. He's a participant of the Quebec/Alberta student exchange and is currently a caucus assistant in the NDP opposition. Mathieu is from Drummondville, Quebec, and is completing his honours degree in political studies at Bishop's. He is a recipient of the millennium excellence scholarship and the Florence May Foreman scholarship. Mathieu has been of great assistance this past month. We appreciate all of his hard work and enthusiasm, and I would now ask that he please rise.

Thank you.

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

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Alejandro Pachon. Alejandro

originally hails from Bogotá, Colombia, where he completed a bachelor of arts degree in sociology. After finishing that degree, he moved to Ibagué, a smaller city in Colombia, and worked as a teacher for the SOS-Kinderdorf International organization, an NGO focused on neglected and abandoned children and orphans. He arrived in Canada five years ago to study English and French and decided to stay here and has since completed another degree in political science from the University of Alberta. In his free time he works on a research project about armed conflict and peace in his native Colombia, and whatever time remains he spends with his young son Sebastian. We are pleased to have Alejandro join the NDP caucus team as a sessional policy field analyst. He's done an amazing job over the months that he's been with us. I will now ask Alejandro to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Hinman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly three exceptional individuals that I'll call political Sherpas as they help me try and climb this political mountain under extreme conditions and thin air and all the other conditions they might suffer. I've got Steve Ellingson, Jonathon Iverson, and the third one, David Strong, here that help me out a great deal, the Alberta Alliance caucus. I'd like them to rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? Then, hon. members, let me do some introductions as well. On June 12 of this week two by-elections were held in the province of Alberta, but seven years and two days ago, on June 12, 2000, elected to this Assembly was the now-serving Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Tomorrow, June 15, is the 14th anniversary of the election of 1993. At that time, elected to the Assembly for their first terms were the following individuals: the hon. gentleman who now serves as the Premier of the province of Alberta, the hon. Minister of Environment, the hon. Minister of Finance, the hon. Member for Calgary-East, the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, the hon. Member for Red Deer-South, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross, the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont, the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill, the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay, the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose, and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek. Fourteen years ago tomorrow.

head:

## Members' Statements

### Tribute to Fathers

**Mr. Doerksen:** Mr. Speaker, this is a tribute to fathers. The humour belongs to Phil Callaway. The sentiments are mine. When I got married, fatherhood was not the first thing on my mind. In fact, kids can be disgusting. They stuff peas in their ears and corn down their diapers. They blow things out their noses, and then they want a kiss. With little money at my disposal, I believed that poverty was hereditary. You get it from your kids. But then one night my beautiful wife stood before me in some rather expensive lingerie and said: honey, let's have kids, tons of them. It seemed like a good idea at the time.

Twenty-eight years ago I met the first two of my four children. Yes, twins. I would hold them like two little footballs, one head in each hand, and stroll down the mall proud as can be. Then came my daughters. I tell you, girls are sweet on their dads. They can

manipulate your heart like no one else. I've taken my kids into the wilderness and pushed them up mountains. Character building, I told them. They whined the whole way. Now I whine while they push me. I taught them to skate and play hockey. Now I can't match their strides. I've learned that having adventures and experiences with your kids is more important than buying them stuff. It has been an awesome ride.

Sunday is Father's Day. I want to thank my heavenly Father for the privilege of being a father and now a grandfather. I thank Him for the wonderful father that I have. God understands that not every kid has a good father and declares Himself to be the Father to the fatherless. I want to thank all fathers and encourage you in what you do with and for your kids. It is the most important and most rewarding responsibility you will ever have in life. Happy Father's Day.

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

### Climate Change

**Mr. Coutts:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently climate change has become a movement popularized by pop culture and media bombardment. The reality is that climate change is a real issue affecting all members of the globe equally. To combat climate change, Albertans do not need to slow our unprecedented rate of growth or our broad, powerful economy. Rather, we must take realistic and efficient measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and live more environmentally conscious lives.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to draw your attention to Climate Change Central. This Alberta not-for-profit organization was established in the year 2000 to incorporate the views of the public and private sectors to address the challenges our resource-based economy has on the environment. As the vice co-chair in the executive I have witnessed practical solutions in working towards the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

The sunniest city in Alberta, Medicine Hat, was the first of 20 municipalities to sign up for the lasso the sun program. This program involves the use of solar modules on rooftops which connect to the power grid. It is expected that this program will reduce 25 megawatt hours of electricity and reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 22 tonnes every hour. In Lethbridge the waste-water treatment plant replaced its coarse-bubble aeration system with a more efficient fine-bubble system. Just by changing the size of bubbles, more oxygen transfer was achieved and savings of about 2,000 megawatt hours of electricity per year.

As of last year the projects administered by the government of Alberta through Climate Change Central resulted in \$2.8 million in energy savings and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 39,600 tonnes annually. Mr. Speaker, these are only examples of a couple of successes of Climate Change Central, and with progressive thinking like this, we can achieve more without compromising our growth.

Thank you.

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

### Ukrainian Shumka Dancers

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, Edmonton's exciting Ukrainian Shumka Dancers have been described as outstanding artistic ambassadors for Edmonton, as a jewel in the crown of Alberta, and as a Canadian cultural icon. Since 1959 Shumka has preserved, promoted, and presented Ukrainian arts and culture through dance, music, costume, and folklore. They have

evolved and developed enormously over 48 years and have performed throughout Canada, the U.S.A., China, Japan, Africa, Russia, Ukraine, and many, many other locations, including command performances for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, for Prime Ministers and Presidents, and special performances alongside great artists such as Anne Murray, Julie Andrews, Christopher Plummer, and others.

Ever mindful of their roots, however, Shumka has always presented most of its concerts right here in Alberta: in our cities, in our towns, and in dozens of rural communities. To date, about 400 dancers count themselves as former Shumka dancers, and I'm proud to say that that number includes myself, my wife, our son, and our daughter. We are all Shumka alumni.

1:20

This past weekend the Ukrainian Shumka Dancers Alumni Association unveiled the Shumka stage in the heart of Louise McKinney park in Edmonton's beautiful river valley. The Shumka stage is a truly marvellous performance venue that will be available to local performing groups and visitors and to service clubs through the city of Edmonton's community development department. I want to congratulate the Ukrainian Shumka Dancers Alumni Association on completing this legacy project, and I wish to thank the city of Edmonton, the government of Alberta, the government of Canada, and numerous private corporations and individuals for their contributions and/or support.

Thank you also to the founding artistic director, Chester Kuc, to subsequent artistic directors Orest Semchuk, John Pichlyk, George Chrunik, Gordon Gordey, to associate director Dave Ganert, to the Shumka alumni president, John Eshenko, and to all Shumka alumni who helped make this project a reality.

Well done and congratulations, Shumka and Shumka alumni.

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

### Assistance for Low-income Seniors

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Seniors Advisory Council I'd like to congratulate the mayor and council of the city of Edmonton for running a program that helps low-income seniors. The city and the province each have programs which help senior homeowners to get financial relief on their municipal taxes. The city of Edmonton has the seniors' homeowner grant program, which gives a payment to 9,400 low-income senior households. This year city council set the payment at \$63. This is the third year that the city has offered the program. The government of Alberta's education property tax assistance program provides funding for senior homeowners to offset any increase in the education component of the property tax. More than 24,000 households in Edmonton receive an average of \$95.

Governments helping seniors is not unique. However, this partnership is unique because governments are working together to help seniors better. The city of Edmonton funds their programs, and they identify homeowners. The government of Alberta determines which households are seniors through the universal education property tax program. It determines which are low-income seniors by using information from the Alberta seniors' benefit program, and it produces cheques which reflect payments under both the city and the Alberta programs. Because the governments work together to administer this program, seniors do not need to fill out two sets of forms. They receive one cheque, and taxpayers save on the administrative and mailing costs.

I want to congratulate the mayor and council for the city of Edmonton for being so thoughtful and caring and helping so many

Edmonton seniors deal with rising living costs. I challenge other municipalities in the province to introduce efficient programs like this one to help out their senior residents.

Thank you.

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

### Parks and Protected Areas

**Mr. Agnihotri:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's 504 parks and protected areas are a priceless resource. They contribute hugely to our quality of life, they improve the economy through tourism, and they support the protection of our precious natural environment. But according to a report released yesterday by CPAWS, this government must do more to ensure that our parks are properly protected and maintained. The report is quite critical of this government, noting that our parks are understaffed and that protected areas must be expanded to shield a much larger percentage of the environment from development.

As those protected areas expand, this government must ensure that funding can adequately keep up with the increase, as it has failed to do in the last 15 years. The report notes that Alberta has the weakest parks legislation in the country. This is a dreadful shame and an appalling truth, considering that Alberta is the steward of some of the most precious and beautiful wilderness on the entire planet.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, as stewards of Alberta's environment this government must do its part to protect the integrity and diversity of the province's wildlife. The General Status of Alberta Wild Species 2005 report shows that over 10 per cent of Alberta wildlife is at risk. The loss of so many species would be catastrophic. The government must act now to address this serious threat to our environment.

As Albertans we have a sacred duty to take care of the land and wildlife that we have been so fortunate to inherit. I would ask this government to take its duty seriously and to strengthen its commitment to our parks and protected areas.

Thank you.

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

### Multiculturalism

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are winners, not whiners. That is why so many want to move to Alberta, to live in our Alberta, and to become Albertans. It is not only because of oil and other rich resources that people want in. It is because of the can-do, make-it-happen attitude that has grown from our rich tradition and history.

Part of that rich history is our aboriginal heritage. National Aboriginal Day is on June 21, and Alberta will again let that rich basis of our heritage shine. That week will see many celebrations and will also see widespread recognition of our First Nations and Inuit and Métis communities in the media and in our minds. I urge all to attend one of the celebrations and to honour our aboriginal heritage in Alberta.

Another crucial part of our Alberta heritage is our multicultural strength and diversity. Alberta is a model for the world on living in harmony. All nations are becoming multicultural as the world becomes smaller, but in the 49 countries that I have seen in my short time on this Earth, Canada and especially Alberta are certainly the safest and most secure area on the planet, especially for those who want to raise a family.

June 27 is Canadian Multiculturalism Day. In Edmonton we have heritage days on the August long weekend. It is the most well-attended festival in Alberta. We have the wonderful diversity of

dance and culture that has grown from our multiculturalism. We have the safety that grows from Albertans understanding the cultural background of others while at the same time celebrating that we are all Canadians. We even have great artists like Cheremosh going on a trip to China to showcase one of Alberta's great cultural heritage expressions, that of Ukrainian dance.

Even the effort to have multiculturalism in our Canadian Constitution was led out of Alberta, with the great former mayor of Edmonton, Laurence Decore, leading that charge. I am sure he'd be proud of the continued efforts for multiculturalism today in Alberta. I am sure he would be a supporter of our new Premier and his government.

Please attend all multicultural events on June 27 and at other times this summer. Let's grow Alberta and our understanding of others.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

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

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House Kristen Lawson from the law firm Miller Thomson, one of the petitioners for Bill Pr. 1, CyberPol – The Global Centre for Securing Cyberspace Act. Though not up for debate today, the bill is currently before the House. Now, if Kristen would please rise in the members' gallery, I'd encourage everyone to give her a warm welcome.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. This is a very exciting day for me and for all members of the Alberta Liberal caucus because I rise today to introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly a new colleague, the MLA-elect for Calgary-Elbow for the Alberta Liberals, Mr. Craig Cheffins. Joining Craig is his wife, who worked so hard on the campaign, Jocelyn Barton-Cheffins, and their son Sam Cheffins. Please give them a warm reception. Thank you.

Joining them are a number of other candidates, in particular the candidate who worked so hard for us in Drumheller-Stettler without success – and we all know that can happen – Mr. Tom Dooley, who is here with his wife, Dani. They worked incredibly hard. Win or lose, we all know how much participation is needed in the democratic process. Thank you so much.

We also have several other people with us. I believe Tom and Dani's son John Dooley is here – he managed their campaign, a recent grad of a political science program – and several other candidates for the Alberta Liberals: Aman Gill from Edmonton-Mill Creek; Keith Elliott and his hard-working wife, Gwen Elliott, from Wetaskiwin-Camrose; Bill Fraser from Stony Plain; Dawit Isaac, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview; Carole Oliver, Calgary-Fort; Bill Kurtze, Calgary-Hays; Jim Kane, Edmonton-Calder; Sandeep Dhir, Edmonton-Manning; Nancy Cavanaugh, Edmonton-Whitemud; Darshan Kang, Calgary-McCall, and one of his close assistants, Avinash Khangura, from Calgary-McCall as well; Pat Murray, Calgary-North Hill; and with them the executive director of the Alberta Liberals, Kieran Lablanc.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the competition. Please give them a warm welcome. Thank you very much.

head: 1:30

### Royal Assent

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the Assembly approved a motion earlier this week which would see the Honourable Lieutenant Governor call upon the Assembly.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor will now attend upon the Assembly.

[The Premier and the Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Lieutenant Governor]

[The Mace was draped]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in the absence of the Premier and the Sergeant-at-Arms I'm going to do something that's never been done before. I've received a letter from the pages who are retiring or leaving, and I was so impressed by the letter that in this interim period I'm going to call upon the head page, Jennifer Huygen, to come forward, stand on the Speaker's dais, and read to you her letter.

### Ms Huygen:

Mr. Speaker, as the Third Session of the 26th Legislature comes to a close, we would like to take this opportunity to share our gratitude for the amazing opportunity that has been bestowed on us through our service to the province of Alberta as Pages.

Firstly, we would like to thank you Mr. Speaker, all Members of the Legislative Assembly, the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Table Officers, the Legislative Assembly Security Staff, the rest of the Pages, and all those in and around the Legislature who have contributed to this unforgettable experience.

In an article published in the Edmonton Journal on Monday, February 10, 1913, the Alberta Pages are described as "bright streaks of mischief". Some things never change. On the other hand, from our humble vantage points at the front and back of the Chamber, we have witnessed growth and transformation within the Assembly and each Member who works so hard for the betterment of our province. We have also noticed a remarkable change within ourselves – we entered this building as teenagers and now leave as young adults, ready to tackle the world.

Whether we were here for one year or four years, we learned that politicians don't operate in black and white. Rather the experiences and ideas that we have seen emerge in this Chamber have opened our eyes to the human nature of politics.

Not many people have had the opportunity to walk this floor and serve the distinct people that make up the Legislative Assembly, and as each of us leaves this Chamber today we will be able to take with us vivid memories of all night debates, visits from members of the Royal Family, inspiring speeches, jokes and new friendships. This is why the Page Programme truly is more than mere employment.

It has truly been an honour and a privilege to work on the floor of this Assembly, and for this, we simply say, thank you!

Yours sincerely,

Maureen Hasinoff, Jennifer Huygen, Samantha Johnston, Taddes Korris, Kaley Pederson, Adam Pisani, and Danielle Wiebe.

[Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Isn't that marvellous? She was given no warning. That's the Alberta kid of today.

[The Sergeant-at-Arms knocked on the main doors of the Chamber three times. The Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms opened the doors, and the Sergeant-at-Arms entered]

**Sergeant-at-Arms:** All rise, please. Mr. Speaker, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor awaits.

**The Speaker:** Sergeant-at-Arms, admit His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Norman L. Kwong, CM, AOE, and the Premier entered the Chamber. His Honour took his place upon the throne]

**His Honour:** Hon. members, please be seated.

**The Speaker:** May it please His Honour, the Legislative Assembly of Alberta has at its present sittings passed certain bills to which and in the name of the Legislative Assembly I respectfully request your Honour's assent.

**The Clerk:** Your Honour, the following are the titles of the bills to which Your Honour's assent is prayed.

- 26 Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2007
- 29 Farm Implement Amendment Act, 2007
- 30 Disaster Services Amendment Act, 2007
- 32 Animal Health Act
- 33 Town of Bashaw and Village of Ferintosh Water Authorization Act
- 39 Engineering, Geological and Geophysical Professions Amendment Act, 2007
- 44 Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2007

[The Lieutenant Governor indicated his assent]

**The Clerk:** In Her Majesty's name His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to these bills.

**The Sergeant-at-Arms:** All rise, please.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, His Honour and the Premier left the Chamber]

[The Mace was uncovered]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, while we await the return of the Premier and the beginning of the question period, I'm going to call on the hon. Deputy Speaker for some words.

**Mr. Marz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Deputy Chair of Committees and myself and, indeed, all the members of the Assembly I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the pages for their wonderful service to the members of the Assembly this past session.

For those in the galleries that may not be familiar with what the pages do, they're the young men and women who are constantly scurrying about the Assembly assisting members and delivering documents and very important communications throughout the day and into the long hours of the night during evening sessions.

Sadly and unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, at least for us, seven of the pages will not be returning this fall. With the generous donations of all the members I've obtained some gifts for those retiring pages, and they will be sent out to them within the next day or two. I would especially like to acknowledge the outstanding service of those who are retiring. As mentioned earlier by Jennifer, they are Maureen

Hasinoff, Jennifer Huygen, Samantha Johnston, Taddes Korris, Kaley Pederson, Adam Pisani, and Danielle Wiebe.

I would like to invite all of the members to show their appreciation for the wonderful service of these fine young Albertans.

**The Speaker:** While we await the beginning of question period – I've got some numbers and statistics that I'll be providing to members at the conclusion of question period, but before we do that, there's a very interesting thing that's going to happen in the year 2007. On September 18, 2007, the current government of Alberta will surpass the length of service of the government of Alberta that served from 1936 to 1971 in number of days. The service then will be 13,157 days on September 18, 2007.

head: 1:40 **Oral Question Period**

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

#### **Public/Private Partnerships for School Construction**

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. At a media conference in Calgary this morning the Minister of Education said that P3 contracts were required to build schools here in Alberta because, and I quote, the Treasury is going broke. End quote. My first question is to the Premier. Is the Treasury really going broke, or is the truth that the minister is simply scaremongering?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, today the Minister of Education made announcements both in Calgary and Edmonton with respect to 18 new schools being built. The plan announced today is going to build these schools quicker, much more efficiently, and at less cost. That's the real good-news story. Eighteen schools built immediately, starting with a template, and it's good news for all the school boards that participated.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, actually, it may be news to the Premier, but there's no proof whatsoever of anything you just said. The Auditor General of Alberta stated in his report of '04-05 that a detailed comparison should be made of P3s between the public and private financing models. With today's announcement the government is stating that it has already committed itself to P3s, that no contractor has been announced, nor any cost savings provided. To the Premier: has the government undertaken a full comparison of costs in building these schools, and if not, why is this project already being announced as a P3?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General also said that we should always look at alternative financing, public/private partnerships, for major infrastructure. The other thing, also, is that we have a policy in place that we will be doing cost comparisons with respect to the projects, but the Auditor did say: please consider public/private partnerships as you move on large infrastructure investment.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Premier has confirmed, in fact, that the homework hasn't been done on these P3 cases, will the Premier admit that there is no business case whatsoever in his government's hands to justify building these schools through P3s, and if he has it, will he make it public?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the last time we had a debate in the House over a public/private partnership was when I introduced, with

the support of all of our colleagues, the southeast leg of the Anthony Henday. That construction is going to be completed this fall. It's going to save millions of dollars. It's going to be complete flow-through traffic, done on time, much cheaper, and much more efficiently. That's what we're going to do. We're going to be bold in our policies. We're going to move ahead and not listen to the chatter that's just going to drag Alberta down. We're looking forward to the future.

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

#### **Horse-racing Industry**

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. This government's favourite P3 is its one with the horse-racing industry. The horse-racing industry knows all about the Alberta advantage. Their subsidy has gone up from \$12 million to \$45 million last year to a projected \$56 million this year. The industry indicates that the new deal they're striking may be even more generous than the last one, a new deal that's going to last 10 years. Ten years. To the Premier: can the Premier confirm that this 10-year subsidy to the horse-racing industry is going to cost Alberta's government over half a billion dollars?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, again completely wrong information. It's not going to cost the government any money. It is the participation at the slots at the horse-racing facilities. People participate. The horse-racing industry gets a share of it. If the people don't participate, don't support the horse-racing industry, then there won't be anything going to the horse industry. So there's no money coming from the taxpayer. Those that willingly want to play the slots, they're the ones that are going to contribute to the horse-racing industry, not the government of Alberta. Again, that's another case of misleading information, and we've heard that now for – what? – 45 days from the same opposition. No basis to it all. Again, misleading. If he thinks I'm not telling the truth, get up and correct me. You know what? He can't because he gave the wrong information once again.

**Dr. Taft:** This is lively. Mr. Speaker, if the Premier knew his own budget, he'd see that there's a line item for horse racing right in his own budget. Is he saying that he's not responsible for his own budget or he doesn't even know his own budget? How can this Premier possibly justify throwing hundreds of millions of dollars at horse racing when so many communities in this province need schools? Why do horses take precedence over schoolchildren?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, if it wasn't for participation in lotteries in terms of the share that goes to the government, the government wouldn't get any share. So the horse-racing industry gets some compensation from those people that play the slots; part of that comes to the Alberta government as well. But, again, day 45, conspiracy after conspiracy, they have not been able to prove anything but just kind of twisting words. We're ending session today, and – you know what? – the attitude still has not changed. Always misleading the public of the province of Alberta. Every time.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today in Alberta thousands of kids went to school hungry and sat in classrooms hungry because there's no school lunch support from this government in Alberta, not

one cent. My question is to the Premier. How can this Premier defend a government that spends \$56 million this year alone on propping up horse racing and allows thousands of kids to go to school hungry?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, once again misleading. The government is not spending \$56 million. It's depending on the participation. You know, notwithstanding the doom and gloom that the Liberal Party of this province creates – and they spread it across the whole country, the doom and gloom – 36,000 people so far this year chose the province of Alberta as their home, and there are more to come. You know why? Because they see hope. They see job opportunities. That's why they're moving here in spite of the doom that keeps coming from that side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, we're here to lead into the next century, not listen to this kind of doom and gloom. I've got to be very careful how I choose my words in the public Assembly. But it's constant. Yet you know what? It is not destroying the hope of those people that want to seek their future in this province.

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

#### Temporary Rent Guidelines

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thirty-six thousand people moved here last year, and a few of them even found a place to live. You know, despite the reality that the housing market is off the charts, the government maintains its neo-con philosophy of no market intervention no matter what. Yet despite an enormous shift in the market over the past decade in oil and gas, the Conservatives have gladly maintained a cap on the percentage of royalties that oil sands projects pay to the resource owners, the people of the province of Alberta. To the Premier: why, then, does the government refuse to allow Albertans and show Albertans the same respect and place a temporary cap on rents in this province until the market stabilizes?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, this government has not placed any cap. It's a percentage. The royalties are based on a percentage. So, again, wrong information. The other thing is: there's no such thing as temporary. You know, they're trying to slide that in. One party says "temporary guidelines." This one just says "temporary." From all the information we have, putting in rent controls is actually going decrease the spaces available. Our role here is to work with municipalities and the federal government and increase the number of spaces. We're doing that. There were announcements made in Edmonton. We'll continue working with the city of Calgary and other municipalities across this province. We're going to be proactive.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta should be the place where people prosper, and some do, the rich do, but the poor get poorer, and the middle class have to work harder and harder just to stay in place. This government is hiding behind a philosophy of no market intervention to deal with the out-of-control housing market, but this is a double standard. Fact: the percentage of royalties paid by oil sands project owners cannot exceed 25 per cent of net revenue. In essence the royalties have been capped – yes, capped – for the past decade. To the Premier: why are the Conservatives okay capping the level of royalties paid by industry to Albertans but not with capping the level of rent that Albertans have to pay landlords? He's right. Apparently, with oil there's no such thing as temporary.

1:50

**Mr. Stelmach:** I don't know. I guess there was no question in there. He was trying to defend the mistake he made earlier in terms of saying that there's a cap. There isn't. It's based on percentage. With more activity we get more of a cut of the action as owners of the resource. Mr. Speaker, that is why we're having a very open, transparent royalty review. The results and the recommendations coming forward should be complete by the end of August. All that information will be made public. Albertans will be able to have a look at it and assess for themselves if they're getting a fair return as owners and also find the balance between the shareholders and also those companies that are making billions of dollars of investment in a very volatile marketplace.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This side of the House has nothing to defend.

It's not just oil sands project owners who get a sweetheart deal. Let's try this one. For conventional natural gas the cap rate, or maximum royalty rate, was implemented in 1993 at a buck forty-seven a gigajoule. Natural gas is currently projected to be selling at \$6.75 a gigajoule, so the maximum amount that Albertans receive is capped. To the Premier once again: why is this Conservative government okay capping the level of royalties paid by industry to Albertans but not with capping the level of rent that Albertans have to pay to their landlords?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the other side hasn't done anything. They haven't done anything, so they have nothing to defend.

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

#### Public/Private Partnerships for School Construction

*(continued)*

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Normally the announcement of new schools is something the government would be proud to announce. Normally new schools would be announced before a by-election, not after. Normally new schools would be good news and not kept under wraps until the last day of the Legislature session. But 18 schools built by P3s in a discredited method of construction is a waste of public money. Cost overruns can almost be guaranteed. I want to ask the Premier why he kept the P3 model for building these school until the very last day of session so that it couldn't be properly debated in this Assembly.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, what did he want us to do: announce it after session finished? You know, if it had been announced before the by-election, it would have been perceived as: you're doing something to win the election in Calgary-Elbow. So you can't win. We're proceeding; we're not holding back. Here's an idea. We talked about it during the leadership campaign. We're moving forward regardless of what bantering we hear from the opposition.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, the P3 model, far from being the innovative and new way of building public infrastructure that the Minister of Education likes to say, is a proven and discredited means of wasting public money and contributing taxpayers' money to the government's corporate friends. I want to ask the Premier if he's going to stand in this House and give us the details, including the

public-sector comparator for those schools, so that we know exactly how much it would cost if they built it through the public system, in the traditional way, which is the proven way to save taxpayers money.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member would have been aware, that is our policy. We do always follow a very strict policy in terms of a public comparator model. The other is: we also punt it to a third-party committee to have a look at those comparisons. You know, in this particular case we're moving forward. These are schools that are badly needed. We're working with the school boards, and the school boards are very co-operative. This is a new approach. In terms of the comments made earlier, our neighbours to the west, the government of Premier Campbell, has moved in the public/private partnerships now for at least three years and has been very successful.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, there's plenty of experience with P3s, including P3 schools in this country, and the Premier just doesn't have to go to his Liberal soulmate in British Columbia. He can look to Nova Scotia to find out exactly what can go wrong with P3s. So I want to ask the Premier again: is he going to make the public comparator available in this House? Will he table it by the end of today?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the template is being produced in terms of the schools. We're going to put it out to tender, and once those tenders come back, then we have something to compare to. You don't have anything to compare to unless you get feedback on the kind of tenders that are going to come back from engineers, architects, and the construction firms that are going to pull their resources together and focus on building the schools that were announced today. It's good news for the province of Alberta. It's the largest school investment in many, many years in the province of Alberta.

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

### Regulatory Reform

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Red tape costs us all. Regulatory burden has become a problem in almost every aspect of our existence. It affects our business, personal, and even our social lives. Paper trails seem endless. Much time is lost. Many regulations are archaic; they make no sense. Most could be made more simple. Respected surveys say that compliance costs \$3.9 billion per year here. That's dead money. This work does not generate new dollars. These costs are huge but do not even count volunteer time wasted. My question is to the Minister of Service Alberta. How can you reassure Albertans that government is constantly vigilant in trying to reduce the burden of regulations on business in our daily lives?

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

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Thank you. The hon. member is absolutely right. In many cases the regulatory burden that's been put on by the many different levels of government do far more to stifle business than they do to maintain the balance of business interaction.

Mr. Speaker, when I was first elected, then Premier Klein – I think I complained so much about it – set me up in something called the

dumb rules committee, which, we found out, basically ended up in a regulatory quagmire. Since then we've worked very hard to try and develop an understanding of how we can review the regulatory burden.

At this time the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House is chairing our Regulatory Review Secretariat. Indeed, all regulations that come from the government must go through that committee and be dealt with at that level.

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

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A supplementary to the same minister: when might we expect an updated report on regulatory reform from the Regulatory Review Secretariat, and what might we expect from that report?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, I think the member must have met with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business because they truly are constantly nipping at us to ensure that we have managed the regulatory burden as well as we can. We have eliminated the review committee and have put all of the responsibility for regulatory review with the regulation secretariat, and when they've completed their review of both process and potential, we'll release it to the public.

**Mr. Backs:** Again to the Minister of Service Alberta. Certainly, the CFIB, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, has done some very credible surveys on this matter in understanding things. I understand that the government started many of the movements on this in the '90s, and it was built on by B.C. Bill 213, the Regulatory Accountability and Transparency Act, speaks to red tape and was introduced here a week ago. It looks to establish a count of all regulations. Such a count was performed for British Columbia in 2001, and this was done in a few months by summer students. When and how can we expect your ministry to bring forward such a count?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, we have been approached about trying to follow the regulatory count that the province of British Columbia did. In fact, the opportunity through TILMA to deal with the province of British Columbia offers a good opportunity to learn, but the number of regulations isn't critically as important as what the regulations mean to the everyday Albertan and their ability to either just live their lives or to run their business. So while counting might be a process to a number, it's not the be-all and end-all to determine whether the regulatory burden is, in fact, too extreme. I wouldn't want to prejudge what we might report, but I don't think that the number count is as critically important as removing unnecessary regulation.

But what a treat to have a reasonably intelligent . . .

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

### Trade with the Netherlands

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week the Alberta government and the city of Edmonton had the great honour to have a visit from the Prime Minister of the Netherlands. Members of this caucus and across the way had an opportunity to meet him and talk about economic development opportunities between us and the Dutch. My question is to the Minister of International, Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Relations. What opportunities came about from this visit?



2:00

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

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to say, first and foremost, that the flags that fly in the hallway of the rotunda of this great building, of course, speak of the relationship that we have had with the Dutch people during many wars. I want to say today that many members of this Assembly have deep roots going back to Holland and the Netherlands and Canada's role. I want to also say that the Prime Minister chose to visit the province of Alberta, and I believe he did that because of the leadership that has been recognized in this government in terms of the approach we are taking. They actually met with a business delegation at the nanotechnology centre at the University of Alberta. Of course, there was a luncheon hosted at Government House, where many relationships were built relative to the future in technology.

**The Speaker:** Now we're going to move on to the hon. member.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the Dutch through Royal Dutch Shell and other companies have huge investments in this province. Do we see further expansion in the oil sands with Royal Dutch Shell?

**Mr. Boutilier:** Mr. Speaker, I can say that the Minister of Energy and myself and the member in this Assembly met in Fort McMurray at the oil sands with Royal Dutch Shell. They were fascinated with the co-operative approach we've had with the government at the federal level relative to a royalty regime that has attracted over a hundred billion dollars to Alberta. In actual fact, Royal Dutch Shell is one of those companies, with over \$10 billion, and it really speaks of the partnership we have and will continue to have in the future, and that was the purpose of the mission to our province.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** I understand that a Dutch bank, Rabobank, is a well-known, agriculture-based bank and is interested in making some partnerships with Alberta. To the Finance minister: can the Finance minister tell us what is being planned with Rabobank and partnerships with this province?

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

**Dr. Oberg:** Thank you very much. Certainly, each and every time we get a new bank coming into this province, it is a positive for the province of Alberta. We do like to see the availability of capital in this market, and we like competition. Each and every time there is a new bank coming in here, that allows its resources to be put in Alberta, it means more development for Alberta than is existing presently. Mr. Speaker, through to the hon. member, any time there is a bank that wants to come and put money into Alberta to allow for investment in Alberta, to allow for more growth in Alberta, the better.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

#### Postsecondary Education Affordability

**Mr. Tougas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the past few years this government has made some grand promises about advanced education. After years of fiscal neglect and skyrocketing tuition it finally appeared that the government had seen the light about the value of postsecondary education, but recently the government has

started backpedalling. Promises made somehow no longer apply. Take, for example, the former Premier's promise of the most affordable postsecondary tuition in the country. Alberta still remains a less affordable place to go to university or college than, for example, Newfoundland or Quebec. To the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology: has the current government now officially reneged on its promise to provide the most affordable tuition in Canada?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, this is what happens when you do your research by reading the daily newspapers: you get the wrong facts. Essentially, what was reported was that we were reviewing whether or not the targets that had been set are still adequate targets. Those targets had been set in 2005, as the member well knows. In fact, if you were to just look at the numbers – and I think that the number reported was 60,000 – and if you looked at the 15,000 seats that we had committed to creating, we're already there. In fact, we may actually exceed that. Indeed, the number of seats that we create may be more; it may be in different places; it will most certainly probably be in different locations. We are working very collaboratively with the postsecondaries.

**Mr. Tougas:** Well, Mr. Speaker, apparently he didn't listen to the question or heard it very differently, but I didn't ask anything about that. My actual question was – and I'll ask it again: has the current government now officially reneged on its promise to provide the most affordable tuition in Canada? I wasn't asking about spaces; I was asking about tuition.

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, I simply took the opportunity to correct the hon. member's facts as he saw them, which weren't actually the truth. The affordability framework, which this government has brought forward and this government has acted on – \$25 million worth in this budget is to create the affordability framework that the students and the faculty have talked to us about through the Learning Alberta report. Mr. Speaker, we are well on our way in becoming one of the most affordable places in this country for students to access the pathways for their personal success.

**Mr. Tougas:** Well, Mr. Speaker, a government that used to crow about the Alberta advantage has now adopted a more downbeat slogan: the price of prosperity. While Alberta used to be a land of unlimited opportunity, there is now a clear government move towards lowering expectations. Rather than live up to a promise, just try to lower expectations on tuition and expansion and try to lower expectations on the access to the future fund. By previous pledges this should be fully topped up to \$3 billion by now but, instead, languishes at a third of that. To the minister: why at a time when surpluses have poured into government coffers has the access to the future endowment been so badly neglected?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the original intent on the access to the future fund was to utilize surplus dollars when they were available for savings. I would suggest to the hon. member that even under the Liberal plan that's on the website, they wouldn't probably have enough money to have put in even the billion dollars, if you did the math, which I don't think they've done.

But I want to go back, Mr. Speaker, to this affordability situation. Affordability in our postsecondary system is not just tuition. It's a lot of the issues that have been brought forward to this House. It is the total question of the quality of the education that the student has, the ability to transfer between our institutions, the transparency of our institutions as it relates nationally and internationally, where the

student wants to create that pathway for their personal success. That's what it's all about.

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

**Public/Private Partnerships for School Construction**  
(continued)

**Mr. Webber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As mentioned earlier in question period, this morning our government announced a new and innovative approach to school funding in Calgary and in Edmonton. This public/private P3 approach will consolidate the design and construction of new schools in these two cities. Can the Minister of Education tell us what the advantages of this new approach to school infrastructure funding will be for the construction of schools in my hometown of Calgary?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I think that despite what we've heard in the Legislature today, today was a great day for education in Alberta. As a result of our announcement today we have some 200 families in some 18 communities in Calgary and Edmonton who no longer have to worry about their kids riding school buses to elementary schools in these cities. Now, what we've done is we've announced that we're going to be bundling 18 schools in Calgary and Edmonton through one contractor.

**An Hon. Member:** How many schools?

**Mr. Liepert:** There are 18 schools, Mr. Speaker. So what's going to happen is that this will get schools built quicker, it will get them built more efficiently, and frankly what it will do is it will show that we have faith in the private sector despite what these opposition members have.

**Mr. Webber:** Again to the minister, Mr. Speaker: when can the communities expect construction to begin on these 18 new school projects in Calgary and Edmonton?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, what's important in this, Mr. Speaker, is to work jointly with the four school districts because . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Please, please.

**Mr. Liepert:** We need to work jointly with the four school boards in Calgary and Edmonton, Mr. Speaker, because what we want to ensure is that what we design, that will be the design going forward, is what works for the school boards. The four school districts were elated this morning; 18 communities in Edmonton and Calgary are elated. The only people who aren't happy are the people in the opposition, who know that they're on a losing side in this argument.

**Mr. Webber:** There's also a great need, Mr. Speaker, for the expansion and renovation of existing schools throughout the Calgary area and, in particular, the Hamptons school in my Calgary-Foothills constituency. Can the minister indicate what timeline he is working with to allow other projects, such as the much-needed additions to existing school facilities, to go forward along with this new P3 model?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I was very clear in my announcement that this is the first effort in getting caught up in our school construction infrastructure. What we also need to do, though, is we have a

number of areas in the province that are growth areas that also require new schools. What won't work in those areas, in all likelihood, is a bundling model like this because there are individual school requirements. So it's going to be my job as part of the cabinet planning committee to ensure that I make the case that some of the unallocated dollars that we have, that schools become the top priority, whether they're in Calgary, Edmonton, or elsewhere in the province of Alberta.

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

**2:10 Hub Oil Contaminated Site Cleanup**

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Environment minister has stated in this House that it is not the role of Alberta Environment to advocate for environmental protection. To the minister: what, then, if not environmental protection, is the role of Alberta Environment?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, the role of the Environment minister and the role of Alberta Environment is twofold: first of all, to ensure that the government and Albertans view decision-making through an environmental lens, to take into account the environmental impact of any decision that the government makes or individuals make and, secondly, to provide the necessary technical advice and expertise so that the decisions that are made using that environmental lens have some validity.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 1999, eight years ago, the Hub Oil explosion rocked the city of Calgary, killing two employees and causing significant soil and groundwater damage. To the Minister of Environment: was the operator of Hub Oil prosecuted to the full extent of the law, and if not, why not?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's the responsibility of anyone who causes damage to the environment, causes pollution, to clean that pollution up. In this particular case, Hub Oil is working with Alberta Environment, with the various stakeholders to put together a plan to do just that. As long as they continue to own that land, as long as they put in place the necessary provisions to ensure that any contamination does not go beyond the land in question, they're not in contravention of our legislation. So it's up to us to ensure that they follow through on their commitment.

**Dr. Swann:** That's the result of Bill 29 last year softening our environmental protection legislation.

Mr. Speaker, Hub Oil is refusing to actively treat and dispose of this contamination. At public meetings Hub Oil representatives have repeatedly stated that a risk management plan is too expensive. Could the Minister of Environment please explain how Hub Oil's risk management plan, that shifts responsibility for contamination to other parties, is consistent with the polluter-pays principle?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, in this particular case the risk management plan that has been proposed by Hub Oil has not been approved. That plan is in the process. Had it been approved, it would have been implemented by now. So I think the member actually answers his own question. If the plan was appropriate, if it was going to be approved, if it dealt with all the issues that have been raised by its stakeholders, it would have been approved. It has not.

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

### Government Initiatives

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some great things have happened in this province over the last six months. Government restructuring: Liberals didn't like it. Co-operation in the capital region: Liberals didn't like it. TILMA: Liberals didn't like it. Today 18 new schools, three of which are in my area: the Liberals didn't like it. My first question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing regarding the recently announced municipal sustainability initiative, which Liberals don't like. This new municipal funding is for operating and core capital projects. Can the minister tell us what projects municipalities will be able to undertake with this new cash?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the funding of the municipal sustainability initiatives is being sent out in the very near future. The work that was done by municipalities, providing input for some of the guidelines, those guidelines are being sent out to municipalities at the present time. I think it's a good question. One of the prime examples is of the city of Edmonton, where they are spending \$17.4 million on these recommendations to support a rehabilitation plan around the city of Edmonton.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Mr. Speaker, my first and last supplemental to the same minister. Affordable housing is a very important matter in the capital region and, I imagine, throughout the province. Can the minister advise: how is this money spent relevant to affordable housing, so that the Liberals have something to complain about?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Mr. Speaker, as you know, this government put \$285 million of new money into affordable housing, and we have municipalities that are working very closely with municipalities on special housing concerns. In fact, the positive input that has been put in is from the city of Calgary. The city of Calgary, who received \$63 million, is spending part of that money on 300 new affordable housing units plus a thousand rent supplements.

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

### Long-term Care Facilities

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government's enthusiasm for public health care privatization knows no bounds. Every time they have tried to openly privatize, they have met fierce resistance on the part of an overwhelming number of Albertans; they're proceeding nevertheless. Their latest target is long-term care. In fact, the government has been moving to privatize long-term care for some time. It's privatization by stealth. The Conservatives know it. They just don't want Albertans to. According to documents tabled yesterday by the Minister of Health and Wellness, there has been a steady decrease in the number of publicly operated long-term care beds in the province and at the same time a big increase in the privately owned . . .

**The Speaker:** Well, thank you, hon. member, now we'll proceed. No, no, no. I'm sorry, hon. member. Remember we've got a rule.

**Mr. Melchin:** Mr. Speaker, I've obviously anticipated the question that would have been asked. We want to thank him for the direction the government is taking to ensure that the seniors' care is there as

they would desire, in the format that they wish. Yesterday I had the opportunity, for example, of being in the Speaker's constituency at Shepherd's Care. Certainly, this might have been a private care. This is assisted living, not necessarily long-term care, but they have a whole range of facilities here in Edmonton also that can serve the specific needs. It doesn't even mean that you have to transfer the place in which you live. It's a matter sometimes of providing the health to where you are rather than having to make them move from a building to another building.

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

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seniors' concerns are the last thing this minister wants to address. The fact is that from 2001 to 2006 we lost close to 11,000 publicly run long-term care beds while the number of privately run beds increased by over 900. Why is this government quietly squeezing out quality public health care?

**Mr. Melchin:** On the contrary, we're actually working towards the direction of aging in place, allowing seniors to be able to live in their own facilities, in their own homes to the extent that they can. Many times those in long-term care actually even progress in health and can go back to assisted or designated assisted living. Their care and their standard of health do change. They're not perpetually having to be in a place where they might have to die.

In respect to whether it's private or public, it has always been a combination of private. The private sector has always participated in the provision of long-term care. That's why there's also a standard, provisions of continuing care that have been put in place to ensure that all facilities meet the requisite high standards of patient care.

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

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister knows that there are almost three times as many private supportive living units in Calgary than there are publicly owned, and there are twice as many privately run long-term care beds in Calgary than there are public ones. Why are seniors' lives being put at risk for the sake of a Conservative ideological bias toward privatization at all costs?

**Mr. Melchin:** Well, we're certainly glad to hear the opposition put on the table that they feel that everything should be public at all costs and that the private sector has no role in our lives. It's quite contrary to the whole development of this great country in which we live, in which you and I can make private choices, can have private ownership and even the provision of services to an individual that are private. In this case it is the level of care that's important and even sustaining a person in their own place.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

### Safety of Human Service Workers

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I raised some crucial questions about the health and safety of human services workers in this province. Unfortunately, I was not able to get the answers that these workers need, so today I will try again. Workers in the Department of Children's Services report the second highest long-term disability rate in government. Overall, many workers feel that the Department of Children's Services has failed to completely implement basic occupational health and safety measures. My question is to the Minister of Employment, Immigration and

Industry. What is the minister doing to help Children's Services fully implement occupational health and safety standards?

2:20

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

**Ms Evans:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I have identified in this House on a number of occasions, the occupational health and safety standards apply equivalently to all of those members of our staff that are covered. The questions that were raised yesterday: I've already asked my staff to make sure that we are networking with Children's Services to determine whether or not there is a concern that has been expressed that we should explore. I certainly take very seriously the mandate of trying to make the workplace as safe as possible. So we have taken that consideration. I will be hearing a report back, no doubt, and we'll share that with the hon. member. I know that the hon. member shares concerns about workers.

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

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Compassion fatigue is a tremendous problem for human service workers. The nature of social service work and constant case overloading can be both physically and emotionally draining. Of all Alberta government employees, workers in Children's Services comprise the youngest workforce but report the highest use of the employment assistance program, which deals with the emotional/psychological health of government employees. To the Minister of Employment, Immigration and Industry: what is being done to work with the Minister of Children's Services to reduce the physical and emotional toll caused by compassion fatigue?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, that's very specific to the compassion fatigue, and I think that there's a necessity to explore that. I would just say that in 59 centres where we also have in Employment, Immigration and Industry many counsellors, many social workers, many people that deal with compassionate issues related to low income, sometimes very difficult social circumstances in terms of children's benefits, in terms of family conflict, in terms of those kinds of circumstances which are stressors in family life, we have many social workers as well who do a very determined job to try and follow through on behalf of the clients as well as gain support. So we'll look at that in that context.

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

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you. Social service workers are often forced to enter alone into situations that armed police officers would not enter without their partners or flak jackets. Workers have told me that they have been called at home and told not to go to work the next day because the threat is too great. All too often social service workers are exposed to death threats, the presence of minor weapons like knives and baseball bats, and illegal drug use. To the Solicitor General: the main problem is that human service workers do not have access to the criminal and police records they need to identify clients that are a potential risk. What is your department doing to facilitate access for these workers?

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

**Mr. Lindsay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member raises a very legitimate concern. We are doing everything that we can in our department to ensure that all of those who work in the social programs have the information that they require to deal with their clients in an appropriate manner.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

### Municipal Sustainability Initiative Funding

**Rev. Abbott:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. As the chair of rural caucus I've heard that some municipalities did not receive as much grant funding under the new municipal sustainability initiative as they did in the last fiscal year for capital and operating expenses. Now, this seems inequitable. So what steps is the minister prepared to take in order to level this playing field?

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

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to emphasize that this government is responsive to the needs of municipalities. My ministry and myself have reviewed the situation, and I'm very pleased to announce that we are going to be providing supplemental support to those municipalities. We have said all along that no municipality should receive less, and we are supporting that with \$1.4 billion.

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

**Rev. Abbott:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's very good news. My first supplement to the same minister: who will qualify for this targeted investment? How do they get in on this action?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said before, last year there was a program in place, the target investment program. Some municipalities received more funding from the target investment program than they did from the municipal sustainability initiative. There are 56 smaller municipalities that are involved. Those are the municipalities that will be receiving that funding. There is one town, one municipality, and I believe 54 villages. Those municipalities will be contacted in the very near future.

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

**Rev. Abbott:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that municipalities need the assurance of long-term, predictable funding in order to do their planning, can the minister tell us how long this funding will remain in place?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we have committed to consulting with the municipalities and the organizations on the funding in years 2 and 3 and in the future. Year 2 we will have \$500 million available, year 3 \$600 million, and there is a commitment at one point to be ramped up to \$1.4 billion up to year 10. I can assure municipalities that we will be working with them in ensuring that that funding will be delivered to best address their needs.

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

### Farm Fuel Rebate Program

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the recent budget debates the Minister of Agriculture and Food downplayed the fact that his department had not reviewed or monitored the farm fuel benefit program. The minister claimed that desk audits had been completed as we go along. Desk audits seem like something that Enron would use to validate their budget. We know that millions of

dollars have been wasted. My first question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Will the minister admit that he was wrong when he made this statement, that no desk audits have in fact been completed and that the farm fuel benefit program has not been examined by this government since 1997?

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

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, yes, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar made some interesting allegations during the Committee of Supply, and he probably will come back to those again. I did not believe state that desk audits are completed. I said that we are now doing desk audits, which is the initial process that we're going to go through in our review.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you. Again, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister. If this government would follow the Alberta Liberals' advice and get rid of all the freeloaders on this farm fuel benefit program, there would be extra money for eligible farmers so that they could see a real drop in their fuel prices when they need it this spring. Now, will the minister commit to having a full audit done of this program before the next general election to determine how many millions of dollars have been lost, or does this minister require another 10 years to accomplish that task?

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Mr. Speaker, this is about the third time I've been asked about following the Liberals' lead. I think, probably, it has to be in the Liberals' handbook that all farmers are inherently dishonest because it comes back to that, it comes back to that, and it comes back to that.

**An Hon. Member:** He called them all freeloaders.

**Mr. Groeneveld:** He did. He absolutely did.

Mr. Speaker, we started the program. The Auditor General has called our attention to it, and we're proceeding as we go ahead. The hon. member also alleged in the paper a week ago that \$17 million to \$34 million probably was being cheated on by farmers.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If anyone should know, it should be the hon. minister, but it was Tory city slickers that ridiculed agricultural support programs during the PC leadership race. The current Minister of Finance knows all about it, as does the current minister of community development and services because it was his EA that was complaining about agricultural grants, not Alberta Liberals.

Now, can the minister explain why farmers in other jurisdictions such as Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and British Columbia have only seen minor increases in their electricity costs while Alberta farmers have seen a 38 per cent increase in theirs?

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Probably the biggest problem: there's not a whole lot of Liberal city slickers. That's probably a problem from the other side of the House.

As I said before, I'm a farmer. I wouldn't farm anywhere else in Canada, and I'm not paying any more for my power and fuels than anyone else.

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

### Law Enforcement Review Board

**Mr. Johnston:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A key factor in maintaining public confidence in policing is timely and effective decisions from bodies such as the Law Enforcement Review Board, which hears appeals from Albertans who have a complaint concerning police officer conduct and from police and peace officers who have been the subject of discipline arising from a complaint. However, the board has been without a permanent chair for some time, hampering its effectiveness and creating a large backlog of cases. My questions are to the Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security. Can he tell us what is being done to ensure that the board has the leadership it needs to function effectively?

2:30

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

**Mr. Lindsay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to confirm that Calgary lawyer John Phillips has been appointed chair of the Law Enforcement Review Board effective today. Mr. Phillips has 30 years' experience practising law in Alberta. His broad awareness of law enforcement and policing issues and processes makes him a valuable addition to the board. The appointment of Mr. Phillips ensures that the board's work will not be interrupted.

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

**Mr. Johnston:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. The Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police recently passed a resolution calling for increased staff and funding for the Law Enforcement Review Board. Can the minister tell us what his department is doing to address the backlog of cases before the board? When will these cases be cleared up?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, we have taken a number of steps to address some of these concerns brought forward. We are increasing the number of board members from seven to nine, we're having two or more board members sit as a separate panel, allowing two hearings to proceed at the same time, we have now built a permanent dedicated hearing room to help address scheduling issues, and we have made the chair a full-time position.

head:

### Statement by the Speaker

#### Spring Session Statistics

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

At this point hon. members might be interested in some numbers and statistics, recognizing that the Legislature will continue to sit, so these numbers will be amended tomorrow to give them current validity.

In this spring session of 2007 this is day 45. We've had 11 evening sittings. Last year, in 2006, we sat 42 days in the spring, including 28 evening sittings. In other words, we sat longer in 2007 than in 2006.

As of 6 o'clock last night this Assembly has sat for 14,873 minutes compared to 14,395 in 2006. In other words, there are nearly 500 more minutes as of 6 o'clock last night. If we sit today till 6 o'clock, that will be another 300 more minutes. That will be 800 more minutes, or 12 hours, more this year than last year. The number of hours as of 6 o'clock last night was 247 hours and 53 minutes compared to 239 hours and 55 minutes last year.

Thus far the words spoken in this Assembly this year are 2,014,117 as of 6 o'clock last night. Last year in the spring sitting it was 1,845,345 words.

Oral Question Period. This year, in 2007, we've had 10 question periods with 15 sets of questions, a set being three questions and three answers; 11 question periods with 16 sets of questions; and four with 17 sets of questions. In 2006 the Assembly had six with 15 sets. Remember: this year it was 10. Last year there were two with 16. This year there were 11. There were also four with seven.

The number of questions and answers in this Assembly in 2007 as of this question period, which ended just a minute or two ago, is 3,896 questions and answers compared to the 3,151 in 2006, a difference of 745. That does not include the 49 occasions when more than one minister responded to the same question.

This year the number of government bills that have thus far received third reading and Royal Assent is 20 compared to 42 last year. Government bills left on the Order Paper that we have – we'll see some progress, presumably, this afternoon – are 25 as compared to two in 2006. Since 1971 the number of bills left on the Order Paper varied between zero and 10 with the exception of this year, with 25; 1971, in which there were 22; and 1974, when there were 20.

Private members' public bills that have received Royal Assent is one in 2007, the same as in 2006. Since 1993, when the new provisions were made for private members' public bills to go through the process to actually receive royal assent, we've now had 41 of them.

In terms of sessional papers there'll be a few more tablings coming up, but it's essentially the same as last year. So far this year it's been 641; last year it was 646.

head: **Presenting Petitions**

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

**Mr. R. Miller:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm not going to read the preamble, but I am pleased to present a petition with 30 further names regarding rental difficulties that people are having in this province. The one point I would like to make is that these names were collected at the housing listening forum that was held recently at the Edmonton public library, and it's notable that the first two names on this petition under the area for address have indicated no fixed address.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three petitions today. The first one has 42 signatures, and it is the one that's calling on the government to finish the overpasses and interchanges at the locations where the Anthony Henday, the Edmonton ring road, intersects Lessard Road, Callingwood Road, and Cameron Heights Drive.

The second one has 60 signatures, and it's the one that is calling on 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.

I'm under the impression that this brings the total number of signatures to 1,940.

The third petition, Mr. Speaker, is the one talking about the pay parity for workers who work with people with disabilities. I've submitted it before. Today I'm submitting 152 signatures, which brings the total to 3,065.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have today a petition signed by 176 people who are concerned with staff remuneration for those who are working with persons with developmental disabilities, and they are from 11 communities: Arrowwood, Vulcan, Carmangay, Blackie, Champion, Nanton, Milo, Calgary, Lomond, Mossleigh, and Okotoks.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition signed by a number of constituents from Edmonton-Centre. It's the same petition that's been circulating, urging the government to take immediate and meaningful measures to help low-income and other Albertans with the escalating and frequent increases in monthly rental costs.

**The Speaker:** Before we proceed on this matter, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce a group visiting from China. They're individuals employed by the Ministry of Finance in China. They're up in the public gallery. They're being hosted by the University of Alberta School of Business. They are being accompanied, I believe, by John Doyle, if I'm correct. I will practice my Chinese pronunciation here if everyone will indulge me.

All the guests may rise and remain standing if you like. From the Financial Bureau of Gansu, Zhang Qingguo; from the Financial Bureau of Guangdong, Lin Hong; from the Financial Bureau of Tianjin, Han Lin; from the Financial Bureau of Hainan, Qui Xiaona; from the Financial Bureau of Shanxi, Sun Xiangrong; from the Financial Bureau of Shandong, Xia Ying; from the Financial Bureau of Xinjiang, Liu Yan; from the Financial Bureau of Chongqing, Leng Xiang; from the Financial Bureau of Changzhou, Wang Xin; from the Financial Bureau of Zhejiang, Hong Xiaoran; from the Financial Bureau of Shaanxi, Wang Bin; from the Financial Bureau of Xianyang, Nan Yan; from the Financial Bureau of Qinghai, Kui Yinghong; and from the Financial Bureau of Fujian, Hu Shanhong. I would ask everybody, please, to give them a warm, Canadian welcome.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Ni hao.

head: **2:40 Introduction of Bills**

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

#### **Bill 46** **Alberta Utilities Commission Act**

**Mr. Knight:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise and introduce for first reading Bill 46, the Alberta Utilities Commission Act. This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation will separate the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board into two separate regulatory bodies: a new Energy Resources Conservation Board and the Alberta utilities commission. An updated regulatory system supports this government's commitment to effectively manage growth pressures. There is an increase in applications brought on by increased oil and gas activity and the demand for electricity generation and transmission. Alberta has a world-renowned regulatory system for our energy industry, and this restructuring builds on that success and will ensure that Albertans have access to a robust regulatory authority as we develop our resource and utility systems. I would like to thank all the participating agencies for their co-operation and hard work on this important piece of legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 46 read a first time]

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

#### **Bill 214 Healthy Futures Act**

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce private member's Bill 214, the Healthy Futures Act.

The purpose of Bill 214 is to require government policy decisions to undergo a health impact assessment to examine a policy's effect on a wide range of factors like income, education, and environment that influence the health of our society. It is more sensible and cost effective to focus on prevention rather than to deal with problems created by unhealthy public policy.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to give my thanks for the assistance I received from staff Lori Deluca and Glen Hughes and also to express my appreciation to the table officers for their help and their immense assistance on this.

Thank you so much.

[Motion carried; Bill 214 read a first time]

head: **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table today a presentation to the Alberta Residential Tenancies Advisory Committee, very clearly a nonpartisan group, on the experience with rent control in Ontario, showing what an absolutely disastrous effect it had on the development of rental properties and how it affected the most vulnerable in society and their ability to access any kind of lodging under rent controls.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour to rise today on behalf of the Minister of Health and Wellness to table an e-mail from a constituent of his from the constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud, one Kayla England, who raises some questions and expresses some concerns about seismic testing at Marie Lake.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have four tablings today. Youthful democracy is alive and well at Sir Winston Churchill high school in Calgary-Varsity as my first two tablings today will attest. The first set of letters my office received in favour of lowering the

working age were written by Them Hoang, Sina Behbahaninia, Sid Mehra, and Vivian Cho.

The second set of letters my office received were opposed to lowering the working age and were written by Harry Han, Hyungmo Gu, Amir Mominov, Flora Kim, Qurat-ul-ain Khan, Ashley Li, Kent Feng, Mehrgan Devony\*, Winnie Hsiung, Tiago Lins, Nina Chang, Laima Ekhlis, and Simone Mehra.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Sir Winston Churchill ESL students and their teacher, Jodi Hill\*, for voicing their concerns to you and through you to all members of this House.

My third tabling is of four letters from Janet McTavish, Ayodele Sombo, Suzanne and Grant Basiuk, and Sandra Harland expressing great concern over the lack of government support for school-age child care.

Mr. Speaker, my final tabling of the session comes from Carla Tetz, who writes, "We had the hope that perhaps we could stay in Calgary, maintain our employment and raise our children here . . . but it is apparent that we must move due to high rental increase."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have four tablings today. The first is a petition from Mr. Mike Judd of Pincher Creek enclosing 368 signatures from the Friends of Mount Bacchus calling for "a moratorium on development on the eastern slopes (particularly extractive industry), and full scale public hearings to determine the future of one of Canada's premier ecosystems."

The second was tabled inappropriately earlier this week as a petition and is from Tanya Woodruff of the Tomahawk area, with 120 signatures calling for exposure guidelines to be strengthened for children, pregnant women, and the elderly in relation to schools, particularly close to sour gas operations.

The third is a letter from Mr. Eric Musekamp of the Farmworkers Union of Alberta recognizing the death of Kevan Chandler, a farm worker through Tongue Creek Feeders, one year ago this week and calling on the government to act to address basic minimum work standards to protect agricultural workers.

The fourth, again from Mr. Musekamp, is a letter to the Alberta government recognizing the third annual farm worker day, August 20, and calling for raised awareness of the working conditions faced by agricultural workers and remembering those that have died.

Mr. Speaker, a further one is from a Calgary teacher in my constituency of Calgary-Mountain View, Wendy Kurchak, and I quote: "Mr. Liepert seemed to say that teachers' salaries are the cause of operating cost deficits" and suggested that the school boards need extra operating funds as a result. She begs to differ.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have an e-mail with the appropriate number of copies to table today. It's from a constituent of Edmonton-Mill Woods stating:

I am gravely concerned and disappointed about the government's lack of commitment to solve the "unfunded liability" for Alberta teachers. Without threats or conditions this issue needs to be solved immediately so that working teachers and pensioners can receive the monies that are owing them.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague the Leader of the Official Opposition I'd like to table

\*These spellings could not be verified at the time of publication.

the appropriate number of copies of a document we received through a FOIP request which clearly shows that the racing industry renewal initiative has been continued for a 10-year time period.

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

**Mr. R. Miller:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. I beg your indulgence; they may both be a little long. The first is some summer reading which is highly recommended for all members of this Legislature. It's a university paper written by a brilliant young man who serves as the chief page at the Senate in Ottawa. His name is David Taylor. The title of the paper is *Glass Houses: A Critical Analysis of Democracy in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, Based on the Procedures and Practices of the Senate of Canada*.

The second tabling I have this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, is the program from the city of Edmonton's 56th annual Salute to Excellence, the hall of fame induction ceremony. I'd just like to read off the names of those awarded if I could, please. In the arts and culture category: Walter Jule and Madge McCready. In the community service hall of fame: Margaret Weir Andrekson, Krishan Joshee, Dr. Dianne Kipnes, Mr. Irving Kipnes, and Reverend Donald Mayne. In the sports hall of fame: Orville Franchuk, Don Horwood, Leigh McMillan, and Danielle Peers. I would like to thank all of those fine individuals for their contributions to this city.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I have two tablings today. I'm tabling first of all copies of a rent notice received by Mike and Patti Beaudry. Like thousands of other Albertans, they received this notice shortly after the government's policy on rent guidelines was announced. The notice is for \$400 per month more.

Also, a notice from a constituent named Linda Retallack. Linda is facing an increase of \$500 per month.

Mr. Speaker, neither Mike and Patti nor Linda have read the documents tabled by the hon. President of the Treasury Board, so they don't yet understand how well off they actually are.

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

2:50

**Mr. Elsalhy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your patience while I table four documents today. The first and second are letters from Edmonton-McClung constituent Mr. Eric Lindstrom. In his first letter he talks about the rental crisis and the need to prevent the sale of rental buildings and for landlords to replace what they've already sold and also for rent controls to protect tenants.

The second is also from Mr. Lindstrom, in which he highlights the income or financial angle in terms of pensions, social assistance, inflation, and the cost of living.

The third tabling, Mr. Speaker, is from Edmonton-McClung resident John LeBlanc, a senior. Mr. LeBlanc wants the education taxes paid by seniors from 1993 till now refunded and to stop collecting this tax from seniors.

The fourth and last is from my constituent Ype Bouma and titled Driving in Alberta. Mr. Bouma has concerns and ideas with respect to drivers' behaviour, road design, planning, signage, and maintenance as well as vehicle maintenance and inspections. He even attached diagrams and pictures for everyone's reference.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

Hon. members, I'm pleased to table with the Assembly today the 20th annual report of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for the

calendar year ended December 31, 2006. It also includes the audited financial statements for the fiscal years 2005-2006 and the 10th annual report of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Alberta branch. All members will receive a copy shortly.

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 Energy: responses to questions raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on June 7, 2007, in Department of Energy 2007-08 main estimates debate.

On behalf of the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports: responses to questions raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, the hon. Member for Strathcona, and the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill on June 5, 2007, in the Department of Seniors and Community Supports 2007-08 main estimates debate.

On behalf of the Minister of Children's Services: response to Written Question 16 asked for by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods on June 11, 2007.

On behalf of the Minister of Health and Wellness: pursuant to the Pharmaceutical Profession Act the Alberta College of Pharmacists' annual report 2006-2007; pursuant to the Health Professions Act the Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists' 2006 annual report, the Alberta College of Optometrists' annual report to government 2006, and the Alberta College of Medical Laboratory Technologists' 2006 annual report.

head: **Projected Government Business**

**Ms Blakeman:** Under Standing Order 7(6), I think it is, could I ask one of the government House leaders to share with us the projected government business for next week?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, after giving it due consideration and careful thought, I've come to the conclusion that we should be able to finish the business of the House today, and it will not be necessary for us to meet next week.

head: **Orders of the Day**

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

**Bill 43  
Appropriation Act, 2007**

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

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my pleasure to rise today to move third reading of Bill 43, the Appropriation Act, 2007.

Mr. Speaker, the budget has undergone scrutiny for many days and many hours here in the House. Now it is truly time to take the budget to Albertans and let them see whether the government has reached and reacted to their priorities. I look forward to the opportunity to do that very shortly.

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

**Mr. Agnihotri:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure to rise and speak on the Appropriation Act, 2007. I'll be very brief. I want to talk about the ministry of infrastructure. As we all know, road conditions all over Alberta are really bad. Even though we put lots of money into this department, I still receive so



many complaints, not only in Edmonton but all over Alberta. What's the reason? I mean, I know that some members are saying that it's shortages of labour and that it's very hard for the contractors to finish the work in time.

Another thing I want to discuss, you know, in this ministry is that new areas, especially in my constituency, are growing fast. The new areas need new schools and new libraries and rec centres, and when I see the capital plan from the government side and we don't see that for at least – what? – three or four years, I'm surprised. I want to ask the minister concerned what answer he has for those people who live in the new areas. Where would the children go for the next three or four years? So new schools, new libraries, rec centres for the new areas: they need them desperately. Those are necessities, I think, for my constituents in that area.

The next question I want to ask is to the minister of seniors. Some seniors are complaining that some drugs are not included in the plans, and they have to pay money from their pocket. I just want to ask the minister if he has any plan to cover all the medicines for the seniors. They are also complaining about the transportation. Some seniors are complaining about the property education tax and also complaining about long-term care centres.

The next ones I want to move to are the ministries of education and postsecondary education: student loans, students' tuition fees, housing for the students, and parking facilities in the university area. You know, we need attention on those things for our students, our future, I should say. We need more apprenticeship spaces for them if we want a long-term solution for the shortages of labour in this province. Definitely we need some new colleges, universities for semiskilled workers.

Next I want to move on to some miscellaneous questions. You know, last year this government passed Bill 20, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Amendment Act, 2006. Is there any plan to reverse that because there's lots of criticism? I think the members sitting on the other side might have heard from some stakeholders that if they really are serious about transparency and accountability, they should reverse this Bill 20 and prove that they are transparent.

Another thing I already asked during the budget debate is about the general revenue fund, that the blue book is not up to date. We can't find lots of information in there. I want to see the full details. It would be really nice if the minister concerned takes that seriously and improves a little bit on that blue book for transparency.

My next question is on the website for all the grants: CIP, CFEP, and many others. The website is still not up to date. It's not showing the full details of how they get the grant, under which grants, and what the rules and regulations are. It's not very clear. I think we should work on the government's website, you know, especially with the government's new slogan that they want to be transparent. If they really are serious about this, then they should update the website, especially the rules and regulations and even on some of the grants. They don't even have rules in place right now. So, you know, the government should work on this.

3:00

Now, my next few questions are about my own portfolio, the Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture. Yesterday, I think, I asked the question about the book publishing companies and the film industry. We are losing the cultural and arts sector industry, and I request once again – I know I asked the question, and still the question was not answered properly – the hon. minister to reconsider their stand on this. I want the minister and this government to help this industry, help this sector as much as possible.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Artists, especially, are suffering because of inflation. You know, in this sector they really work hard, and I think that if we are serious about promoting arts and culture in this province, we should seriously help this sector. If this sector flourished, then it would help all other ministries, like health care, even education. The artists play a really important role in that. I don't want to go into details, but the minister knows how important the arts and culture sector is in this province.

The next questions I want to ask the minister concern the question of human rights. People know that the system takes lots of time. If somebody complains to the Human Rights Commission, it will take years. How can we find the solution to speed up the application process so that more and more people who are discriminated against can somehow complain to the Human Rights Commission? So far that's the only reason they don't.

I've asked this question about the sports policy many times, and I still don't see the sports policy. I heard that this policy was made, I think, a long time ago but never implemented. I once again request the minister concerned to implement the sports policy so that we have the policy long term, especially for the new areas, when and where we can have new schools, recreational facilities, and school grounds, et cetera.

I think some other members want to speak on the appropriation bill, and that's all I have to say, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to third reading of Bill 43, which represents the Appropriation Act, 2007. It is our view that the Assembly should not accept the Appropriation Act, Bill 43, for a number of very important reasons. Most importantly, we don't believe that this budget actually deals with the real problems facing Albertans in this period of the overheated economy and the extremely rapid growth that we're seeing in the province.

Mr. Speaker, before I elaborate on that, I would like to introduce an amendment to the bill, which I will provide copies of to all members and to the table. I will move that

Bill 43, Appropriation Act, 2007, be not now read a third time because the Legislative Assembly believes that the expenditures contained therein fail to deliver on the government's promise to manage pressures created by Alberta's overheated economy, particularly regarding infrastructure, health, education, and housing.

Mr. Speaker, this is, in fact, a nonconfidence motion in the government. Should the motion pass, the government falls.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, we will allow the pages a moment to distribute the amendment, and we'll refer to the amendment as amendment A1.

Hon. member, you may proceed.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We believe that this bill should not now be read at this time because the expenditures contained therein fail to deliver on the government's promise to manage pressures created by Alberta's overheated economy, particularly regarding infrastructure, health, education, housing, and royalties. In terms of the economy the Premier was very clear right after he was elected as leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and thereby became the Premier of the province that the government would not touch the brake with respect to the economy.

Mr. Speaker, the government has created conditions for an overheated economy through a number of measures. Extremely low

royalties is the main one, the elimination of most environmental regulation in the area surrounding the tar sands at Fort McMurray being the other one, and the third one is, of course, creating conditions for the undermining of legitimate trade unions working in the oil sands through the employer-friendly unions like CLAC, the merit shop, and, of course, the temporary foreign workers program, which has left thousands of qualified Alberta tradespeople working at other jobs rather than the ones they are trained for.

The entire development of the tar sands in the present circumstances is not being done, in our view, in the interests of the people of Alberta and certainly not in the long-term interests of the people of Alberta, Mr. Speaker. They are being done in the interests of the foreign oil companies, the giant energy corporations, and, of course, in the interests of the George Bush administration's energy policy, which is to find a safe, secure, and relatively cheap source of energy given that their adventure in Iraq has come to a rather bad end. It's pretty clear that the invasion of Iraq was plan A for the Bush administration, and Alberta's tar sands and this government's policies around that are plan B.

I want to make it perfectly clear that we believe that the provincial government is selling out Alberta's natural resources. They are selling them for a price well below what other jurisdictions are requiring. Of course, the main examples that are most often cited are Alaska and Norway, but I think other members have during debate in this Assembly brought forward information that shows that many American states have much higher royalties than Alberta does. Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate that I think it's absolutely unacceptable that we have a royalty regime in this province that allows much of the oil produced in Fort McMurray in the tar sands to be sold with only 1 per cent royalty being collected. That means that there's not enough value being created for Albertans and particularly for future generations of Albertans.

3:10

Mr. Speaker, I think that's one of the major issues we need to deal with because unless the government has a plan, a rational plan, for the development of the Alberta economy and particularly the tar sands, no amount of expenditure on infrastructure is going to be able to close the gap, and I think it's time the government realized that. There's nothing in the budget which addresses the main indicators of growth pressures. I want to just say that provincial inflation is now 5 and a half per cent, which is at its highest in 15 years in Canada. A labour shortage is grinding away productivity across the province. The housing and construction industry is looking at 25 per cent increases in building costs, and rents are increasing at twice the rate of inflation.

I don't think that the lack of a plan on the part of the Conservative Party, the Conservative government which is reflected in this budget is going to resolve these issues. In fact, I think it will only become worse. It's not management, Mr. Speaker. To quote Stephen Colbert: this is like rearranging the deck chairs on the *Hindenburg*.

I want to also talk a little bit about infrastructure. We've done some research on this, Mr. Speaker, and more needs to be done. We estimate that the debt of this province, if you measure it in terms of infrastructure, is close to \$20 billion. I remind the House that when former Premier Klein was elected as leader of the Conservative Party and became the Premier of the province, he talked about the \$23 billion that the province owed. That was the debt of the province when Ralph Klein became the Premier of the province. He tried to claim that he had paid it all down, but of course if you look at the cost for the infrastructure that exists, you'll see that there's \$20 billion or close to that in debt remaining in terms of the infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, \$20 billion is a lot of money. This budget has about \$600 million earmarked for capital projects. There are thousands of kilometres of roads and highways that have not been repaired. There's an estimated \$5 billion of infrastructure deficit in Calgary. Over a hundred new school requests have been ignored, with cost overruns and delays with the health care infrastructure. I just want to indicate that there's less than an inflationary increase for operating budgets, a 5 per cent decrease in capital funds for schools – no budgetary planning for the ATA, and school board negotiations are coming up – and there's more prescribed funding tying the hands of schools and school boards.

In terms of health, hospital beds and wards are not being used because of severe health professional shortage: 1,500 doctors short, 34,000 health professionals short in the next few years. Calgary health and other regions have a constant state of code burgundies and code reds. We have unforgivable delays and, subsequently, immense cost overruns in projects like the Calgary south hospital. The government refuses to be accountable and release the health workforce strategy. We have no idea how the \$300 million set aside for the health workforce will alleviate the workforce pressures.

Mr. Speaker, I want to come to housing, which is the most severe problem facing this government and, I think, one that they have dropped the ball on rather badly. Renters are stuck between a rock and a hard place. Rent is rising at twice the rate of inflation, but wages aren't even matching inflation. Low-income and fixed-income families, seniors, people with disabilities, and AISH recipients are facing housing hardships. The middle class will whittle away to nothing. Its disposable income is eaten by rent increases. But the government's limited plan will not help them, and they're becoming desperate and destitute. What is needed is what the government has repeatedly rejected: the need for rent guidelines.

I want to just indicate in closing that that is, I think, just a tragic decision on the part of this government and one that has doomed tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands of Alberta families to loss of their homes, loss of their disposable income, and in many cases has doomed them to poverty.

So, Mr. Speaker, we cannot support the bill, and we do not believe that it should be passed at this time. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) allows for questions or comments. The hon. Minister of International, Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Relations.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Yes. Thank you very much. I might have misunderstood what the hon. member had suggested, but coming from the oil sands capital of the world, which I'm very proud to have served as a mayor and alderman – and it is my home, and with our new one-month-old son we'll breathe the beautiful air in Fort McMurray and, I might also say, drink the beautiful water in Fort McMurray. Often it is said that politicians are inherently selfish. I can assure you that I will continue to do what this government is doing: ensuring protection of the environment and ensuring that all of us will enjoy the wonderful resource we've been blessed with.

I could interpret from what the hon. member has suggested that he really would like to see people out of work in my community of Fort McMurray. I could not disagree any more with what he is suggesting. The oil sands capital of the world, I might also remind the hon. member, as much as the New Democrats may want to shut down this economic opportunity – you know, the New Democrats have a wonderful reputation for working with unions as does this member in this government. I'm wondering what he is saying to the good union folks that are in Fort McMurray when really what he's suggesting is: shut down their jobs.

**Mr. Mason:** No.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Well, that's what I interpret. Maybe he needs to clarify, but I'm calling a spade a shovel here, and what I'm saying is that you're saying: shut it down. I could not disagree more with that because I want people to be able to feed their families, with a good job, while protecting the environment.

Let me add perspective as well. I remember that this government in its planning, and planning well out into the future, had a bridge to nowhere that was called the Peter Lougheed Bridge, a \$50 million bridge. It crossed the Athabasca River. Everyone joked. The opposition joked because of the fact that it was a waste of taxpayer money. Well, now that bridge to nowhere is a bridge to a hundred billion dollars of economic opportunities for jobs. So ultimately we can protect and sustain the environment, give people jobs so they can feed their families, and I also even . . .

**Mr. Mason:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We have a point of order.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Okay. Well, I get to finish my point, don't I? What's the point of order? What citations?

**The Deputy Speaker:** We'll deal with the point of order, and then you can finish.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona on the point of order.

**Dr. Pannu:** I'm just seeking clarification. Is he going to ask a question, or is he speaking to the amendment? That's not clear.

**The Deputy Speaker:** What's your citation?

**Dr. Pannu:** Standing Order 29(2)(a). Is he speaking to 29(2)(a), or is he speaking on the motion itself?

**The Deputy Speaker:** This is dealing with Standing Order 29(2)(a) where there's a five-minute question and comment period on what the previous speaker has said. That's what he's talking on. He's not speaking on the amendment; he's providing a comment, the comments he wishes to have. Previously, the House has allowed a lot of leeway on that particular situation, including that a member can stand up and ask for the speaker to continue for the remainder of the five minutes. So I feel that I have to allow the same privilege to this member to make his comments on what the previous member has stated.

So continue.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I might also say that I hope that the commentary doesn't take away from my five minutes.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It didn't.

**Mr. Boutilier:** It didn't. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would also like to be able to say that as we move forward, we had a bridge to nowhere that was criticized by others because we had planned ahead. We had streets paved, with fire hydrants and curbs, that people used to teach their kids to drive on, and we didn't have any homes on the investment of money that was put into it.

Let me just add – and the hon. member also sat on a municipal council here in Edmonton, a very good council – that it was interesting. We had a water treatment plant that we had planned ahead on, working in partnership with the provincial government, that accommodated water for 85,000 people – 85,000 people – and we were criticized because at the time we only had 35,000 people living there, enjoying the economic developments of the oil sands.

3:20

I had the opportunity and watched the fiscal regime that many people are critical of relative to the royalty regime that is in place today. Make no mistake about it. Working in partnership with the federal government that the fiscal regime that was signed when the Prime Minister came here with our Premier and the Minister of Energy back in late 1996 – I had the honour of being mayor – that public policy has attracted over a hundred billion dollars of investment opportunity. You know what? That is helping Edmonton. I might add to the hon. member, who comes from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, that this has created \$45 billion of direct and indirect jobs for the good folks here in Edmonton and in Calgary. It's been doing that, and it's having a tremendous impact all across Canada.

I do not ever want to see this type of example of something shutting out. Perhaps the hon. member can stand up and clarify what he's saying, but I have on what he has said assumed that he really wants to shut down the oil sands. Now, if he's suggesting not, I would appreciate him standing up. We can stand together and hold our hands, saying: full speed ahead with the oil sands with the good plan that we have.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, you get to respond.

**Mr. Mason:** Neither one, Mr. Speaker. Steady, progressive development for full employment for Albertans and manage the tar sands in a way that benefits Albertans, both this generation and generations to come.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Anyone else on Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Okay.

Does anyone wish to speak on the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

**Dr. Pannu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the NDP opposition in the House has given an eloquent explanation for the motion before the House, so I don't need to spend too much time on repeating what my leader had to say. But I do want to put on record a couple of concerns which have led this caucus to bring this motion forward by way of our leader as a presentation just concluded. In this House in response to all kinds of questions during estimates debate and during question period the Minister of Education has been claiming that the Education budget increase is more than adequate. He uses a year, '97 for example, to draw attention to the fact of how much increase the budget has experienced. I want to set the record straight.

Yesterday in the House during question period he talked about an 85 per cent increase in the Education budget between '97 and 2007. Mr. Speaker, I want to draw the attention of the House to the fact that that's absolutely misleading – absolutely misleading. If you adjust it for . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, are you speaking to the amendment, or are you speaking to issues that happened yesterday in the House?

**Dr. Pannu:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, speaking to the amendment before us.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Please restrict your comments to the amendment.

**Dr. Pannu:** Indeed. The amendment draws attention to the fact that the budget has failed to address the serious problems that this budget creates and that this government has created over the years for

education. Education is the most important responsibility that the government had, to secure the future of this province, to provide the best education possible for our children who are in school now so that they will become the guarantors of future prosperity. This budget fails, Mr. Speaker, and this is why this motion is before the House. Why this budget fails is because it doesn't provide enough money. That's the point that I was trying to make.

In 2007 dollars the increase in the Education budget from '93 to 2007 is 11.5 per cent, not 85 per cent. Again, in terms of 2007 dollars the difference between the 1997 and 2007 budgets is only 30 per cent, not 85 per cent as the minister has been claiming.

Now, on the other side, inflation over these years has gone way past 30 per cent. So the actual budget, the Education budget, included in the current 2007-2008 budget, in real value, in fact now means less in terms of money available to schools if you adjust for inflation and if you choose the right year for comparison.

I just want to set the record straight on that, Mr. Speaker. With that I conclude my remarks on the motion.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is again available.

Seeing none, are there others wishing to speak on the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. R. Miller:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll try to be brief. I will be the first to concede that I, like the members of the NDP opposition, do not have a lot of confidence in this budget to address the promises that have been made by the government, and for the most part I agree with the sentiments expressed in this amendment. However, I do believe that the public service needs to be paid. The work of the government has to proceed, and I think that this amendment is nothing more than grandstanding of the highest nature.

The Official Opposition is long on record as having expressed our lack of support for the way that the Conservatives are managing this province, and I believe we've chosen a much more appropriate way to express that concern, Mr. Speaker. We held a series of standing votes under the Standing Orders where we took out those areas of the budget that we had concerns about and expressed our concern through that. As I say, I think that was a more appropriate way to do this. I don't believe we can accomplish much here today that hasn't already been accomplished, and for those reasons I cannot support this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Again, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for question and comment.

Seeing none, does anyone else wish to participate on the amendment?

See none, does the mover wish to close?

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Now, does anyone wish to participate back on the debate?

**Mr. R. Miller:** Again, very briefly, Mr. Speaker, I've had a number of opportunities to speak on Bill 43 and the budget in general during supply estimates.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We have a point of order.

**Mr. Mason:** My understanding, Mr. Speaker, is that a reasoned amendment on third reading ends debate on the main motion. Is that not correct?

**Ms Blakeman:** No. Only a hoist.

**Mr. Mason:** Only a hoist.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Do you have a citation to show that?

**Mr. Mason:** No. I guess that I'm wrong.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We're back on the debate. Hon. member, please proceed.

**Mr. R. Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It must be the last day of school, I guess. I don't know.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to reiterate the concerns that I've made in the past regarding the lack of a savings plan in this budget. It causes me a great deal of concern as someone who would aspire to be the Finance minister for this province.

I'm particularly anxious to point out to members of this Assembly and all Albertans that the current Finance minister six months ago to the day believed in eliminating health care premiums, and somewhere over the last six months that seems to have evaporated. It's not represented in this budget, and I think that's unfortunate.

Six months ago to the day the current Finance minister was supportive of a resource revenue savings plan. That's not represented in this budget, and I believe that that's unfortunate.

Six months ago to the day the current Finance minister was supportive of the idea of capping increased spending at the combined rate of growth of inflation and population. That's not reflected in this budget, and I believe that's unfortunate.

I would hope that over the next several months, as the government does its planning for budget 2008, the Finance minister will perhaps revert to his old ways and find a way to convince his colleagues of the merits of those three very, very important initiatives, which are all reflected in Funding Alberta's Future, the document which the Official Opposition has produced. Not only the current Finance minister but, frankly, a number of people who sought the leadership of the Conservative party also supported similar initiatives.

3:30

I think there is a great deal of willingness on behalf of the people of this province to move in that direction, and I can only hope that the government will see the light, as it were. They've certainly come to recognize the will of the people when it comes to initiatives such as a broader ban on smoking in public buildings. I'm just hoping that they will as well recognize the wish of the people of this province to save some of the wealth that we're blessed with today to eliminate health care premiums, which has been high on many people's lists for a long time, and to find a way to cap spending at the rate of growth and inflation. Those are three priorities for this opposition, and I would strongly encourage them to be priorities for the government as they plan next year's budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for anyone.

Seeing none, does anyone else wish to participate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going through my files of issues and concerns. Indeed, a couple of them come to mind here. I am particularly interested – and this is a cross-ministry concern – about what overriding policies the government has and what specific policies in each ministry are existing around

specific strategies to protect people's personal information. I know that we have the overriding legislation available from the Health Information Act and PIPA, but I'm increasingly concerned with what I see around the collection of people's personal information, the posting of it on computers, and the sharing of it by Internet.

Even if it's just sending some information from one place to another, it's very difficult once it's on the Internet to be able to control it. I'm sure that many of us as politicians have experienced that you respond to one constituent's e-mail, and they then forward it on to their Facebook companions or whatever else, and then you start hearing back from 50 other people. When you answered that first e-mail, you weren't thinking that it was going to go to 50 other people, not that you're worried about what you said. That's the power of the Internet. It really can go out there to thousands and thousands of people.

I'm increasingly concerned with what the government is doing. If you're just being silent because you've got a plan well in hand and you know what it is and you don't want to share it with the bad guys, okay. Fine. But you need to signal something to people like me and to members of the public that you do have something quite concrete. If you're being silent because you don't have anything, then that's a deeper problem.

You know, I look at some of the pieces of information that have come my way, like the ability now to transfer personal information that is stored on one kind of document like a credit card or a passport or even the pass cards that we have. There's personal information that's electronically stored on this. The ability now to be able to harvest the information off of this and other kinds of documents and to be able to then share that – what strategies does the government have in place to be protecting us about this?

The other one is around using the voice-over Internet protocol and the ability now of some particularly inventive hackers to be able to harvest the phone numbers that people are actually trying to phone on either end off of that kind of information.

At the same time, I notice ever more information being requested from certain groups of people. I remember an article in which our own chief of police in speaking I think to a group of his colleagues was expressing concern that there were limitations on how much information they can get on people and that, boy, they'd sure like to have more. I mean, in this day and age where there are GPS chips in your cellphones, I think we need to have a better overall strategy about this.

It's not something that you can tag to any one particular department. It is something that I wish I could see better research being employed and funds being expended on across the board. I think as legislators this is going to become an increasing problem for us for two sides. One, we need to educate the public to beware and to be careful about how much personal information they give out. At the same time, we as government are trying to collect that very same information from people to use to be able to analyze that information and help us to make better decisions based on what we can get out of that. I think it's an ongoing area of concern.

The next issue that I want to raise is around the Human Rights Commission and just some observations that I have around that. I don't feel that it's working as it should be. You know, people have now become reconciled in some cases to avoiding the Human Rights Commission because it just takes forever, and that's a quote from some of my constituents. I note that in B.C. cases go straight to tribunal, but here there are not enough resources to have investigators for human rights. So we end up with a first attempt at conciliation, and we end up with a partial investigation, a statement of fact.

Then the director will either dismiss it or allow it to go forward. Then an HRC panel looks at it, and at that point it leaves the control of the Human Rights Commission and goes to the chief commissioner.

The lawyers aren't terribly happy with this system. They say that it doesn't work and that the remedies from the Human Rights Commission are too low to be meaningful. I question whether it's useful. The focus and the mandate of the commission as it sits now is not to punish but to try and put people back in the position they would have been in but for the discrimination. But the process that seems to be working to support that doesn't seem to be working, is what I'm trying to say.

I think it could be argued that the website is not very happy, and I'm putting a very positive spin on the words that were actually used to describe it. In particular, it's very difficult to do any research on the judgments. The panel judgments are listed by the year but not by the issue. You don't go on there looking for what the Human Rights Commission did in any given year. You go on there looking for other cases of discrimination based on gender or, you know, discrimination based on sexual orientation or some such thing. You don't go on there looking: gee, I wonder what they did in 1967. Those were a couple of the additional concerns that I wanted to raise while I had the opportunity.

If I can just clarify, I did raise yesterday that the government has set up two policies which are in conflict with each other. I was talking specifically about the decision-making process for school boards to prioritize where they want their schools built. Of course, there's great encouragement there to have the school boards close some schools in order to have a utilization rate that would enable them to open new ones. That policy is pitted against policies that our urban municipalities, our metro municipalities are trying to use to keep the inner part of our cities, not necessarily meaning the inner city but the centre of our cities, vital and to keep schools open there in some form or another and to make use of the building. There's nothing like having, basically, a square block of darkness in the middle of a community to really suck the life out of that community. The building is dark, it's not occupied at night, there are no lights on in it, and it is literally a black hole. It really damages neighbourhoods.

### 3:40

My communities in Edmonton-Centre were amongst the first wave of schools that got closed. Now, this would be eight years ago or so. I can really see the effect of that, particularly in Queen Mary Park, where we had the Queen Mary Park elementary school close. What it's done to that community is really sad because it is a meeting place for the community. Even if people don't have kids, they see the kids walk by. They see the parents walk by. They see people. You know, when there's a special night at the school, other people come to hear the Christmas choir and those kinds of things. It does bring a community together. When that school is gone and when there's no activity happening in that building, you lose that opportunity to connect. It's that connection that makes those communities safe. It has people knowing who's around, who's part of the community. They talk to each other. They know who should be there and who shouldn't be there. It does help to build communities. I'm quite concerned about this. I really urge the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Minister of Education to make note of my comments here and to see if there isn't a way to stop pitting these two policies against each other.

Thank you for the opportunity to raise those additional issues around the appropriation budget. I appreciate it. I will let others make comments. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) does anyone wish to make any comments?

[Motion carried; Bill 43 read a third time]

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

[Mr. Marz in the chair]

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

**Bill 18  
Judicature Amendment Act, 2007**

**The Chair:** Hon. members, debate was adjourned on amendment A1, so we are still considering amendment A1. Are there any members who wish to participate in the debate on A1? The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

**Dr. Brown:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General I'm pleased to continue the discussion in Committee of the Whole on Bill 18, the Judicature Amendment Act, 2007. Yesterday in relation to the House amendment to section 23(2)(d) I was in the process of stating the rationale for that amendment. The report on vexatious litigants, as I was saying, done by the Law Reform Commission of Nova Scotia included the factor of, as an example, vexatious behaviour, and we interpreted the word inappropriately to include some level of persistence. But in light of the comments made by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, we are agreeable to having that clarified. We would propose to amend section 23(2)(d) to state: "persistently using previously raised grounds and issues in subsequent proceedings inappropriately."

The third House amendment is in regard to section 23.1(3), which states: "The Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Alberta has the right to appear and be heard in person or by counsel on an application under subsection (1)." The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung sought confirmation that the Attorney General would not be denied or prevented from appearing or being heard on vexatious litigant hearings initiated by a court on its own motion. I can confirm that there should be no difference between an application and a court's motion. Therefore, we propose to amend section 23.1(3) to clarify that the Attorney General has the right to appear and be heard at hearings initiated by a court on its own motion. The wording of the subsection would be: "The Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Alberta has the right to appear and be heard in person or by counsel on an application or a Court's motion under subsection (1) or (4)."

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the fourth House amendment is to section 23.1(6), which provides: "the Court of Appeal or a justice of the Court of Queen's Bench may make an order . . . binding on any one or more of the other Courts." I am putting forward an amendment to delete the words "a justice of" preceding "the Court of Queen's Bench." As a rule of interpretation the word "justice," of course, refers only to a judge of the Court of Queen's Bench, and this amendment would clarify that masters in chambers of the Court of Queen's Bench would also be allowed to make such orders that may be binding on one or more of the other courts. The current section does not limit the masters' authority in this regard, and the intention of Bill 18 is simply to give the courts additional powers, not to take away any powers.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to thank the members opposite for their constructive comments on the bill in second reading. Their input certainly helped to formulate the House amendments, and I think they will clarify and improve the legislation.

I would now like to move the amendments as stated to the House.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona on amendment A1.

**Dr. Pannu:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'll be very brief. I want to just indicate my pleasure at the fact that the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill has recognized and incorporated, as a matter of fact, some of the suggestions that I made in comments during the second reading of the bill. The amendment that he's proposing to section 23(2)(d) I think does clarify and address the concern that I expressed. I want to thank the member for giving careful thought to, obviously, the constructive way all of us engaged each other in debate on this bill. Two other amendments as part of A1 also seem to make sense, so I'm happy to support these amendments, and we'll see. We'll then vote on the bill as amended.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Anyone else on amendment A1?  
Ready for the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

**The Chair:** Are you ready for the question on the motion? Did you want to speak on the bill, hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill?

**Dr. Brown:** Just a couple of further comments, Mr. Chairman. I will be very brief. Bill 18 empowers the courts to prevent an individual who has been found to be a vexatious litigant. The hon. member, as I mentioned, from Edmonton-Strathcona expressed a concern that the provision cast a fairly wide net. I would say that, as a whole, the bill makes it clear that the provision is meant to manage certain types of mischief, and I certainly have confidence in the fact that the judges will make an order only in such circumstances where it's necessary to protect the legal process from abuse. Nothing in the Judicature Amendment Act limits the authority of courts to stay or dismiss a lawsuit, which are powers that they already have.

I think that I have dealt with all the questions and concerns raised in debate and that we should move forward with the bill. Mr. Chairman, once again I urge all members of the Assembly to support Bill 18, the Judicature Amendment Act.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are you ready for the question on Bill 18, Judicature Amendment Act, 2007?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The clauses of Bill 18 as amended agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

3:50

**Bill 14****Pandemic Response Statutes Amendment Act, 2007**

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I had put some questions on the record for the government that I was hoping to get a response about. But I will say again that overall I'm supportive of this legislation. For any of us that are at all close to the health sector, it's been made very clear to us that we need to have good preparations in place for a pandemic, which the experts tell us is almost certain to be coming within the next year to three years and which may well last in six-month scenarios, take us a couple of rounds or rotations to get through it. So it could be as long as 18 months before we're out the other side.

This bill is amending four pieces of legislation. It's essentially giving either the health regions or the ministry the ability, really, to do what needs to be done at times like that. I think we've been able to learn quite a bit from Ontario and their experience around SARS. Certainly, I think one of the major things is to make sure that lines of communication are clear and they're established prior to any pandemic actually beginning.

There is a Canadian pandemic influenza plan that maps out how Canada will prepare for it, and some of the questions that I'd asked were: what is Alberta's role in that overall plan? What can we expect from the provincial government, the roles and responsibilities? What's the co-ordination with other governments to anticipate problems? Provincial governments are responsible for mobilizing contingency plans and resources. What's been done with that?

I had gone through a sectional analysis previously, so I'm not going to repeat that. Overall I didn't have any large concerns with this. As I say, in second reading I had put some other questions on the record. At this point I'm happy to support Bill 14, the Pandemic Response Statutes Amendment Act, and allow passage so that it can be implemented.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there any others who wish to participate?

Are you ready for the question on Bill 14, Pandemic Response Statutes Amendment Act, 2007?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The clauses of Bill 14 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that the committee rise and report bills 18 and 14.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

**Ms Haley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the

following bill: Bill 14. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 18.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

**Hon. Members:** Concur.

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

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

**Bill 12****Income and Employment Supports Amendment Act, 2007**

**Ms Evans:** So moved.

I hope that this passes today. I think it's essential. I think it's a good-news bill for our constituents.

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

**Mr. R. Miller:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I will try to keep my comments brief considering the amount of work that we're trying to get through here this afternoon. I'd just like to reiterate the disappointment of the Official Opposition that, once again, when passing an amending bill which looks after income supports, we're not taking any measures to tie income support to the rate of inflation despite the fact that MLAs' remuneration is tied to the rate of inflation. We should be looking at some sort of a market basket measure and making sure that the people that are most vulnerable and in the most need in this province receive some protection from inflation, which we do not currently do.

Just briefly, Mr. Speaker, a very poignant example of that came to me recently when I attended the housing listening forum at the Milner library downtown and met a young lady who had moved to Edmonton to be nearer to the supports that she needed. Her first apartment was in Mill Woods, a very nice apartment, but she was receiving AISH. As we all know, I believe it was for a period of about nine years the AISH supplement did not increase at all. As a result of that and increasing rents, she was forced to downgrade her accommodation to a not-so-nice apartment in the Beverly community. Then a couple of years later she was once again mandated to downgrade her accommodations to an apartment on 97th Street because she could no longer afford the place that she had in the Beverly community. She's currently living in a rooming house on 95th Street, with crack dealers and prostitutes in the same home.

It was just a really striking example of how the lack of tying income support to inflation has forced someone who through no fault of her own has now had to downgrade her housing to the point where she's living in not just undesirable but, in fact, unsafe conditions. I think it really illustrates why the opposition pushes so hard on this point and why I felt compelled once again today to remind the government of how important it is to take that into consideration. Again, I would hope that the next time we review income supports, we would take that step.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others?

**Mr. Martin:** Just very briefly. I suppose we could talk about all sorts of things in this bill. We know that this is a result, Mr. Speaker, of how the government reacted badly legislatively.

Hopefully, I see this as a necessary cleanup bill, but we do really have to concern ourselves somewhat with how we are treating the vulnerable people in this society. There's a growing group of them. I understand that – while the minister's here – to our surprise there is a minimum wage announcement today, that there would be an increase to \$8. That came as a total shock to us, but the Premier announced it today.

I would hope that in the Legislature we could do things a little differently because we had this discussion. I was told that we would be moving along with this; there would be an announcement about an increase at some point. But sitting there, I was totally surprised, Mr. Speaker. So I think I tie this into how we're operating within the government here. I know that the minister's probably not going to comment on that because I understand that she has a news conference tomorrow, but I guess she'd be glad to know that it's already out there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions or comments.

Seeing none, any others wish to speak?

Does the hon. minister wish to close?

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a third time]

4:00

#### Bill 17

#### Limitation Statutes Amendment Act, 2007

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

**Mr. Tougas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague from Edmonton-McClung I'd just like to say that we are prepared to vote . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, first we should allow someone to move on behalf.

**Mr. Tougas:** Oh, okay. Well, you called me.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I didn't see anyone standing up.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

**Mrs. Fritz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill I'm pleased to move Bill 17 at third reading, and that's the Limitation Statutes Amendment Act, 2007.

As you know, this bill is a proactive solution that, it's believed, will clarify the law for Albertans. It'll avoid unnecessary legal action in two areas. The first area deals with the recovery of possession of land, while the second area deals with cases in the area of conflict of laws between Alberta and another jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill has asked that I thank members of the Assembly on his behalf for supporting this bill.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Now the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Tougas:** Now, where was I? It was a very complicated issue. Again, as my colleague from Edmonton-McClung tells me, this bill is fine. We've looked it over and checked it out with stakeholders, and we're perfectly ready to vote in favour of it, actually. That's all I have to say.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Anyone else?

Does the hon. member wish to close?

[Motion carried; Bill 17 read a third time]

#### Bill 18

#### Judicature Amendment Act, 2007

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

**Mrs. Fritz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm also pleased to move Bill 18, the Judicature Amendment Act, 2007, on behalf of the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General for third reading.

Mr. Speaker, we just heard debate a few minutes ago in Committee of the Whole regarding this bill. It amends the act to give the courts in Alberta greater power to deal more effectively with individuals who waste time and resources in court. This legislation will simplify procedures for dealing with vexatious litigants.

Amendments to the act were made. They are important as well to make sure that there is a right of access to justice and that it's not undermined by vexatious litigants. I believe these amendments, as we heard earlier, will preserve the right of access to justice for all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important bill. I know that the hon. minister, when he spoke to it in legislative review, was very clear that this has been a long time in coming. It's important for the province of Alberta. Having said that, I would ask members of the Assembly to support this in third reading.

**Mr. Tougas:** I might as well just repeat what I said before. My friend from Edmonton-McClung assures me that this bill is in order. I believe some of the issues he brought up were addressed in the amendment. We're very pleased with it, and we're prepared to vote.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others?

Ready for the question?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 18 read a third time]

#### Bill 14

#### Pandemic Response Statutes Amendment Act, 2007

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Member for Red Deer-North I'm pleased to move third reading of Bill 14.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. I just spoke to this in Committee of the Whole and indicated that I was still awaiting answers to the questions, but I've been assured by the minister of health that those answers will be provided. At this point I'm prepared to support this legislation.

Thank you.

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

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a third time]



**Bill 5****Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2007**

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. I move Bill 5 for third reading.

The Health Statutes Amendment Act essentially makes amendments to a number of health statutes, as the title suggest. In addition to some clean-up issues the primary purpose is to amend the Health Care Insurance Premiums Act and corollary acts to make it easier to appropriately audit the premium process and make sure that the system is working as it's intended.

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

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you. I'd just like to make a few comments about Bill 5, the Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2007. I understand, essentially, that this is an act to amend five pieces of legislation, and I'd like to comment on the first, third, and fourth sections.

The first section, which is amending the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act removes the requirement for a practitioner to provide permission to the department to review patient records and establishes a penalty for a practitioner who refuses to give his permission. My concern is around the protection of patient confidentiality. I know that this has been raised before, but I'm wondering what is being done to ensure that there's protection.

I also had a concern on the same first section with the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act around the minister's ability to select members of the committee that then reviews the claims that are submitted. I know that previous to this certain professions were required to be on the review panel and not others, and this has been removed. I understand that, but I believe it's important that we should always have members of the public involved so that we can have an independent view being brought into discussions. It's also important to ensure impartiality. Along with that, of course, I believe that representation from professions is important and wonder why some were originally excluded and what criteria there might be in terms of selecting the members to ensure, I guess, impartiality.

Section 3 is making it easier for Albertans to opt out of the health care insurance plan, and I wonder why we are doing this. It's just very few people that I hope would be concerned about doing that. I guess I'd like to comment here that I would like to see us get rid of health care premiums altogether.

The fourth section is about mandatory testing and disclosure, and I like this because it's going to capture the definition of guardian that's contained in the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, and I think capturing that definition just makes good sense.

I think that pretty well summarizes my concerns. I support Bill 5 but again want to emphasize the concern regarding patient confidentiality.

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

**Mr. Martin:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to comment about one part of it and maybe lead to a question that if not here today the minister of health can do. Of course, I would say that medicare premiums – I think it's pretty obvious – should not be there. They're a regressive tax. But we can have that debate another time. I have a feeling that even the minister of health might agree with me although I know that it would cost the treasury some, but I think it's the most regressive tax we can have. And we wouldn't have to be playing with it here.

4:10

But in saying that, in the past we were making it easier for people to opt out. Basically, moving from 12 months to 36 months, I don't think that's particularly wise. My understanding from the latest figures that I was able to look at is that there were 255 registrants who opted out. That is somewhat not a lot, and if they're adults, I suppose they can make that decision to opt out under the act the way it is. I guess that I'm wondering: what happens if there are children involved in those 255 – I don't know if there are or not – and all of a sudden there's a serious illness with a child? It seems to me that that could be somewhat punishing. I wonder how that is handled.

I think that that's an important point in here. People can opt out. Now we're making it easier. I don't know if that would make the numbers go up from 255 to a little more, but there's obviously the potential there for some serious problems with people that are too young to make that decision, or rather if they couldn't, what happens to them if the parents opt out?

So I'd just leave it there, Mr. Speaker, if the minister has an answer to that or if he could get back to me on it, either way. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness wish to close on behalf of?

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I do appreciate the member's comments and support. I will undertake to answer the question that was raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. My understanding is that if you opt out, you can in fact opt out for your dependants. But the fact of the matter is that this opting out provision is really quite a silly provision, in any event, if I may say so, because you can opt back in. So there's no real penalty involved in opting out. Very few people use it.

What we're really doing in this is making it easier to administer, easier for us, not easier for anybody else. So we don't have to monitor them on an annual basis because so few people actually use it.

With respect to the health care premiums themselves I do hope that we will have an opportunity to discuss health care premiums and how they're collected, whether we collect the premiums as part of the tax bill or whether they are in fact converted to a tax, and how we might incent Albertans to be more responsible for their own health using the premiums. In other words, if we collected it on the tax bill or converted it to a tax, either way we might be able to save collection costs; we might be able to save writeoff costs, but we might also be able to introduce some process whereby people could take deductions for things that they do to improve their health status. I think that's a discussion which we should look forward to. I'm pleased that you've not chosen to get too far into that one on this act because this act really is about clarifying our ability to audit the process.

I appreciate the concerns from Edmonton-Mill Woods with respect to confidentiality of patient information. There is always a trade-off, if you will, in terms of making sure that the process works appropriately and having the opportunity to audit, with the necessity for ensuring patient confidentiality. But that's inherent in the system. When the health care premium is billed to the department by the doctor that sees the patient, we get some health information as a part of that. It's our job to make sure that that health information is protected and is not let out, but it's also our job to audit the process to make sure we're being billed for appropriate procedures.

So I appreciate the concerns there. This will help protect the public dollar and the money that people pay us by way of health care premiums. I would encourage all members to vote for it.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a third time]

**Bill 10**  
**Horned Cattle Purchases Act Repeal Act**

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

**Mr. Lund:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure and honour to move on behalf of the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat third reading of Bill 10, Horned Cattle Purchases Act Repeal Act.

This being one of the most important bills of the spring sitting, I would hope that the passing of this bill would be unanimous.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I agree with the preceding member that this was a bill that demanded a great deal of time and attention of the Assembly. There was certainly vigorous debate involved, with participation of many members on a subject that is very near and dear to the hearts of many people. It was nice to see such a joining together of rural and urban MLAs as they worked together on this project. At this point I'm very happy to support third reading of the Horned Cattle Purchases Act Repeal Act.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there others?

Does the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House wish to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a third time]

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I rise now to indicate that after 45 days in the Legislature this spring and after actually more hours and more days in the Legislature than we did in last year's spring sitting, a spring sitting which included new rules which allowed for thorough scrutiny in Committee of Supply in a manner which has not been done before, changes to our Public Accounts Committee to allow private members the full opportunity to hold the government accountable, and the institution of legislative policy committees, I think some momentous changes in the Legislature – I don't think it would be appropriate for me to move adjournment without having commented on those issues.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's with great pleasure that I move that the House adjourn until 1 p.m. on Monday, November 5, 2007, pursuant to Standing Order 3.1(2) and Government Motion 28.

[Motion carried; pursuant to Government Motion 28 the Assembly adjourned at 4:20 p.m.]