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The 27th Legislature
First Session

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The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 27th Legislature

First Session

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[Errata, if any, appear inside back cover]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 17, 2008

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Grant that we the members of our province's Legislature fulfill our office with honesty and integrity. May our first concern be for the good of all of our people. Let us be guided by these principles in our deliberations this day. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

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

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week is National Victims of Crime Awareness Week, and it is a pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three people among many throughout Alberta who work on the front line of services to victims of crime. With us today we have Jean Williams, Caroyle Weinhandl, and Fion Lee. Mrs. Williams is coordinator of the Cardium regional victim services unit, serving Breton, Evansburg, and Drayton Valley. She is also past president of the Alberta Police-based Victim Services Association. Mrs. Weinhandl is co-ordinator of the Maskwacis victim services unit in Hobbema. Ms Lee is the outreach worker for the ASSIST Community Services Centre, working with victims of family violence in Edmonton's Chinese and South Asian communities. These women represent a network of 117 victim services units and 26 victim-based programs across our province that ensure that victims of crime are heard and are treated with dignity, respect, and the compassion they deserve. I would ask that Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Weinhandl, and Ms Lee rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly members of the Alberta and Northwest Conference, United Church. They are here today to bring awareness to the realities of child poverty in Alberta, as demonstrated in their rally earlier today on the steps of the Legislature. Sitting in the public gallery, I would like to recognize Lillian Stewart from Calgary, chair, Alberta and Northwest Conference, United Church women; Janet Walter from Red Deer, chair, child well-being initiative; Sharon Prenevost from Lethbridge Church in the World; and the other dedicated members that have come with them: Marilyn Penfound, Betty duPlessis, Emmy Henry, Marilyn Thomas, Sharon Gillespie, Marilyn Morse, Agnes Morgan, Gerry Dyck, Delores Hanchurak, Joyce Nelson, Pat Hughes, Joanne Wilson-Symonds, Delores Duris, Linda LeDrew, Pat Haase, Janelle Brooks, Joyce Francis, Dorothy Gamble, Donna Krucik, Elsie Coon, Kathy Hogman, and Reverend Elizabeth Carter-Morgan. I see that they're all standing. Could we please give them the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Hon. members, before I call on the first hon. member to participate, today is a day of anniversaries and congratulations as well.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, happy birthday. Hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, congratulations on becoming a

grandfather. Hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, congratulations on becoming a father.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Firearms Regulation

Mr. Hehr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recent statistics from Calgary point to a 30 per cent increase in firearm-related injuries. This past Sunday Asia Saddleback, an infant sitting at her grandfather's table in Hobbema, was wounded tragically in a gang-related shooting. Although the Premier has made the safety of Alberta communities a central platform in the government's agenda, frequent crimes involving firearms continue to dominate the headlines. Will the Solicitor General amend the Traffic Safety Act in a similar manner to Bill 212 from the Second Session of the 25th Legislature to provide the police with the authority to seize vehicles that contain firearms where the registered owner of the firearm is not in the vehicle?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Lindsay: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll speak very briefly to this and pass it on to the Minister of Transportation. Certainly, those are tragic events. The Traffic Safety Act is under the Transportation ministry, so I'll ask him to supplement.

Mr. Hehr: Failing enactment of these legislative measures, how does the minister plan to impose restrictions on the use of Alberta roads for the transportation of arms involving gang members and criminals?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the incident that the hon. member is speaking about is certainly a concern to all Albertans. We have stepped up the patrols on our highways to increase safety, and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Hehr: Mr. Speaker, curbing the proliferation of firearms in this province is a daunting task and will require a well-tailored approach. With this in mind, what novel approaches does the minister have regarding addressing these issues in Alberta's aboriginal communities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member brings up issues that are a concern to all Albertans. Again, it's not just a matter of putting more police on the street. It's a matter of community involvement to address the root cause, also to adjust to ensure proper sentencing and to make sure that we have the proper treatment in place to address the issues.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Peace River Health Region

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the Auditor General's report

released yesterday, the Peace River health region is singled out as the only region that has failed to monitor if its long-term care facilities comply with proper standards. Apparently, no one out there seems to know if standards of care are being met in the region. Ultimately, this is the failure of that RHA board, which happens to be comprised 100 per cent of members of the PC Party. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: why has this government repeatedly allowed the Peace River health region to dodge the Auditor General's recommendations on monitoring long-term care?

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, one of the very important announcements that we made yesterday was that we would immediately start to enforce standards across the province. So we have taken action on this.

Dr. Taft: Is the fact that the Peace River RHA board is the only one in Alberta comprised 100 per cent of PC Party members the reason this government has taken such a kid-glove approach to enforcing standards?

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, I have no idea whether they hold PC memberships or not, and frankly I don't care. What we will do is ensure that whether it's Peace River or any of the other regional health authorities around the province, we will be enforcing standards. That was my commitment.

Dr. Taft: Could the minister explain to this Assembly why part of his action plan in enforcing standards in the Peace River health region isn't replacing this complete patronage board?

Mr. Liepert: One of the other commitments that I made in our action plan yesterday was that we would bring forward in the next 60 days, I guess, a governance model that would be in place that would allow us to ensure that we can make the changes to the system that will make it more accessible and sustainable.

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

Child Poverty

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is no excuse for child poverty in abundant Alberta. Sixty-four thousand Alberta children are living in poverty. Although more Albertans are employed now during this time of incredible economic prosperity than ever before, full-time work at minimum wage does not permit an escape from poverty. To the President of the Treasury Board: with the paltry increase of 40 cents bringing the minimum wage to a mere \$8.40 an hour, how can this government continue to justify token wage increases instead of establishing a realistic living wage, which would act as an effective tool in ending child poverty?

1:40

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Speaker, I grew up in a very poor family. We looked after each other, and we looked after our neighbours. There were very few government programs of any kind to do it. There was a certain pride that was developed amongst our community and each other in how we had to lift one another up. The hon. member is well aware that the minimum wage was never designed nor will it ever be an amount of money that you can raise a family on. In many ways it's an educational learning experience for some. It brings people with limited skills into the workforce, and it accomplishes that very well.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Children and Youth Services: the risk of living in poverty is not the same for all children; therefore, why do rates of poverty, particularly among First Nations families, continue to increase? Is this part of the government's learning experience?

Mr. Snelgrove: The hon. member is also aware that the First Nations operate under a system that's run by the federal government. While they are challenged with many other things on their reserves, where we can support all of the First Nations, children included, we do.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. I said First Nations families, just to be clear.

Again to the Minister of Children and Youth Services: if this government claims that it plans to ensure prosperity for all Albertans, why does it not implement a provincial child poverty reduction strategy with targets and timetables?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Tarchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe and I think this government believes that we as a society as a whole will be judged by how we take care of the less fortunate and the vulnerable. I'm very pleased to live in a province of just over 3 million people, and we dedicate \$1 billion to the well-being of our families and our children. If I have time, I would just like to list a number of programs that we do have that do support lower income families: child care subsidies, parent link centres offering parenting resources, our FCSS programs, early intervention, and more.

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

Access to Medical Services

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Copeman Healthcare is opening a clinic in Calgary where for a very substantial fee wealthy Albertans can get fast access to publicly insured medical services while regular families wait in overcrowded emergency rooms and struggle to find a family doctor. The crowded emergency rooms are made worse by a drain of doctors and other staff out of the public system and into private clinics like Copeman. My question is to the minister of health. When you pledged faster wait times, were you only talking about people that could afford a \$4,000 fee?

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, it's amazing that the more things change, the more they stay the same. This particular member has been very consistent in this Assembly by – I'm not sure if the word fearmongering is acceptable or not, but I'm going to use it because that's what he's been doing. The people of Alberta after a 28-day campaign of fearmongering – that's what they delivered. I'm proud to say that we've got a caucus of 72 members that are looking at health care in a way that needs to make it accessible and sustainable.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, it only took the minister four days to spring that one. I was expecting it.

My question to him is whether or not he thinks it is acceptable in this province for people who can pay a \$4,000 annual fee to have superior access to publicly insured medical services. That's the question.

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, this particular clinic, like many others, has been challenged, and it has been proven that there is nothing untoward that is happening at these clinics. When medically necessary services are provided by the clinic, it is billed to Alberta health care, and it is paid for in the normal process. If there are other services that a clinic wants to offer and people want to pay the fee, the way they might pay to join any other club, they're more than welcome.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, what does the minister have to say to Albertans that are waiting in emergency rooms and waiting for surgeries in the public system when other Albertans who can afford it are getting treated immediately through clinics like the Copeman clinic?

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, what this minister is going to say is that we are going to change the way health care is delivered in the 21st century. There were three parties that campaigned on change in the last provincial election, and we will see over the next year which party wants to stay with the status quo and which one wants to change.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Provincial Mental Health Plan

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In his report released yesterday, the Auditor General was very critical of the government's provincial mental health plan. Concerns were raised over accountability, monitoring, and reporting on the plan's implementation. The provincial plan has been around for four years, and I wonder: can the Minister of Health and Wellness assure Albertans that measurable progress on its implementation has been made during that time?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not always that I agree with the Auditor General, but unlike the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, I don't agree with the Auditor General when it suits me politically and disagree with him when it doesn't suit me politically. What I would say is that the Auditor General has made some good recommendations, and our department will act on them.

Mr. Rodney: Mr. Speaker, my only supplementary question is to the same minister. What details can the minister share regarding what is actually being done to address accountability specifically for the provincial mental health plan?

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, as you well know, a couple of years ago we determined in Alberta health to move the delivery of mental health services to the health regions. In his report the Auditor General said that for over 80 per cent of the criteria that were measured, the work has been completed. Now, I recognize there is some work that needs to be done, and I will commit today that it will get done.

The Speaker: Calgary-Lougheed, okay?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Monarch Place

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was gobsmacked to learn that in Red Deer last year Monarch Place, an affordable housing complex purpose-built with taxpayers' money for low-income disabled tenants, was sold off and the tenants turfed because this government provided zero, zilch, nada, not so much as one thin dime to keep the complex operating. At a time of desperate need for affordable housing – affordable, accessible housing – the Auditor General finds that the operators told the government they couldn't afford to keep it going and the government did nothing. To the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs: why wasn't any operational funding provided?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, Monarch Place was a 65-unit development, and in 2003 a \$1.3 million grant was allocated to the developer to develop 26 affordable housing units in Monarch Place. The developer sold Monarch Place last year, and that led to community agencies and organizations asking the question about whether or not the original developer would be required to repay the grant. The answer is yes, and that process is currently under way.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, that is not even close to the question I asked, so I will ask it again. Why wasn't any operational funding provided? It doesn't do much good to throw capital funding at something that you're not going to make sure is a viable, going concern.

Mrs. Fritz: Mr. Speaker, it's very clear in the Auditor's report, and I can tell you this, that when a grant is allocated, especially a capital grant – I know you'd like to discuss the operational grant, but I'm talking about the capital grant. When a grant is approved, the Auditor General made it clear that it has to be well defined about the processes that are in place to ensure that it's handled appropriately. In this case the Auditor found that the program goals were met. He also found that the contract was adequately monitored and, more importantly, too, that the public funds were protected.

Mr. Taylor: He also found that it was a capital-based initiative, not allowing for operating expenses and with no available business solution. The society sold Monarch Place. To the same minister: given the severity of the affordable housing crisis and the fact that taxpayers expect the government to do good and lasting work with our money, not just ask for it back when its own lack of involvement allows the good work to go south, why is the ministry not taking a more active role in helping get affordable housing built and financed and operating? You should be a key player, not just a bank.

1:50

Mrs. Fritz: Well, this government has taken a very active role in ensuring that affordable housing is being developed. Mr. Speaker, just recently, within the past year, through the Affordable Housing Task Force report you know that there was \$285 million that was allocated. Sums over \$200 million were provided to Alberta as a whole for affordable housing, and we've also made a commitment, which you did not in your plan, to develop 11,000 units over the next five years. I can tell you that we're on track for that with affordable housing.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Mr. Dallas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I was pleased when you circulated the Auditor General's report. I was particularly pleased that the Auditor had reviewed Monarch Place. Of course, this is of considerable interest in Red Deer. My questions are to the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs. Will the Auditor's findings have an impact on how her ministry monitors these types of capital grants going forward?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Very clearly, it will have an impact on how we monitor the grants. We know that there are good systems in place. I believe that there is always room for improvement, hon. Member for Red Deer-South. We will ensure as we go through the steps that, as I say, we do improve the ways in which we do handle the grants. I know that the ministry is looking forward to working, you know, with the Auditor's report and ensuring that that happens.

Mr. Dallas: My final question to the same minister: can the minister explain what happened to the people in those 26 affordable housing units in Monarch Place?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that when the department learned about the situation, they quickly put together a highly qualified team, and that team worked with Employment and Immigration, hon. member, as well as your own Red Deer Housing Authority to ensure that residents would receive assistance with housing. Those with mobility issues, which I think you are concerned about, were provided with a rent supplement in order to assist them with remaining in their own suites. Can I just leave you with this? The Auditor made it very clear that Monarch Place was handled very well.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Long-term Care

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Auditor General's report on seniors' care noted that there was a total decline of 251 available long-term care facility beds in rural health regions. The emphasis on supportive living arrangements does not absolve the government of continuing to provide the needed number of long-term care beds in rural areas, particularly when our aging population is rapidly increasing. My questions are to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. Why are we seeing these decreases in rural spaces when constituents in places such as Wetaskiwin have pleaded with the government to rectify the chronic shortage of long-term care beds in their area?

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you for that question. First of all, I'd like to say that the government continues to support the development of long-term care in our communities. We've committed \$300 million for 600 new beds and the replacement of 200 old beds. I also want to say that we have a policy of aging in place, which helps Albertans to remain in their own communities and stay close to family and friends as they age. Not only that, but seniors are going into long-term care at a very much older age. It's an average of 85 years of age. It's our supportive living continuum of care that's very important as well.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you for that.

Given that the report on healthy aging and continuing care in Alberta put out in 2000 by Alberta Health and Wellness stressed the importance of aging in place, why are we still seeing the trend towards displacing families out of their communities?

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, I would like the opportunity to answer the question. This hon. member should actually be giving a member's statement in this House congratulating regions like the Chinook health region, who have taken it upon themselves to ensure that seniors can stay in assisted living rather than having to move into a long-term care home. This member should be talking about the good news that's happening out there and not looking at it as something that's gone wrong.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker.

It wasn't who I asked the question to, but it's certainly who I'm going to answer. In the Chinook region they had attempted to keep the 130 beds for long-term care. They have now increased it. My question to you, sir, is: check your facts before you stand up. They are increasing the long-term care beds.

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. member to check with the chair of the health region in Chinook and ask the chair of the Chinook health region whether or not they have a waiting list for long-term care beds. I guarantee you that he will tell her the action that that health region took some seven years ago has now resulted in a system in Chinook that is much superior to any other part of Canada.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Chronic Wasting Disease Control

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've had many concerns expressed to me recently about the deer cull in east central Alberta and particularly the way it was done. My question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Can the minister tell this Assembly and all Albertans if this action was, indeed, necessary?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Chronic wasting disease is a very nasty, progressive, and always fatal disease. We know that it's spread through contact with other deer, so the key factor is the density of the population. In certain western states the spread of this infection has reached 20 per cent of the wild deer, in certain areas of these western states. We're determined to make sure that that does not happen in the province of Alberta, so our efforts are to thin out the deer populations to reduce the statistical probability that it'll spread to the larger population.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Marz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given the many reports on how this action was carried out, can the minister assure us that this was done in the most humane way possible?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've received a lot of

communication on this from affected communities and concerned citizens. We appreciate that. The cull takes place both through a hunter harvest and also through a strategic cull. The strategic cull does involve a helicopter with professionals that shoot from the air. These people are trained, though, and we use them in other aerial activities as well. This technique, however, is used. It's the least disruptive to landowners and causes the least surface disturbance, so it's environmentally the best way to go. However, we have expanded last year and we'll expand this year and next year the use of hunter harvest rather than the alternative technique.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Marz: Thank you. My last question, again to the same minister: could the minister tell us how these culled animals were disposed of?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, while the primary purpose of this operation was disease control, salvage of the deer was also a secondary objective. The animals that were appropriate for this were butchered, and the meat went to freezers and will find its way to needy families. Also the hides, again, that were appropriate, that were capable of this, will be given to fish and game groups as part of their fundraising programs.

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

Groundwater Quality

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There remain many questions involving the safety of groundwater in relation to expanded drilling for coal-bed methane and cumulative impacts of a hundred years of seismic and drilling activity in Alberta. Recently a report from the Alberta Research Council into several landowner complaints about gas contamination in their water wells, partially funded by EnCana, concluded that resource companies were most likely not the cause. Independent University of Alberta isotope fingerprinting expert Dr. Muehlenbachs disagrees, however, with their conclusions, citing three major inadequacies in the ARC study. To the Minister of Environment: is the minister satisfied that the ARC report exonerating industry is independent and impartial?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, the issue of safe groundwater is a priority for Alberta Environment. As a matter of fact, as we get into discussion of the upcoming budget and business plan, members should be pleased to note that we will be increasing significantly the amount of groundwater mapping that goes into place. If the member is bringing into question the integrity of the Alberta Research Council, then I would humbly say that there are some very, very independent minds working at Alberta Research Council that should rightly be offended by that comment.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that tomorrow one of the five landowners in question with contaminated water in the Rosebud area, Fiona Lauridsen, is getting her safe supply of water cut off by EnCana, can the minister tell the House what he is doing to ensure safe water for this family?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have the responsibility to

ensure that the groundwater that Albertans access is safe. At the same time, Albertans have a responsibility to ensure that they maintain in an appropriate way their domestic wells. In this specific case, this case and others, there are issues. There are cases with respect to whether or not that maintenance of those domestic wells has been done appropriately.

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since baseline water testing in this province only began in 2006, will the minister do the right thing and establish once and for all an independent committee to determine where industry has and has not affected our groundwater?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, that independent committee, frankly, already exists. We do have an expert committee that is reviewing data on an ongoing basis. I have received a number of interim reports from that committee, and I look forward to a final report from that committee in the months to come.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Child Care Services

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the Premier delivered his child care plan during the election, the feedback from parents was swift and negative. Sharlene Dolan, a mom who pays \$875 a month for child care, said: okay, he's going to cut our taxes – right – but it still doesn't help with the fees. To the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Two things will make child care affordable in this province: increasing child care spending to the national average and capping daily fees at \$25. Why won't you do this?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Tarchuk: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure that those comments are right. I think what's really important here is that we do what's right for Albertan families and base that on consultation with Albertans, and that's exactly what we've done. I mentioned yesterday at great length how the five-point plan was based on what parents wanted to see, operators wanted to see. This past year we enhanced a lot of the aspects of the programs and created some new spaces. My mandate for the next three years is fairly aggressive, and we plan to get to work and in a couple of weeks build on the successes.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: given that in 2006 over 120,000 children under the age of 6 had mothers in the workforce, how can you possibly trumpet provision of half those numbers by 2011 as a success rather than a failure?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Tarchuk: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do know how many parents we have in the province. We know how many parents are working in the workforce. We do know that we have a tight labour market. We have a workforce issue. I am confident that we're basing our targets on very reliable numbers.

Ms Notley: Well, notwithstanding your consultation, given that parents at your own election announcement were critical of the government's announced child care plan, wouldn't it make sense to start from scratch, imitate Manitoba by increasing your funding and moving to the \$25 a day cap?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Tarchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I think we want an Albertan plan, not a Manitoban plan.

Also, this isn't to take away from any issues that may have been raised at that meeting in Red Deer. A lot of what we will be introducing will be new to those parents and, frankly, based on the comments and concerns that we've heard over the last several weeks.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Capital Region Municipal Planning

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and around the newly created Capital Region Board. Creating a plan for growth for the region is essential but will take some time. How will the regional priorities be protected while the plan is being developed?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, Mr. Speaker, a transitional framework has been put in place to help municipalities determine which plans or amendments are regionally significant. It gives the board some criteria for evaluating the significant plans. It will give the boards the tools to ensure regional outcomes are not compromised while the capital region plan is being developed.

Mrs. Sarich: Mr. Speaker, the only supplemental is again to the same minister. What items must be referred to the Capital Region Board for review under this framework?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, Mr. Speaker, the municipalities must refer the new intermunicipal development plans, the new development plans that are taking place in the area, or any amendments to the intermunicipal development plans. Also, they must refer to the board new and amended area structure plans. The amendments to the municipal development plans and all of those above are if they are of a regional significance.

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

Protection of Personal Information

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Service Alberta. In his recent report the Auditor General noted that no government department has an overall adequate IT control framework. Why has the government violated the trust of millions of Albertans and failed so long to implement a clear and comprehensive framework to ensure the security of personal information on IT systems?

Mrs. Klimchuk: Yes, hon. member. Service Alberta has accepted all the Auditor General's recommendations on this issue, and the department is already doing a number of initiatives in this area. This is an ongoing process, and we'll continue to protect Albertans' information.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister again: since the Auditor General recommendations regarding IT controls go back at least five years for numerous departments, does this government believe the privacy of Albertans' personal information is not important, or is this just yet another case of gross mismanagement?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe this government considers the integrity of information very important as the Premier has designated this portfolio. It's very important, and the ongoing work that is going on will continue, and we'll work in a collaborative manner with all government departments to make sure we're all on the right page.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology: given that a number of the Auditor General's recommendations concerning IT systems at postsecondary institutions are from previous years, why did the government fail to provide the necessary guidance and support to help them address these problems and protect sensitive student financial data?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are protecting sensitive student financial data and, in fact, are working within the Campus Alberta framework to develop a common platform throughout the IT sector. As the hon. member well knows, the transformation of any IT sector from legacy systems takes some time, it takes some planning, and we want to get it right.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Intermunicipal Transit

Mr. Elniski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Growth in the capital region has had a significant impact on traffic congestion. You've announced that the new Capital Region Board will be developing a plan to address intermunicipal transit. When will this plan be developed?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, Mr. Speaker, in one year I expect to have the regional plan to address the intermunicipal transit, but also I expect to have the plan for the land-use planning, for the geographic information system, and lastly I expect to have a strategic plan for housing.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Elniski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplementary to the same minister. Expanding Edmonton's LRT is a priority for many residents of Edmonton-Calder and the entire region. Will the plan support a division to expand the LRT?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, Mr. Speaker, transit, as you see in the priorities, is very important to this government, but that board will decide

what type of transit it should be. If it should be LRT, if that's the direction or the decision, then of course that's the one that will be supported.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Elniski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Second supplementary to the same minister: will the province provide extra funding to support any major and potentially costly initiatives identified with the intermunicipal transit plan?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, Mr. Speaker, the government will continue to fund its share of infrastructure in the province. It will continue to encourage and have support that comes from the federal government, and the municipalities as well have the option to utilize the municipal sustainability initiative funding.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Workplace Safety

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There were 154 job site related deaths in Alberta in 2007, up from 124 in 2006. That is a 24 per cent increase from one year to the next. One hundred and fifty-four workers paid with their lives for our prosperity. That, again, is three workers per week who are losing their lives on our job sites, and the minister is right: it is unacceptable. My first question is to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Why are these tragic numbers in this province so high at this time?

2:10

Mr. Goudreau: Well, Mr. Speaker, there's no denying that 154 workplace fatalities is way too many. In fact, I would say that one fatality is way too many. Some might say it's the cost of doing business or it's the cost of prosperity, but I don't agree. I know that the families and colleagues of each of these workers also don't agree, nor should they. As a result, my ministry is committed to continuing its hard work and collaboration with industry, labour, and safety associations to ensure Albertans and their workplaces are safe.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: will the minister commit to Albertans and this House this afternoon to hire more occupational health and safety inspectors and instruct them, once they're hired, to do more random job site safety inspections to guarantee that all occupational health and safety rules are being enforced – strictly, strongly enforced – throughout this province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We do work very, very closely with various industry associations, and we have our own inspectors that respond to every incident that happens in the province of Alberta. We do investigations as incidents happen, and we do have strategies to improve health and safety in the various sectors that we deal with.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given that there were 63 Albertans who lost their lives in

2007 as a result of an occupational disease, what research is the department doing to ensure that the number of occupational diseases, the deaths from occupational diseases, goes down, not up even more?

An Hon. Member: Good question.

Mr. Goudreau: Well, that is a very, very good question, Mr. Speaker. We do have, as I indicated, various strategies, and we have initiated a strategy to improve health and safety in the health care sectors. We're in the process of launching various programs, and we will be focusing on certain sectors, including our youth entering the workforce.

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

Capital Region Municipal Planning (continued)

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs: as the new Capital Region Board works towards drafting a regional planning document, what are the provincial expectations of municipalities when dealing with amendments to their existing municipal development plans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The province has provided the 25 municipalities with a transitional evaluation framework for reviewing the new and amended municipal plans but while – and I say to you “while” – they develop their own plan for development. I also want to stress to you that the existing municipal plans have been grandfathered. I say to you also that the new and amended plans are expected to conform to the regional plan.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplementary to the same minister: who will be responsible for making sure the 25 area municipalities follow the new guidelines?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, Mr. Speaker, the board is responsible for monitoring and ensuring that there is compliance. If there is a question or if there are any breaches, of course it'll come to the ministry. They also have the option of taking it to the courts.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplementary is to the same minister. When does the board's role in planning for growth in the capital region begin?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, Mr. Speaker, the regulations took effect on April 15, and all municipal plans approved before that date have been grandfathered. The board will play a role from that day on.

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

Mr. Allred: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is also to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs. The minister has announced the new Capital Region Board. How will the municipalities make decisions, and specifically how will the voting model work?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, the board hopefully is going to reach a consensus on decisions. The board decisions are one vote, one municipality, with 75 per cent of the population. At least 17 of the 25 boards of the regional population have to vote in approval if it's needed, if there is an agreement that needs to happen or a vote that needs to take place.

Mr. Allred: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker: will municipalities have to be present to vote?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that this is a difficult question because, yes, municipalities do need to participate. If they do not participate, it is automatically assumed that they are voting in favour. But we are looking at the board and giving the board some guidelines where smaller municipalities have the ability to vote by proxy or to be able to have, you know, a teleconference vote because we do realize that some of the smaller municipalities may have a hard time getting to all meetings.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Allred: Thank you, sir. Just a last supplementary: are the chair or the provincial members on the board voting members?

Mr. Danyluk: Mr. Speaker, the chair or any member of the provincial government that may be involved with the board is not allowed to vote. The voting is completely taken by the 25 members, and their direction is the direction that will be taken and will not be interfered with by any government process.

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

Child Poverty (continued)

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Just a quick question: what is the government doing to address child poverty?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Tarchuk: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said earlier, the well-being of Alberta's children is my ministry's main objective, and we want to make sure that the basic needs of all Albertans are met. In order to meet this objective, our ministry spends almost a billion dollars a year to support our children and families in the province. We provide a number of programs that are available to low-income families, and they would include our child care subsidies. Our parent link centres are great resources for parents. FCSS, as we all know, have hundreds of locally driven, very good community-based programs. One that I'd also like to mention as probably one of our more unique partnerships is Alberta's Promise. We've spent \$139 million over five years.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My second question is not to the minister of children's services but to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. As the minister responsible for income support your ministry also has a role to play. What assistance is available to help low-income families make ends meet?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our income support benefits are helping about 21,000 children every month, but the assistance we provide goes beyond family income. These families can also receive extra money for expenses like child care and school expenses, and they're also eligible for the Alberta child health benefit. This benefit is available to all low-income families and provides over 86,000 children with coverage including eyeglasses, prescription drugs, emergency ambulance services, dental care, and essential diabetic supplies.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. Something that's very important to Albertans: you've mentioned the programs that you have to support lower income Albertans. But what are you doing to help break the cycle of poverty?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that child poverty is not a stand-alone issue, and we have programs to help break that cycle of poverty. My ministry is helping low-income Albertans do just that. Last year we invested \$246 million in a variety of programs to help Albertans upgrade their skills and find employment. This includes helping with job searches, career planning, job placement services, basic skill training programs, and financial assistance that allows full-time students to receive income supports while they learn.

2:20 Potato Cyst Nematode

Mr. Prins: Mr. Speaker, in October of last year a potato cyst nematode was found in two fields near Edmonton, which has closed the U.S. and Mexican borders to Alberta-grown seed potatoes. The Alberta seed potato industry is worth about \$50 million per year. Many of my constituents have been following this issue with great interest because they are seed potato growers and it's affecting them in a great way. My first question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. Will seed potato producers receive compensation for this problem?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the potato cyst nematode certainly is a problem here in Alberta, but producers can receive financial assistance through AgriStability. They should speak to their local AFSC office. We're also working with the feds to see what sort of emergency assistance the industry would qualify for.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what are we doing to help reopen the border to seed potatoes to both the U.S. and Mexico?

Mr. Groeneveld: Mr. Speaker, we are working with the CFIA to increase laboratory capacity here in Alberta to handle the large number of PCN soil samples that we require to reopen the border. We're working closely with the CFIA and the USDA to open borders for the export of seed potatoes from Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Prins: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. The main concern to consumers is: does this potato cyst nematode pose a health risk to humans or consumers?

Mr. Groeneveld: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that Albertans can rest assured that this agricultural pest poses no risk to human health whatsoever. However, it does pose a great risk to the health of the potato industry by greatly reducing the yields.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that exhausts my list of questioners for today, and the clock shows two minutes, 47 seconds left. The first member up I will recognize.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Public Health System Reform

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister of health. Yesterday I asked the Premier about the decision of the minister to talk about everything being on the table, including, for example, some of the recommendations in the Mazankowski report. I've heard the minister talk about his favourable inclination towards that report. Given that that report includes proposals for more private health care delivery, can the minister tell the House whether or not he is prepared to go down that road?

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, in the Mazankowski report, as I mentioned yesterday, the first two recommendations are, number 1, healthy living, and number 2, putting customers first. I would ask this hon. member whether he agrees with those two recommendations or not.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that I do but given also that there is a recommendation in there for more user fees, can the minister level with Albertans and tell them whether or not he is considering increasing user fees for certain health care procedures that are currently insured?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, unlike some political parties in this Assembly we talk about what we're going to do, not about what we're not going to do.

Mr. Mason: This minister is refusing to talk about some of the things that are in the Mazankowski report, and instead he is letting Albertans be very concerned. My question to him is whether or not he is prepared to rule out increasing private delivery of health care services in this province. Yes or no, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, as I tried to point out yesterday, we have a very large caucus that represents a large part of this province. I intend over the course of the next year to listen to my caucus members, and we will do what Albertans want us to do.

Capital Region Municipal Planning

(continued)

Mr. Allred: Mr. Speaker, a further question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Mr. Minister, you've stated that the capital region plan will not take away local autonomy. How will the capital region plan affect the subdivision of rural land adjacent to urban municipalities?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, Mr. Speaker, the subdivisions or the develop-

ments need to be under a plan, and if they are of a regional nature, then they will go in front of the regional board. If they are of a nature or a smaller nature that does not affect the area regionally, they do not have to. The municipalities still have the ability and the autonomy to be able to have development.

The Speaker: We'll cut it off there as the bells have gone. That's 116 questions and answers today.

Hon. members, before we move on, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm just delighted to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a class from NorQuest College. We have eight students joining us today in the public gallery along with their instructors, Nicky Young and Jeanny Bakher. If I could ask the group from NorQuest College, my favourite college, if you would please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Rodney: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this fine Assembly 30 very impressive students from the Glenmore Christian Academy grade 9 band. They are here with their teacher and band leader, Dan Bartholomew-Poyser, and are joined by parents Carol Miller and Tiffany Ho. GCA has been a jewel in the crown of Calgary-Lougheed for 15 years. It's a K to 9 fine arts focused school incorporating French and Spanish, guided by an illustrious leader, principal Dale Backlin. The grade 9 band is here on their yearly tour, performing at Edmonton schools, West Edmonton Mall, and the Capital Care facility. They're very good. They were awarded gold at the international band festival here in Alberta this February. The band is here today for a tour, to witness question period, and to participate in the mock Legislature with visitor services. It just so happens that two students are celebrating a happy birthday: Connor Iredale and Courtney Hockaday. I do request that our GCA ambassadors rise now to receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds from now we'll call on the first hon. member to participate.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Reach for the Top Provincial Competition

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend it was my pleasure to attend the junior high and intermediate provincial Reach for the Top academic competition, which was hosted by Trochu Valley school. Some of our province's brightest and sharpest young minds gathered in Trochu to test their academic skills against each other. I was quite impressed to see some of the contestants accurately answer questions before they were completely asked.

In the junior division Calmar came out in first place, followed by Percy Baxter school in second and Lacombe junior high in third,

with Trochu Valley winning the team spirit award. In the intermediate division W.D. Cuts junior high was first, Hunting Hills high school was second, and Calmar won third, with Lacombe junior high winning the team spirit award.

I'm confident many of these young people will be amongst our top leaders in our province in the very near future. I ask all members to join me in encouraging and congratulating all these young people on their accomplishments in competing at the provincial level.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Kinsmen Club of Edmonton

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize a milestone for the Kinsmen Club of Edmonton. This year marks the 80th anniversary of Kinsmen and its phenomenal contribution to furthering citizenship, volunteerism, and community development in our city during the last century. Indeed, Kinsmen has been a key partner in developing and funding numerous nonprofit organizations that are renowned and respected in this city and provide essential services to many Edmontonians, organizations such as the Youth Emergency Shelter, Women in Need House, and the Boyle McCauley Health Centre. In particular, the advocacy of the Kinsmen Club was a critical component of Edmonton's successful bid to host the 1978 Commonwealth Games and the 1983 Universiade.

2:30

This past weekend I had the pleasure of joining Kinsmen in celebrating one of their most recent contributions to Edmonton: the mortgage burning of the Kinsmen twin ice arenas in my constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford. Over 160 current and past members of Kinsmen Edmonton attended this gala event at the Hotel Macdonald, coincidentally in the same room used by the club for its meetings in its very early years. The twin ice arenas will leave a great legacy in southwest Edmonton, Mr. Speaker. It's a place where people can come together to participate in sport, cheer on their family members, and connect as a community. It's a place where dreams can be born, ambitions sharpened, and sportsmanship practised. I know that the now fully paid off Kinsmen arenas will proudly serve many future generations of Edmontonians.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all members, especially my Edmonton colleagues, thank you to the Kinsmen Club and its president, Mr. Joe Spaziani, for 80 years of exemplary service to Edmonton and to Alberta.

Thank you.

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

Child Poverty

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 1989 the House of Commons unanimously resolved to seek to achieve the goal of eliminating poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000. According to Campaign 2000's 2007 report card on child and family poverty, child poverty is exactly the same as it was in '89 despite a 50 per cent increase in the size of the economy over the same period. One in 8 children in Canada live in poverty. In Alberta, despite its boom economy, 1 in 12 of our children live in families with income below the low-income cut-off.

This province can do better for its children by providing a clear action plan and investing in poverty reduction strategies such as affordable housing, quality accessible child care and after school care, remove school fees, lower costs for postsecondary education,

and provide stronger support for recent immigrants, aboriginal families, people and children with disabilities, and children and families in crisis.

It is not acceptable that this government's social responsibility has been downloaded onto the faith-based and municipal communities without the proper funding. Dollars spent on programs for parenting skills, nutritional education, and programs that ensure marginalized kids can play organized sports, be involved in music or the arts will save millions of social service, justice, and policy dollars in the long run.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater.

Radway and District Friends of STARS

Mr. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to draw this Assembly's attention to the small community of Radway, a community of only a few hundred people that are showing great leadership. Recently I was fortunate to attend their STARS fundraising dinner that sold out to 450 people. The well-attended event, their eighth annual, was assisted by everyone in the area, including the local 4-H and Lions clubs.

One thing that made this event so special was that they unveiled their community logo emblazoned on the STARS helicopters. Mr. Speaker, this is a privilege reserved only for groups who donate \$250,000 or more. I'm told they're only one of two rural communities north of Red Deer to have achieved that honour. On Monday the Radway and District Friends of Stars will be in Edmonton to present the proceeds to STARS, \$45,000, bringing their eight-year total to a whopping \$336,000.

I'd like to commend and thank all those involved, especially the organizers, Chris Dowhan and Maurice Kruk. Their spirit and initiative is a great example of what makes Alberta so special.

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

Child Care

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For many Alberta families child care is a necessity, but in addition to the difficulty of finding available space for their children, families also struggle with how they can afford to pay the fees for child care. This Alberta government spends the lowest amount per capita on child care of any jurisdiction in Canada. By contrast, as you may have heard, Manitoba spends roughly three times that per capita on child care. In that province the maximum fee families pay to have their infant child in a licensed daycare is \$26 a day.

The Conservative government is trumpeting its current efforts to increase the number of child care spaces; however, the 3,500 new spaces recently announced would only bring the total number of spaces in Alberta back up to 1992 levels. Our population is exploding, and this government is proud that we have almost as many spaces as we did 15 years ago. In 2006 over 120,000 pre-school kids had mothers in the workforce, yet this government is planning to provide fewer than half that amount of spaces by 2011. They are planning for failure, and they seem to think that we should applaud that.

Researchers have found that investments made in the early years of a child's life result in better returns than those made later on. In addition, early investment in child development programs lead to greater health, better education outcomes, and significantly reduce the cycle of child poverty. The investment required is significant, Mr. Speaker, but I believe our children are worth it.

Thank you.

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

SAIT Trojans Hockey Team

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to acknowledge the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology Trojans men's hockey team from Calgary. They recently won the Alberta College Athletic Conference hockey championship. This signifies back-to-back titles for the SAIT Trojans and their third championship in four years.

I'd just like to mention that the players are Landon Kroeker, Alex Greenlay, Kirk Deeg, Blake McCullough, Aaron Peace, Michael Ewanchuk, Adam Knight, Marcus Wiebe, Mike Bulawka, Kyle Dorowicz, Blair Gray, Cam Doull, Dallas Costanzo, T.J. Babey, Brock Michalsky, Kyle Gladue, Derek Werenka, Shane Lust, Kevin Lessard, Jonathan Leinweber, Joel Barrett, Bryn Gagnon, Darren Zurkan, Reese St. Goddard, and, of course, the coach, Ken Babey. Jim McLean and Lyle Hamm are the coaching staff, with therapist Robs Sweeney, trainer Jason Kaszycki, and manager Timothy Lees.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting Petitions

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two petitions this afternoon. The first one reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to launch a full public inquiry under the authority of the Public Inquiries Act into spying practices by the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board . . . and the Minister of Energy's oversight role of the AEUB.

This is signed by people from all over central Alberta.

The second petition I have, Mr. Speaker, reads:

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

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

This petition is signed again by citizens from throughout the city of Edmonton.

Thank you.

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

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm presenting today a petition with 1,200-plus signatures from all over Alberta, and it reads:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government to revise their policies to eliminate child poverty and its many manifestations in Alberta.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: Hon. Government House Leader, do you want to say anything about written questions, motions for returns?

Mr. Hancock: Well, if necessary, Mr. Speaker, I would give notice

that we will bring forward a motion that written questions and motions for returns stand and retain their places on the Order Paper.

The Speaker: Okay.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 201

Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 201, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act.

Throughout the history of the province hunting, fishing, and trapping have played a key role, and the goal of the proposed legislation is to recognize that importance.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 201 read a first time]

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

2:40

Bill 202

Alberta Volunteer Service Medal Act

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being Bill 202, the Alberta Volunteer Service Medal Act.

The bill calls for the government to form a committee to look after the creation of a medal that would promote recognition of dedicated volunteers in Alberta.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 202 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter from a number of citizens with labour issue concerns, not the least being a request for legislation outlining the use of replacement workers, automatic certification of workplaces where more than half of the employees have indicated a desire to be represented by a union, and one labour law for all unionized workers among other things. These letters are from Stephanos Habashi, Jennifer Martin, Iris Albrecht, William Fleming, Jason Finley, Tyler Bedford, Jose Fernandez, Stan Adair, Gail Hutseal, and Cynthia Perras.

Thank you.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have one tabling this afternoon. It is a letter that is dated December 5, 2007, and it's to myself as a committee member for the Alberta Personal Information Protection Act Review Committee. It is from Anne Landry of Calgary. It's 19 pages in length, and it is her request for a public inquiry into a number of matters.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of tablings

today. The first is a report by the Alberta Federation of Labour entitled *Temporary Foreign Workers: Alberta's Disposable Workforce*. It chronicles Alberta's deplorable working standards enforcement.

My second tabling is an annual report entitled *Developing Productive Futures* prepared by the Momentum Group, a community economic development organization celebrating 17 years of contribution to the city of Calgary.

Thank you.

Projected Government Business

The Speaker: The Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. According to the standing orders old and new at this point I would like to ask the Government House Leader to share with those assembled the projected government business for the week of April 21 to 24.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, depending on progress that's made, we would anticipate in the evening on Monday, April 21, that we would have Committee of Supply, day 1 of 1 day, and potentially also, time permitting, address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

On Tuesday, April 22, in the afternoon it is anticipated that the hon. Minister of Finance and Enterprise would be addressing the House with the budget and that the normal provisions with respect to adjourning at the time that Orders of the Day are called and then coming back at the usual time for the Budget Address on the 22nd. In the evening, address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

On Wednesday, the 23rd, in the afternoon the usual time allotted for the Leader of the Official Opposition to reply to the Budget Address and anticipation that the leader of the third party would also be replying. The balance of the afternoon and evening would be in address in reply to the Speech from the Throne and, time permitting, progress on any bills on the Order Paper. At this time it's simply Bill 1.

On Thursday, April 24, assuming progress on the motion this afternoon with respect to rules, we would anticipate being in Committee of Supply.

The Speaker: Hon. Government House Leader, is it possible for you to be more definitive with respect to the time frame of next Tuesday? When the hon. minister says the ordinary time, we've had two times in our history, as I recall, for the budget: 3 and 4. If it's 3, then it's now quarter to 3, so there would be a 15 minute interlude, and we haven't finished the Routine yet, and it is possible that the Routine might even go beyond 3 o'clock. Could you be a little more helpful, perhaps: 3 or 4? If it's 3, that's fine.

Mr. Hancock: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I could, and I will as soon as I can.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, a similar point?

Ms Blakeman: A point of order under 13(2), Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Certainly.

Point of Order

Explanation of Speaker's Ruling

Ms Blakeman: Referencing *Hansard* April 11, 2001, page 11, and April 16, 2008, page 12, under 13(2) if 2001 to 2004 was the basis for the current QP rotation and the Official Opposition had seven members between '01 and '04 and seven questions, the Official Opposition now has nine members but only opportunity for eight questions. Could the Speaker please explain his ruling?

The Speaker: Absolutely. The provision that we looked at basically had placements for the first three questions for the Leader of the Opposition, the fourth question to the leader of the third party. Members will recall that in the time frame going back to 2001, there were 74 government members. This time there are 72 government members. Then there were seven opposition members in the Official Opposition. Now, today there are nine. The third party remained the same. Essentially, I looked at that and looked at the precedent associated with it and made one adjustment with respect to the ruling, and that was the placement, I believe, of the 14th or 15th question. We added one additional one to the opposition party in recognition of the fact that they had two additional ones.

Right now there's provision within the first 15 questions for eight questions to come from nine members of the Official Opposition. If the Official Opposition chooses to have one member raise all eight, they may do so. If they want to go with the traditional approach, that the Leader of the Opposition has three and then they can go with the other ones – but eight out of nine of their members have an opportunity to raise a question. There are 47 private members on the government side in the house, and they may have the fifth, seventh, ninth, 12th, 14th, 16th, and if we ever got beyond that, then they would have those numbers. From the chair's perspective in consulting the precedents and the traditions we've had, in consultation with the table officers we thought this was overly fair. That explains the question.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, under 13(2): in both '01 to '04 and in the ruling that was handed down yesterday, the Speaker has allowed for one of the opposition parties to have a question each, time permitting, but did not extend the same to each member of the other opposition party. Could the Speaker explain that, please?

The Speaker: Absolutely. In terms of the protection of the minority there has always been a certain degree of leverage provided to the least-numbered party in the Assembly. Considering that the third party has only two members, in fairness for the protection of their integrity it just so happened that it turned out to have their two.

One should also recognize that the same kind of logic was used with respect to the placement of Members' Statements, where perhaps the two private members, in this case the third party, would have had one question every fifth day. If you took up the numbers, the Official Opposition has nine members; the NDs have two members. Presumably that would have been on the fourth and a half day. Well, there is no such thing as the fourth and a half day, so the Speaker, in his wisdom, with his generosity, in recognizing tension purveyed to the smallest numbers, made the ruling to give the NDs the opportunity to have one Members' Statement every fourth day instead of one every fifth day. In other words, the Speaker rounded down to provide more opportunity for the party in fairness to the smallness of numbers.

Is that it?

2:50

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

Standing Orders Temporary Amendments

8. Mr. Hancock moved:
- A. Be it resolved that the following temporary amendments be made to the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta:
- 1 The following is added after Standing Order 3:
2008 Fall Sitting
3.1(1) Unless otherwise ordered, the Assembly shall meet for the 2008 Fall Sitting commencing on Tuesday, October 14th and concluding no later than Thursday, December 4th.
(2) During the 2008 Fall Sitting, the Assembly shall stand adjourned for a constituency week during the week of November 10th.
(3) Nothing in this Standing Order precludes the Government from advising the Speaker that the public interest requires the Assembly to meet on a certain date, and the Speaker shall give notice that the Assembly shall meet at that time to transact its business as if it has been duly adjourned to that time.
(4) Nothing in this Standing Order precludes the Assembly from adjourning prior to the adjournment date in suborder (1) if so ordered by the Assembly.
(5) The Fall Sitting may be extended beyond the adjournment date in suborder (1) on passage of a Government motion, which shall be decided without debate or amendment.
 - 2 Standing Order 4 is amended by striking out “8 p.m.” wherever it occurs and substituting “7:30 p.m.”
 - 3 Standing Order 7 is amended
 - (a) in suborder (1) by adding “At 1:50 p.m.,” before “Oral Question Period”;
 - (b) by adding the following after suborder (1):
 - (1.1) At 1:50 p.m., the Assembly shall proceed to Oral Question Period with the balance of the daily routine to follow.
 - (1.2) If the items in the daily routine are completed prior to 1:50 p.m. the Assembly shall proceed to Oral Question Period, and any matters outstanding shall be taken up prior to the calling of Orders of the Day.
 - 4 Standing Order 8 is amended
 - (a) in suborder (2) by striking out “8 p.m.” and substituting “7:30 p.m.”;
 - (b) in suborder (4) by striking out “60 minutes” and substituting “55 minutes”;
 - (c) in suborder (7) by striking out clause (c) and substituting the following:
 - (c) A public Bill other than a Government Bill shall be called in Committee of the Whole within 8 sitting days of the day the Bill receives second reading unless the Bill has been referred to a Policy Field Committee, in which case the Bill shall be called within 8 sitting days of the day on which the Policy Field Committee reports.
 - 5 Standing Order 34 is amended
 - (a) by striking out suborder (3) and substituting the following:
 - (3) On Thursday, the Government House Leader shall give the Assembly notice of any written questions or motions for returns that will be accepted or otherwise dealt with on the following Monday.
 - (3.1) On Monday afternoon, written questions and motions for returns are deemed to stand and retain their places except those for which notice has been given under suborder (3) or those which are otherwise due for consideration.
 - (3.2) The Clerk shall read the number, text and name of the sponsor of any written question or motion for return of which notice of acceptance has been given pursuant to suborder (3) when this item of business is called.
 - 6 The following is added after Standing Order 38:
Intersessional deposits
38.1(1) If the Assembly stands adjourned for a period of more than 14 days, any return, report or other periodic statement that is to be laid before the Assembly in accordance with an Act or any resolution or Standing Order of the Assembly may be deposited with the Clerk (with the required number of copies) and such return, report or other periodic statement is deemed to have been laid before the Assembly on the day on which it is deposited.
(2) The Clerk shall publish a list of documents deposited under this Standing Order at least once every 4 weeks during a period of adjournment.
(3) A record of documents deposited under this Standing Order shall be entered in the Votes and Proceedings on the next sessional day.
 - 7 The following is added after Standing Order 52:
Policy Field Committees
52.01(1) Five Policy Field Committees, consisting of 11 members each, shall be established to consider the following subject areas:
 - (a) Standing Committee on Community Services – mandate related to the areas of culture and community spirit, education, housing and urban affairs, municipal affairs, and tourism, parks and recreation;
 - (b) Standing Committee on the Economy – mandate related to the areas of advanced education and technology, employment and immigration, finance and enterprise, infrastructure, and transportation;
 - (c) Standing Committee on Health – mandate related to the areas of children and youth services, health and wellness, and seniors and community supports;
 - (d) Standing Committee on Public Safety and Services – mandate related to the areas of aboriginal relations, government services, government organization, personnel administration, expenditure management, revenue, justice, policing and public security;
 - (e) Standing Committee on Resources and Environment – mandate related to the areas of agriculture and rural development, energy, environment, international and intergovernmental relations, and sustainable resource development.
- (2) The Chair of a Policy Field Committee shall be a member of the Government caucus, and the Deputy Chair shall be a member of the Official Opposition.

Consideration of Bills by Policy Field Committees

52.02 A Policy Field Committee shall review any Bill referred to it.

Consideration of regulations by Policy Field Committees

52.03 A Policy Field Committee may review any regulation, amendment to a regulation or prospective regulation within its mandate.

Orders of the Assembly take priority

52.04 An order of the Assembly that a Bill, regulation or some other subject matter stands referred to a Policy Field Committee shall take priority over any other hearing or inquiry.

Referral of annual reports to Policy Field Committees

52.05(1) The annual reports of each government department, provincial agency, Crown-controlled organization, board and commission shall be deemed to be permanently referred to a Policy Field Committee.

(2) Each Policy Field Committee may

- (a) examine each annual report referred to it and report to the Assembly whether the report is satisfactory;
- (b) consider in more detail, and report to the Assembly, on each annual report it considers unsatisfactory;
- (c) investigate and report to the Assembly on any lateness in the tabling of annual reports;
- (d) report to the Assembly each year whether there are any bodies which do not table annual reports in the Assembly and which should present such reports.

Public hearings

52.06(1) A Policy Field Committee may conduct a public hearing on any Bill, regulation or prospective regulation under review.

(2) A Policy Field Committee shall be required, prior to reporting that the attention of the Assembly be drawn to any regulation or prospective regulation, to inform the government department or authority concerned of its intention to so report.

Policy Field Committee inquiries

52.07(1) A Policy Field Committee shall inquire into, consider and report on any matter referred to it by the Assembly.

(2) A Policy Field Committee may on its own initiative, or at the request of a Minister, inquire into any matter concerned with the structure, organization, operation, efficiency or service delivery of any sector of public policy within its mandate.

(3) An order of the Assembly that a Policy Field Committee undertake an inquiry shall take priority over any other inquiry, but a Policy Field Committee shall not inquire into any matters which are being examined by a special committee.

(4) All inquiries must be concluded and a substantive report presented to the Assembly no later than 6 months after the commencement of the inquiry.

(5) If funds are not available for the conduct of an inquiry by a Policy Field Committee, then approval for any additional funds is required from the Members' Services Committee.

Additional powers of Policy Field Committees

52.08(1) A Policy Field Committee may hold public meetings on any matter within its mandate.

(2) A Policy Field Committee may recommend to the Assembly on the need for legislation in any area within the Committee's mandate.

Response to reports

52.09(1) The Government shall respond to a Policy Field Committee's report on any matter other than a report on a Bill within 150 days from the date on which the Policy Field Committee reports.

(2) No motion concurring in the report of a Policy Field Committee to which the Government must respond under suborder (1) shall be voted upon until that response is tabled in the Assembly.

8 Standing Order 53 is struck out, and the following is substituted:

Public accounts referred

53(1) Public accounts and all reports of the Auditor General shall stand permanently referred to the Public Accounts Committee as they become available.

(2) The Government shall respond to a report of the Public Accounts Committee within 150 days of the date on which the Committee reports.

9 The following is added after Standing Order 55:

Reports of the Officers of the Legislature

55.01 Reports of the Officers of the Legislature shall stand referred to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices unless otherwise ordered.

10 Standing Order 56 is amended by adding the following after suborder (2):

(2.1) A temporary substitution in the membership of a standing or special committee may be made upon written notification signed by the original Member and filed with the Clerk and Committee Chair, provided such notice is given not less than 24 hours prior to the meeting.

(2.2) A substituted Member under suborder (2.1), including a Member who is substituting for the Committee Chair, shall be considered for all purposes to be acting in the place of the original Member.

(2.3) A temporary substitution in the membership shall be permitted for a specific time period or for committee consideration of a specific issue.

(2.4) A temporary substitution may be terminated at any time by the original Member of the committee.

(2.5) If the Assembly is adjourned and the Chair of a committee resigns his or her position or is otherwise unable to carry out the duties of Chair, the committee may elect one of its Members as Chair.

11 The following is added after Standing Order 59:

Application of Standing Orders during main estimates

59.01(1) The Standing Orders of the Assembly shall be observed in the Committee of Supply's consideration of main estimates except as follows:

- (a) a Member may speak more than once;
- (b) no Member may speak for more than 10 minutes at one time.

(2) Notwithstanding suborder (1)(b), and provided that the Chair has been notified, a Minister and a private Member may combine their respective speaking times for a total of 20 minutes, with both taking and yielding the floor over the combined period.

(3) During Committee of Supply consideration of main estimates,

- (a) officials of the Government may be admitted to the floor of the Assembly to advise the Minister whose estimates are under consideration, and
- (b) staff of the opposition may also be admitted to assist Members who are participating in estimates consideration,

provided that at least 24 hours' written notice of the names of the officials or staff is given to the Clerk.

Hours of main estimates

59.02(1) During the 2008 spring sitting, the Committee of Supply shall be called to consider the main estimates for 60 hours.

(2) The schedule for consideration of main estimates shall be determined by House Leaders but if they fail to reach an agreement, the Government House Leader shall schedule the appearances of departments for estimates consideration by the Committee of Supply and such schedule shall include a minimum of 2 hours of consideration for each department.

(3) The schedule for consideration of main estimates shall be tabled in the Assembly no later than one sitting day following the Budget Address.

(4) On the first day of consideration of the main estimates by the Committee of Supply, the first member of the Executive Council to speak shall move that the main estimates in their entirety be considered by the Committee.

(5) If at 10:30 p.m. the main estimates are being considered by Committee of Supply, the Chair shall interrupt and the Committee shall immediately rise and report without question put.

(6) When the time allotted for a department's estimates has expired or if there are no Members who wish to speak, the Committee or subcommittee may then proceed to the next department's estimates that are scheduled for consideration.

(7) When the time allotted for a department's estimates has not expired, but there are no Members who wish to speak, that department's estimates shall be deemed to have been considered for the time allotted in the schedule.

(8) When an amendment to a department's estimates is moved in Committee of Supply, the vote on the amendment stands deferred until the date scheduled for the vote on the main estimates.

Voting – Main Estimates

59.03(1) On the date scheduled or at the end of 60 hours of consideration, there shall be one vote on main estimates unless

- (a) additional votes are required on amendments pursuant to Standing Order 59.02(8) prior to calling the vote on the main estimates;
- (b) on at least one day's notice a Member has provided written notification to the Chair and the Clerk of his or her desire that the estimates of a particular department be voted upon separately, in which case that department's estimates shall be voted separately and the final vote for the main estimates shall consist of the estimates of any departments not yet voted upon.

(2) The votes under suborder (1) shall be taken without debate or amendment except as provided in Standing Order 59.02(8).

(3) For the 2008 Spring Sitting, the vote on the main estimates may be scheduled with a minimum of one sitting day's notice to occur any time after the main estimates have been given 60 hours of consideration, unless otherwise ordered.

(4) On the date for the vote on the main estimates and prior to the vote on the main estimates, the Chair shall put the question to approve the estimates of the Legislative Assembly, as approved by the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services, and the estimates of the officers of the Legislature, which shall be decided without debate or amendment.

(5) At 5:15 p.m. on the date scheduled for the vote on the main estimates, if the vote has not been taken earlier, the Chair shall interrupt the proceedings, and the Committee of Supply shall commence voting and, if required, continue beyond the normal adjournment hour until all matters have been voted upon, at which time the Committee shall immediately rise and report.

12 The following Standing Orders shall have no force and effect for consideration of the main estimates during the 2008 Spring Sitting:

- (a) 60(1);
- (b) 61(1), (2), (4) – (8);
- (c) 62(2);
- (d) 65(1)(b).

13 Standing Order 62(1) is amended by striking out "11 p.m." and substituting "10:30 p.m."

14 The following is added after Standing Order 74:

Referral of Bill to a committee after first reading

74.1(1) Immediately after a Bill has been read a first time,

- (a) with respect to a Government Bill, a member of the Executive Council
- (b) with respect to a public Bill other than a Government Bill, the sponsor

may move a motion, without notice, to refer the Bill to a Policy Field Committee.

(2) The Member moving the referral motion may be permitted to give a succinct explanation of the motion.

(3) Any motion made pursuant to this Standing Order shall be decided without debate or amendment, and if the motion is decided in the negative the Bill shall be ordered for second reading.

(4) This Standing Order does not apply to appropriation or private Bills.

Proceedings on Bills referred to a committee after first reading

74.2(1) When a Bill is referred to a Policy Field Committee after first reading, the committee may conduct public hearings on the subject matter of the Bill and report its observations, opinions and recommendations with respect to the Bill to the Assembly.

(2) Upon the concurrence of a committee report that a Bill be proceeded with, the Bill shall be placed on the Order Paper for second reading.

15 The following is added after Standing Order 78:

Referral of Bills to a Policy Field Committee after second reading

78.1(1) Immediately after a Bill has been read a second time,

- (a) with respect to a Government Bill, a member of the Executive Council
- (b) with respect to a public Bill other than a Government Bill, any Member

may move a motion, without notice, to refer the Bill to a Policy Field Committee, which shall be decided without debate or amendment.

(2) This Standing Order does not apply to appropriation or private Bills.

Public hearings after second reading

78.2(1) When a Bill is referred to a Policy Field Committee after second reading, the committee may conduct public hearings on the content of the Bill.

(2) No public hearings may be conducted under suborder (1) if the Bill has been subject to committee consideration after first reading.

Report of Policy Field Committee on Bills

78.3(1) A Policy Field Committee to which a Bill has been referred by the Assembly after second reading shall be empowered to report the same with or without amendments or to report that the Bill not proceed.

(2) The report may contain a written statement of the committee's conclusions if the Bill was the subject of a public hearing.

Procedure on report from Policy Field Committee

78.4 When a Bill is reported pursuant to Standing Order 78.3, the following procedure shall apply:

- (a) any Bill shall be considered committed to Committee of the Whole Assembly unless otherwise ordered;
- (b) when a report recommends that the Bill not proceed, a motion to concur in that report shall be put immediately and decided without debate, and if agreed to, the Bill shall be dropped from the Order Paper but if negatived, the Bill shall stand committed to the Committee of the Whole.

B. Be it further resolved that the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing shall, without further motion, review and consider

- (a) the amendments to Standing Orders in this motion by comparing the reforms to the practices in other Assemblies, examining whether the reforms afford open discussion of public policy where Albertans can participate and whether the reforms maximize oversight and accountability;
- (b) the need for additional amendments or reforms to the Assembly's rules and practices to further objectives of open, public discussion of public policy, the role of the Assembly in overall government accountability and the work/life balance of Members; and
- (c) the process used for Committee of Supply consideration of main estimates in 2008,

and shall report to the Assembly with its recommendations no later than October 30, 2008.

C. Be it further resolved that the Policy Field Committees referenced in Part A of this motion be designated as Category A Committees for the purposes of the Members' Services Committee Allowances Order, RMSC 1992, c.M-2.

D. And be it further resolved that

- 1 The amendments in this motion come into force on passage.

- 2 The amendments in this motion shall have effect until the conclusion of the 2008 Fall Sitting.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to move Government Motion 8 as is printed in the Order Paper. The purpose of the motion, obviously, is to amend standing orders. Members of the House will know that last year there was a full set of temporary standing orders which governed essentially three areas of interest. The first area of interest was the establishment of all-party committees of the House, and that was something that I think members from all parties in the House had been interested in for some time. We had the opportunity to take a stab at establishing all-party committees and having them operational for a short period of time. The purpose of this motion is to continue that, albeit as a temporary measure until they can be made permanent standing orders.

So a good portion of this motion is addressed to re-establishing the so-called policy field committees, with a minor modification from last year in that we're proposing five policy field committees rather than four. Other than that, the provisions that are being proposed in this motion for the standing orders would have those policy field committees established in much the same manner and operational with the same opportunity to refer bills and regulations, et cetera, as was contemplated in last year's House leaders' agreement and put in place through the temporary standing orders.

I think there was one modest change in the provisions from the standing orders last year, if I recall correctly, and that was simply to clarify the intention that the so-called policy field committees could meet to hear public presentations. There are groups across the province that represent both private interests and public interests. When they come to talk to government about their interests, it was understood that those might more appropriately at times be heard by an all-party committee of the House, so the language has been clarified to reflect that.

The other major interest which needed to be addressed was with respect to how we deal with Committee of Supply. Last year in the temporary standing orders there was a recognition that the Alberta Legislature should spend a considerable amount of time in Committee of Supply because it is important to hold the government accountable for the spending of public dollars. When we looked across the country at committees of supply and the ways they work, there are various ways that legislatures do it. We landed on a concept that there should be 75 hours of examination but then recognized last year that with the late start it would be more prudent to start with a 60 hour Committee of Supply.

This year, of course, because of the election we have another late start and another late budget. If we want to have the Committee of Supply done within a reasonable period of time and the budget passed within a reasonable period of time, it was prudent to again go with the 60 hours for this spring. So we're proposing to bring forward a Committee of Supply process which would allow, as we did last year, 60 hours of examination.

The other piece that was in the standing orders last year was a rotation with a reservation of days for each caucus and then days for cross-ministry processes. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that resulted in a number of things which I heard from members, concerns they had. One of the concerns was being excluded from certain days. Another of their concerns was the fact that some ministries were then recalled a number of times to go over some of the same material depending on which caucus was asking the question. It became fairly apparent that we weren't necessarily using the benefit of previous days' work in the House in committee.

So what was being proposed this year is to retain the 60 hours but to do it, in essence, in scheduling. Although the scheduling is not specifically set out in the standing orders themselves but rather to be agreed or otherwise determined, the scheduling essentially would be in lots of two-hour evenings, which would be Monday nights; two and a half hour afternoons, which would be Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday afternoons; and three-hour evenings, which would be Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. With a combination of those two-hour, two-and-a-half hour, and three-hour blocks, obviously in consultation with the Official Opposition and the third party, we could schedule the ministries that they want to spend more time on in the three-hour blocks, others in the two-and-a-half hour blocks, and some with a minimum of two hours. Every ministry would be called within two hours.

Now, this is somewhat consistent with the current, existing standing orders, where every ministry is called for a day, a day being an afternoon or an evening and a day being a minimum of two hours. So it's very consistent with the current standing orders. It meets our objective of last year to have an additional amount of time, i.e., the 60 hours. It does not deal with the concept of having exclusive blocks of time for caucuses, but as I said, that was not felt by many members to be useful insofar as ministries were going over the same material over and over again.

Again, those would be temporary. My anticipation and hope would be that the House leaders would be meeting and talking about how we take this forward, that we would have recommendations coming out of our experience both last year and this year to go towards the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing for recommendation for what might become permanent, or as permanent as standing orders are.

Those were the two processes, the main pieces of this motion: the re-establishment of policy field committees and their procedures and the establishment of a process for Committee of Supply for this year. In order to get the three-hour blocks and to do it in an effective manner, we have proposed that the House meet at 7:30 in the evening rather than 8. Again, not new: that's something that we did during Committee of Supply last year, so that time frame would work. That's the reason for suggesting the 7:30 time frame instead of 8 o'clock.

We would continue to have a private member's motion on Monday evening dealt with within an hour. There was a slight anomaly there where it became an hour and five minutes, but we'll deal with a private member's motion in an hour on Monday nights.

Those are essentially the provisions. We did put in, again, the provision for some certainty of planning, the concept of when the fall sitting would start and when it might be anticipated to end. I say anticipated because, of course, we also keep in the standing orders the provision to call a session earlier if necessary and to stay longer if necessary. But so that members might know and be able to have a better sense of how to plan their own affairs, both in their constituency and with their families, some attempt at certainty in the standing orders, to the extent it can be made, was felt to be appropriate. We were able to discern what dates we felt we should be able to come back, so we put them in the standing orders. As I've indicated publicly, there's a fairly significant legislative agenda, so the fall sitting this year will need to be longer.

Mr. MacDonald: Tell us what's on it.

Mr. Hancock: I'd be happy to very shortly.

Those are the essential elements of it. There may be one or two pieces in there. There is one piece with respect to intersessional deposits. There's been an anomaly in that there's a requirement to

deposit certain reports with the Legislature. When the Legislature's not sitting, in its desire to make those reports public in a timely way, there needed to be a way to do that. The table has advised that this is a mechanism that's used in other jurisdictions, so it's not something we're inventing; it's something that's entirely in order in parliamentary jurisdictions and not out of process.

Mr. Speaker, those are the provisions. There is also a provision, again, to have the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing review them in due course and report back to the House. There's a provision that the amendments come into force on passage. The reason for that, of course, is that if the House agrees, we would like to start on Monday because we have a Committee of Supply on Monday night, albeit in supplementary supply.

Those are the essential elements of this. This does not preclude the House leaders meeting and talking about some of the corollary issues that are important. One of the issues that is important, for example, is workload. There's some concern about policy field committees, for example, meeting while we're doing the work of Committee of Supply in evening sittings and that sort of thing this spring. I think that's something that we have had some discussions on, and we can and will come to some agreement in terms of what we'll recommend to committee chairs and the House with respect to when the committees sit. I think that's a reasonable way of approaching it.

3:00

My point is a commitment on my behalf, at least, to meet with the other House leaders to work out the ongoing issues that may be there and deal with them. But we need to have rules in place, and it's best to have them right at the beginning of the session so that we're not mixing and matching and so that we have in place a Committee of Supply process.

Is there anything else you wanted me to put on the record?

Ms Blakeman: It's your time.

Mr. Hancock: There may be some other things that we had some discussion on. If they're necessary, I certainly will put them in writing to opposition House leaders and deal with them from that perspective, but for the purposes of the afternoon I think I've dealt with the substantive measures of the motion.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a debatable motion under Standing Order 18(1)(a) and (j), and we'll recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, in this whole process I certainly notice what a difference a day makes. Before March 3 we had the Premier of the governing party talking about how important private members' business was, no night sittings, how we were going to be more democratic, how it was going to be more family friendly. One day – and that day was March 3 – and everything changes. Now we're looking at changes to our standing orders that bring back night sittings. There's no opportunity for members to go back to their constituencies and give their constituents the attention and value that we think they deserve. Very interesting to me what an enormous difference a day makes. We have the Premier promising and saying one thing on the 2nd of March, and an entirely different thing is coming off that front bench on the day after the election.

Let's have a look here at what we're talking about. I had gone into the House leaders' negotiations, that extended over a three-

month period of time in January, February, and March of last year, that resulted in the temporary standing orders. There were three objectives that I had brought to the table, and for the most part there was agreement. They were to enhance private members' business so that we would have a more democratic and predictable process, that there would be a better quality of life – what I kept saying: more humane, a more humane way of approaching the business that we do in this Assembly – and an improved budget process. So it's very interesting to me to see the choices that the government has decided to put back on the table.

As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, we met for three months. The House leaders negotiated with great good faith, and I believe we had developed a very good number of changes and improvements and updates, modernizations to the standing orders.

Those were tabled before this Assembly in the form of a signed House leaders' agreement, and then we had our stalwart Parliamentary Counsel turn all of that into a government motion which came before the House and was open for a debate and, in fact, did have debate. Part of that was that at the end of the spring session, over the summer, the Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing was to meet and make some recommendations specific to the budget process to come back in the fall and then, further, was to meet again to review the entire temporary standing orders.

What we ended up having happen is that the committee did in fact meet. I've reviewed the *Hansard* from that. Very interesting, the things that the committee raised and the things that they didn't raise, Mr. Speaker. I would recommend highly to everyone that they get out the *Hansard* from November 26 and December 3, 2007, and read the *Hansard* from the Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing Committee meetings.

In the end there was a motion, in fact, sponsored by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, that the temporary standing orders be extended to the end of 2008. The discussion that preceded that was that we felt these were actually doing pretty well and that we wanted to give them another test run, run them through another spring and another fall session, to the end of 2008. Imagine my surprise, Mr. Speaker, when we came back after the election. Again, the difference that one day made in all those promises about democracy and humanity and friendliness. One little day. We came back after that, and lo and behold, everything was wiped off the table.

Then there are things from the government that they would like to put back on. It's interesting to me what's been put back on the table, what wasn't put back on the table, and what was not allowed to be put on the table by the Opposition House Leader and by the House leader of the third party. You know, the government clearly has total control of the agenda of this House. For the backbenchers that are listening, keep that in mind because as much as they like to tell you that we somehow have this mighty power to destroy your lives and keep you away from your families, wrong. Total control over there. If you have a problem with when you're getting out, take it to your friends on the front bench over there because they're the ones that are controlling the agenda. They choose when the budget comes in. They choose how long we're going to spend on it. They choose things like what these standing orders changes are going to be. They choose when the throne speech is. They choose all of it.

What we have being put back on the table here are things like policy field committees. Okay. I can see that with the increased number of people in the government backbench, there's a need to have a bit more work for all those folks to do. And, oh, there'd be five of them instead of four, so that'd be one more position for which somebody on the government side manages to get paid. Very interesting with that.

Also, the whole budget agreement. What I'd heard was that they didn't like that budget agreement and the whole thing was probably going to get tossed. Well, no. In fact, we go back to the argument about how many hours of debate. Keep in mind that Saskatchewan, absolutely reviled by most members of the government and dismissed and trivialized and demeaned for being so backwards . . .

Mr. Mason: Not anymore.

Ms Blakeman: Members of the government, careful.

Little old Saskatchewan spends 100 hours on their budget debates – 100 hours of debate. We were managing to look at 75 hours of debate in this Assembly, a whole whopping 75 hours of debate. Now we're back to talking about 60 hours of debate as though that were a great gift to all of us. My goodness, isn't it interesting what a difference a day makes.

When I want to look at some of the other things that are no longer here, what's been omitted? Well, one of the things that got omitted was the protection of private members' business. It was important to me that we protect private members' business. There are a lot of private members on the backbenches. What has happened is that private members' business is only done on Monday afternoons and now under these new old orders for an hour on Monday night, but if for any reason something comes up and the private members don't get their opportunity, that's it. It's gone for the week until next week. We already lose a number of private members' Mondays because of statutory holidays, so it was important to me to protect that private members' business. Guess what's not back on the table. So if something happens that interferes with the private members' business on Mondays, there's no protection to bring it back on Thursday, which is what had been negotiated in those previous temporary standing orders. Very interesting what a difference a day makes.

When I look at the comparison between what is being put back on the table now and what was in the previous temporary standing orders, one of the other interesting things that has gone missing is tabling answers to questions in Committee of Supply. We had worked out a whole roster of how after we'd debated each ministry and we'd asked a number of questions – and this is a long-running concern of mine. We would be expected to vote on the budget and I still didn't have answers to the questions that I'd asked in budget debate months earlier, literally four or five or six weeks before that.

We quite reasonably had worked out a process by which within two weeks of a budget being up for debate, there would be an expectation that the answers to the questions that had been asked would be tabled and would be provided to the member that asked them, except for those ministries that were debated in the two weeks immediately prior to the budget. Obviously, if you were the day before the budget, there was no expectation on my part that you would have to, you know, turn around and do instant responses. We expected these to be thorough and carefully thought out and all of that. We wanted substantive responses, and this was to assist in that. Interestingly enough, that's gone. So now once again we will be asked to vote on a budget, and there's no guarantee whatsoever that we will have had responses to the questions that we asked in good faith in this House of ministers of the Crown. There's no expectation. There's nothing in these new standing orders that says that you have to answer those questions before we actually vote on every one of those different ministries.

3:10

Another thing that disappeared, again, you know, something that was near and dear to my heart, was minority reports. This is

part of: how much do we respect the position of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition and any other possible opposition parties in this House? We heard a lot from the Premier before the election. The difference one little day makes: gone. The opportunity for minority reports or any other report to be included in any reports from the policy field committees: gone. It's a way of the government being able to make sure that no other voice makes it onto this Assembly floor as part of official tablings and reports from committees. Very interesting: the choices that were made about what got on the table and what didn't get on the table.

I hear the House leader say that he hopes that all the House leaders can get together and continue to negotiate this. You know, I'm just the tiniest – no, not the tiniest; I'm mightily offended by that, actually, Mr. Speaker, because we had an agreement, a House leaders' agreement, that came before this House. It appeared as a government motion. It was accepted into temporary standing orders. There was an agreement that a committee would look at this. The committee met, they made a motion, and then the government made sure that the report, which would have made it have effect until the end of 2008, could not be tabled in the Assembly. Now there's an idea that somehow, having done all of that work last year and then it all got thrown out, we're going to be just so keen to do this all over again. Frankly, I think that it also offends the members of Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing because that committee met twice and almost met a third time.

Dr. Taft: The first time in how long?

Ms Blakeman: Oh, the first time in 15 or 20 years.

Those members all did due diligence. They all came with their concerns. They brought them up. The work of that committee has now been swept off the table. Nope, nobody wanted to carry forward the wishes of that committee.

One of the other things that the House leader had also promised to do was to meet with me and the House leader from the third party and meet with the Speaker to talk about QP, and we saw the result of that.

Let me look at some of the other changes that are actually happening here. Now, I did talk about the out clauses. For those of you that are following along, if you look at that very beginning section under 2008 Fall Sitting, for the backbenchers that are new here, you start to get a feel for exactly how much the government can actually control the agenda here. This is about when there'd be a fall sitting. If they want to call it sooner, they can; if they want to call it later, they can; and if they want to cancel and get out of it sooner, they can do that too. All of those kinds of things are included in that section under 3 and 3.1 and the subclauses under that.

Then in the government motion under section 2, which refers to Standing Order 4 being amended, what we have is very interesting as well. What we have is that instead of starting the evening sitting – remember, we weren't going to have evening sittings; it was supposed to be more humane and family friendly. Yeah. Well, those evening sittings that we weren't going to have are the ones that we're now going to start at 7:30 at night rather than at 8.

Now, I don't care one way or another; I can easily accommodate. But I know that for a number of other people you've now got a break that goes from 5:30 to 7:30. So you've got a two-hour break instead of a two and a half hour break. Some people may have been able to get home, spend some time with their families, eat dinner with their kids, certainly the people that are centred in Edmonton or around here. For those that had families visiting from elsewhere, you would have had a nice enough break. Now, two hours. You're

short by half an hour, and that makes quite a difference when you're looking at breaks like that. So much for family friendly.

The government does love certainty. They do love certainty. They clutch it to their tiny little chests with balled up little fists. We have Oral Question Period starting at 1:50. So the government gets what it wants, but in these great House leaders' negotiations nobody else gets to get anything on the table.

We also have some issues around public bills being called.

Oh, you know, the House leader had asked me: well, what were the things that I wanted that I didn't get to talk about other than the things I've already noticed that were complete changes? Let me talk about a couple of the other things that I've continued to bring up in negotiations that we think are important on this side.

We would like to see that there's an adjustment to the private member's bill draw because right now the opposition members are mixed in with all of the government backbenchers. I know how the Speaker likes to remind us that all private members are the same, but all private members are not the same. Certain private members don't have access to, oh, say, government caucus meetings, cabinet meetings, standing policy committee meetings. We don't have access in the same way that others do.

We think it's important that the position of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition is recognized. I have often asked for the government to consider allocating the first private member's bill to the Leader of the Official Opposition. I believe, if I may be so bold, that in negotiations I've been in in the past, the third party has also raised the possibility of having a bill for the third party in position 205, was my memory. That's one suggestion that I had.

Second is trying to get a better process for supplementary supply, which is sort of higgledy-piggledy. We kind of go on this odd general rule that if it's over a billion, more than one day; under a billion, then one day of debate. One day, which is two hours of debate, for a billion dollars. How much does that come out to a minute or a second?

Mr. Snelgrove: One per cent.

Ms Blakeman: One per cent. Well, we have the President of the Treasury Board, who is very interested in getting involved in the debate, and I look forward to his contribution.

We also have felt for a long time that question period should focus on Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition and questions from other opposition parties, not the government's backbenchers reading questions that have been prepared for them by the ministry. I don't see that that's the point of question period, but clearly I differ with others in this House.

There's also a really interesting little section in here that I think should be deleted. That is in either old or new standing orders under 8(8), which is basically a kill option for a bill, which means that you can make a bill disappear out of thin air without ever bringing it to a vote. I think that section should be bowed out of these standing orders.

Essentially, it allows that before the mover of a motion for second or third reading of a public bill other than a government bill, so a private member's bill, closes debate or the time limit is reached, the member can move a motion that isn't subject to debate or amendment – nobody else can raise any problem with it; that saves them, right? – “that the votes necessary to conclude consideration at that stage be postponed for 10 sitting days or the first opportunity after that for the consideration of the Bill.” It's a way to make that bill disappear into thin air. You tend to be in this stage of the reading on a private member's bill toward the end of the sitting, and

it's a way of making it just disappear without there ever being a vote held on it. It's a very interesting tactic. That should disappear, in my opinion, because if you're going to vote something down, you should vote it down, not sneak it out of here under somebody's coat.

There's a short list of some of the things that I think could be addressed or improved.

I know I have a number of colleagues who are eager to speak to this, but a number of other changes came through. For example, I know the government really finds written questions and motions for returns a nuisance, but for members of the opposition they're an important opportunity for us to question the government. We can't get answers out of them during question period. I'm often reminded that it's question period, not answer period.

3:20

Dr. Taft: How many questions did we have today?

Ms Blakeman: I have no idea.

Mr. MacDonald: A hundred and six, wasn't it?

Ms Blakeman: A hundred and six questions today done at rapid-fire pace, but none of them answered. We don't get our letters with questions in them answered either. So written questions and motions for returns are a very important opportunity for us to actually pry some information out of the government's clasped fists. There is an attempt here to manage those written question and motion for a return opportunities more by not allowing us to have debate any longer on questions that are going to be accepted but only on those that are going to be amended or defeated. Once again, the government has total control of what's going on.

I also notice under section 6 a new escape clause which allows for the government to get reports tabled in here. Now, this one would have been handy because we actually could have had Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing Committee report into the Assembly in time to have it take effect.

Mr. MacDonald: Were you on that committee?

Ms Blakeman: I was on that committee. I presented to that committee. I've reviewed the *Hansard* of it, and I recommend that everybody else do that as well because, interestingly, what was raised with me as a severe problem was never raised once in those proceedings. Nobody raised that issue that is now such a terrible difficulty . . . [Ms Blakeman's speaking time expired]

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we'll try and go in a rotation if there's enough interest from members to participate.

I see the hon. President of the Treasury Board moving, so I presume he wants to participate.

Mr. Snelgrove: It's interesting. The hon. member says: what a difference a day can make. Obviously, some things never change when you are unaware of the difference between having your say and having your way. It reminds me of home. I've raised four children, and there were always times in their lives when they were able to throw tantrums and think they were going to accomplish a great deal. Often you just let them stamp their feet and bang their heads. They'd actually think they were getting somewhere – I'm sure other children watching think that works too – but most of the time they grew out of it. A couple of them have actually become very productive, mature young men that are contributing very well

to Alberta's economy, so there is hope, Mr. Speaker, for all. For some it's dim – time may be fading – but I'm sure that for all Alberta's fine young children there is light at the end of the tunnel.

You know, we are talking here about how important our time is and how important time is to put government bills and motions under the scrutiny of the opposition. That is a very critically important part of any democracy: that we would have an opposition that could be kind of questioning, looking with a different critical eye at what we're trying to do. I think that's important.

But I think it is surprising when you start a new session and motions as simple as referring supplementary estimates to committee require a standing vote and a 10 minute waste of everyone's time to get something done. Have we seen a willingness from an opposition? If it were voting on the supplementary supply itself, that's one thing. There's good debate. There are votes. "No, you've made a point." I can accept that. Most of Alberta that watched, watched an opposition that was very unproductive, ringing the bells for seven hours one night. These are things where I think Albertans have said: we elected no one to go there and do that.

It's a procedure, Mr. Speaker, and we're being accused of being a tyranny of the majority, rolling over the poor, defenseless minority. Well, sometimes manipulation by the minority . . .

An Hon. Member: Let's burn our bras.

Mr. Snelgrove: Yeah. We could light our hair on fire – some of us could – and maybe bring attention to something when we're not getting our way, but I can assure the hon. member and all hon. members here that this Premier and this government are very committed to the quality-of-life issues that we are all faced with in this House. So we can sit a few hours every afternoon, and those from Edmonton and nearby can go home to their families – the rest of us can do more work or sit here and wait – or we can work some extra hours at night and try to get back to our families hopefully by the time school is out or will nearly be out so that we can actually spend some quality time with our children.

Now, I know that it may be the luck of the draw where we live, where we choose to live, where our lives have taken us. It's never going to be fair for everyone. It's never going to be that we can all spend time with our children or our spouses. I can accept that, except that sooner or later we have to say, "You know what? We're bringing a budget in," regardless of circumstances of the vote and a certain amount of time to be debated and important bills passed. The government's been very careful trying to limit the number of bills coming in this spring.

We've all had long, hard days in a campaign. Well, to be perfectly honest, some of us didn't have that hard a campaign, I hate to tell you, but it was a fine young gentleman from Edmonton who came out to try and represent the opposition in Lloydminster. Actually, what he said to me since, Mr. Speaker, is that he couldn't imagine where his brain was when he agreed to run, and he could never, ever vote Liberal again in his life. So spending a little time in our constituency may be something they should consider. Maybe loading up a small minivan with their caucus and driving out there for a day would help them.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just saying: what goes around in this Assembly comes around. If the opposition wish to make statements of tyrannical majority and the abuse of family, so be it. The rest of us are here to do what we feel is right, in the best interest of all Albertans, and that's what we intend to do.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. I am not going to get into name-calling, but I am going to talk about the bully principle. I spent 34 years of my life as a teacher. I've worked with kids from elementary, primarily at the junior high level, where the greatest degree of difficulty is often experienced, through to high school. I operated on a set of rules – I coached wrestling for 25 years; I coached soccer and gymnastics – and I knew what the rules were. We all played by them, and guess what? The referee reinforced those common rules regardless of whether it was a home game or an away game, and we knew where we stood. If we lost – we did our best; we gave it all out on the field – we didn't gripe. We didn't whine. We played the game. However, this game changes. To use the theme of what a difference a day makes, the rules seem to change at the convenience of the government.

We have previously, in my limited experience, had House leader agreements. I can remember the Speaker bringing it to my attention: your House leader and you voted and agreed to these rules. There was a process, a collaborative process as opposed to a consultative process, and therefore I was to apply myself and obey those rules. Well, these rules haven't been agreed to. As for the wasting of time with the ringing of the bells, that is based on frustration because this government, more than any other government, federal or provincial, uses closure like a bloody baseball bat to prevent discussion from taking place.

We have heard about the Saskatchewan example. Compare Saskatchewan's GDP with ours and the amount of time that is given for their organization and their opposition to debate, and we have what the Greeks used to call an enlightened dictatorship. But this isn't enlightened. Bullies eventually meet their end. Whether it's the Sun King, who believed he ruled by divine right, whether it's Henry VIII, these people met rather sad ends because people eventually revolted.

Now, this government believes that it has a mandate to govern, and I want to talk a little bit about the electoral process, the manipulation of the electoral process. I took some time after the election to try and deal with the powers of the government and the level of the playing field, and I entitled it – and this is a précis version – Antidotes to Apathy: Electoral Reform in Alberta.

The worst provincial voter turnout in Canadian history has left many Albertans wondering how to overcome an alarming rise in democratic disengagement.

3:30

In 2004, of the 46 per cent of eligible Albertans who voted, a slight majority voted against the government. However, because of our lingering first past the post system, 62 Conservative MLAs were elected of the entire 83 possible seats. In 2008, with only 41 per cent of Albertans casting a vote, 72 Conservative MLAs were elected by 22 per cent of eligible Albertans. This low voter turnout can hardly be considered a mandate to govern or a vote of confidence. Many reasons have been offered for the failure to ignite voter enthusiasm.

Alberta is a Canadian anomaly, an enigma not only to the rest of the nation but to Albertans themselves. While other provinces regularly change their party allegiances and governments, Albertans tend to embrace, cling to the status quo. The Social Credit Party was in power for 36 years prior to the current Conservatives' 37 years and counting. While Alberta has the greatest per capita wealth, Albertans' dissatisfaction is statistically evident in high divorce, addictions, suicide, and high school failure rates. In poll after poll Albertans indicate a desire for change but are reluctant, as the recent March 3, '08, low voter turnout demonstrates, to make the change.

There is no singular, silver bullet remedy for Alberta's apathy

riddle. A series of proactive prescriptions could potentially revive the democratic process. However, since the majority of changes necessary to level the participatory playing field are not in the government's power retention best interests, the changes will probably have to be forced from without rather than come from within. However, the passing of recent legislation in the form of bills 1 and 2, which were strengthened through the scrutiny of all-party policy committees, recently adopted into Alberta politics, does provide a glimmer of hope for internally overcoming some of the democratic deficit.

The current electoral process is flawed because it unapologetically favours the government. Without a fixed election date the government has the enormous advantage of unilaterally deciding when an election is in its best interests. Currently the government can appoint electoral officers from the ranks of its own Conservative membership lists, which calls into question whose interests are being served, those of the people or the party. The provincial government decides when to update its enumerated voters list independently of either federal or municipal census gathering. Government-appointed committees decide on electoral constituency boundaries, which frequently do not take into account the rising urban population reality compared to the reduced rural constituencies. The fact that over two-thirds of Albertans reside in cities is not reflected in the constituency allocations seriously undermines the democratic principle of representation by population.

Although absentee ballots are available, there are opportunities to participate in an advance poll, and employers are required by law to allow their employees the opportunity to vote, the fact that the polling booths don't open until 9 a.m. and are closed by 8 p.m. does not facilitate the voting process. In the U.S.A. polling stations are open for business at 6 a.m. In New Zealand voting occurs on a Saturday and in some European countries on a Sunday, which encourages voter participation through more convenient access opportunities. While consensus will not be achieved on compulsory . . .

Mr. Oberle: Point of order.

The Speaker: The hon. member on a point of order. Please, the citation.

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 23(b)(1). I wonder if the Speaker might be willing to rule or have the member confine his comments to the question at hand. I'm quite sure that the voting hours in New Zealand are somewhat irrelevant to the question at hand. Again, wasting the time of the House is supposedly our fault here; I think that's a brutal waste of the time here.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River is basically talking about relevancy with respect to the motion. There is a concern with respect to that, hon. member. We've now gone 12 minutes. We do have a motion; it's called Government Motion 8. It does have a text of nearly five pages. The relevancy and association with it would be helpful. I know that the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity is very eloquent, usually has very long preambles. It may take 12 minutes to come to the point that he wants to have to connect it to Motion 8, but it's probably time to find that connection.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I respect your position as referee of this House, and I am required to abide by your ruling. Whether or not I agree with it is another matter.

Debate Continued

Mr. Chase: Motion 8, the one we are discussing in this Legislature today, is about the unreasonable power of a government to change the rules as it sees fit, when it sees fit and totally ignore the role of the opposition in terms of contributing to the discussions or the well-being or the governance of this province.

It concerns me greatly that members of this House on the government side believe that they have all the answers; therefore, they can determine how much debate will take place. They don't like the idea of us standing and having account taken of the positions they have taken. Many of the positions that the government has taken on issues we find offensive. To record our offence taken to the policies put forward by the government or the actions of the government, we have very limited rules that we can apply. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, you can expect us to apply at every opportunity the few rules that are given to protect the opposition parties in this province.

Yes, as of March 3, 2008, Alberta came closer to a dictatorship than it has in previous years. However, while there are still 11 of us sitting or standing, we deserve the right to put forward our ideas. We deserve the right to have our ideas taken into account. The House leaders have traditionally worked together to establish rules that affected the governance of all members. As our House leader, the MLA for Edmonton-Centre, pointed out, there is nothing in this new set of rules that provides for the encouragement of members to connect with their constituencies, to attempt to bring forward relevant debate, to point out through the use of preambles during Question Period the set-up for the question that will be asked if not answered.

As a member of the opposition I don't think a number of the backbenchers realize the difference between the paycheque they receive for the work they do in the House and that expected from members of the opposition. I, for example, as do most of my colleagues, represent three shadow ministries: the shadow ministries of education, of children services, of tourism, parks, and protected areas. I'm very proud, Mr. Speaker, to represent those areas; however, there is a tremendous amount of work associated with them. There is also an expectation, thanks to our new House rules, that I be a member of two standing policy committees. Great. I want to have my input included. I am very proud of my role as a member of Public Accounts. I can only be in one place at one time, and I know the members are thanking their lucky stars that cloning hasn't been invented because two of me would probably be more than they could handle.

How can we as opposition members carry out the duties our constituents elected us to do if time is not provided for that to take place? We cannot be in three places at once. However, having said that, that is not whining; that is a statement of how hard the opposition works. We will continue to work hard on behalf of Albertans because – guess what? – 79 per cent of Albertans did not vote for this government.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the chair saw no hon. member move after the speech from the presentation of the hon. Government House Leader nor the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre nor the President of the Treasury Board. As the chair reminded every speaker yesterday as we were going through debate, there is an opportunity for a five-minute question-and-answer segment associated with this under Standing Order 29(2)(a). Anybody have a question or want to make a comment with respect to the presentation?

There being none, and I have no further government member on

my speaking order list, does any member of the third party wish to participate in this? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

3:40

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to speak to the government motion. If I can reflect on some of the work that was done in the previous session of this Legislature between the various House leaders, I thought that we saw some significant progress. I took it as a good sign that the new leadership of the government was interested in some steps to make this place a little more open. I certainly appreciated the fact that the government was prepared to give a greater role to the opposition.

One of the things that bothered me, I guess, as a new member of this Assembly when I was first elected in 2001, was that there were committees that were established here that considered policy matters, and they were only available to members of the government caucus. There was a fiction that was created that these committees had something to do with the Legislature. In fact, they did not. They were committees of the government, and they were financed through the different government departments, so opposition members were excluded from that. I thought that that was a rather tortuous route around the principles of the democratic nature of the Assembly where all members are supposedly equal.

I took it as a good sign that the government, once the change in the leadership of the Conservative Party took place, wanted to replace those committees with legitimate parliamentary committees. They did. I think that they've proven their worth. I appreciate the fact that this is going to be continued. In fact, there's going to be an additional policy field committee created, and I appreciate the fact that the NDP opposition will have positions, very likely, on all of them even though we only have two members. It will keep us very busy. That may be part of the intent. I don't know. Nevertheless, I think that this does represent a step forward, and I want to commend the government on that.

There were other reforms that were discussed and brought in. The government seems to be backing away from some of those. Night sittings were a serious problem and continue to be a serious problem for many members, not all members of the Assembly. I took it as a very positive direction that they were going to be phased out. Even though we had a few of them, it was agreed that because we were in a transitional phase, we needed to have a few night sittings. Now, Mr. Speaker, we're back to the situation where it looks like the government can't get away from it. It may just be because of some of the disorganization on the part of the government at the present stage, coming out of an election with lots of new members. I don't think that it's unreasonable for the government to be a little bit disorganized right after an election with a lot of new ministers and a large number of new MLAs, but I would like to have some clear indication on the part of the government that they do intend to eliminate night sittings and stick to it. It seems to me that there are plenty of good intentions about getting rid of night sittings, but there's always an excuse why we have to bring them back. I think we need to make the rule and stick to it.

Now, obviously, if you're getting into a situation where there's an extremely bad piece of legislation that the government wants to ram through and the opposition quite rightly is trying to prevent its passage, the government may wish to revert to night sittings. I don't think there's much we could do to stop that, as abhorrent as it is to the principles of democracy, Mr. Speaker. But I would like the government to actually make a commitment to eliminate night sittings and not just when it's convenient. I'd ask them to do that.

The motion doesn't deal with question period. This has been

traditionally the purview of the Speaker. I will accept guidance from the Speaker if I'm out of order on this point, but I do want to talk a little bit about question period. Question period is critical to the opposition holding the government to account. It's perhaps the most important single tool that the opposition has, and in many Assemblies the question period is reserved for the opposition. The spectacle that we see here, where a majority of questions are asked by government members of their own cabinet ministers, to whom they have access in caucus and other places, strikes me as a little bit bizarre, but I respect the fact that private members on the government side want to be able to demonstrate to their constituents that they're doing a good job, so there's some utility to this.

I want to say that I believe that the system we did adopt, where the opposition was able to ask a question and make whatever preambles they wished in both supplementary questions for 45 seconds and the government was allowed to respond for 45 seconds, worked very well and made this place more lively. Some have suggested that it reduced the decorum, but I think that what actually happened is that it increased the discomfort of ministers because it actually gave the opposition some means to hold the government accountable.

The system that we had before that limited the opposition to three sentences. It's almost like it's been created for a grammar school. You have three sentences in which you can make a statement, and then you can ask one question in one sentence. The government was then allowed to respond at whatever length they chose. So all the rules were around what the opposition could do and constrained what the opposition could do, but there were no rules around what the government could do.

In fact, we saw repeatedly government members go on and on at great length. The former Premier, in particular, was noted for his ability to go on at some length in the answer. It reduced the number of questions that members were allowed to ask, and since our second question came at the 11th question, it could be used by the government to use up the time so that they didn't get to the 11th question. When we were particularly on a roll on some issue, that happened to us on a number of occasions. That was a problem.

Now, I understand that the ministers don't like the fact that we could have preambles in our second and third questions, in our supplementary questions. Well, my answer is: get over it; you know, suck it up. That's something that I think adds to this place and adds to the opposition's ability to make its point and to hold the government accountable.

What we've got now is a similar situation to that but with a 35-second question and answer. Now, I'm concerned that 35 seconds, even though it may be used in the federal House of Commons, may not give the minister enough latitude to answer a question, should they at some point choose to do so, adequately. It also speeds things up considerably. The problem is that at the end of the rotation, after, I think, the 10th opposition question, all subsequent questions go to the government side.

3:50

The Speaker: Just for clarity: after the 15th.

Mr. Mason: The 15th?

The Speaker: Yeah. Quite a difference.

Mr. Mason: Okay.

Mr. Oberle: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: A point of order to be heard.

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, once again under 23(b)(i). Given that both of the opposition parties have expressed some apparent distaste with the motion at hand, I wonder if we might actually discuss it for a little while. I don't see what question period, which the member himself has acknowledged is not a part of this motion, or the habits of our former Premier or anything else about question period has to do with the discussion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: In the narrowest sense the hon. Member for Peace River may have a point. However, if the hon. member would look at Government Motion 8, you'll find section 3, which does identify Oral Question Period. You know, the principle basically is some degree of laxity. If you open up a bill, the whole bill could be looked at. So the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is completely within his right to make comment with respect to question period if he wishes. There's much more, though, in the motion than that.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much for that, Mr. Speaker. I have tried to avoid speaking about the electoral system of New Zealand in my comments, but I think that question period is important.

Debate Continued

Mr. Mason: Here's the thing. Here's the thing, Mr. Speaker. Under what we're dealing with today, the length of a complete set of questions and answers under the rules before was 4.5 minutes. Now, because you can't use a preamble in the second and third questions, it's probably going to be about three minutes. The result is that we move through the questions much more quickly at the expense, primarily, of opposition time, and then all of that saved time now accrues to questions for government members.

By my calculations the opposition has lost 10 and a half minutes, more or less, of its time in question period, which has now been added to the government side. In my view, that represents a situation that contradicts the principle that question period is primarily a tool for the opposition to hold the government accountable and, in my view, is not in the best interests of this place. I think that represents about a quarter of the opposition time in question period that has been lost and given to government members, and I want to express my real concern about that situation in particular.

Mr. Speaker, I know there are many other aspects to this. I think that the amount of time available for the budget is insufficient. I do want to say that it has always been the case that the rules of this House have been set by the House and not on the basis of agreement between House leaders, and I don't believe that unanimous consent applies in this case. I recall that after the 2001 election, I think, dealing with different House leaders, when I was the House leader, the government did impose rule changes. It does seem to me that whenever the opposition finds something that really works, the government uses its majority to take it away from us. We saw that before, and I think this is what we're seeing again.

You know, Alberta has a long tradition of very strong governments and very small oppositions, and it seems to me that the people of this province would benefit by weighting things a little bit more in favour of the opposition instead of doing the opposite. I don't think it's a question here of whose political party benefits but of whether or not the people benefit in the long run. You may be a

little uncomfortable having some preambles in the supplementary questions, but it's not going to kill you, and in the end it's probably a lot better for the people of this province.

I would urge the government members to take a good, hard look at this after the spring session is over and think about what's really in the interests of the public. Giving the opposition some more tools to do its job is good for the people, so the government should do it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Danyluk: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I need to talk about some of the comments made by the hon. leader of the third party, the first one, of course, being his discussion about inclusion and the lack thereof, according to his statements, with the government. It was our Premier who very much talked and talks regularly about the importance of every member in this House, whether they be a minister, whether they be a member, whether they be a member of the opposition or the third party. It was in this House that we brought forward committees and brought forward a committee that included the opposition and the third party in the housing task force. Also, it was this government that brought forward the standing committees to bring forward the opportunity for the third party . . .

The Speaker: Hon. minister, remember that there is only a five-minute segment for question and comment. I will recognize the hon. minister to participate in the debate for a full 20 minutes if he does, but right now he'd better come to a question really quickly or sum up the comments. Okay?

Mr. Danyluk: Okay. Mr. Speaker, my question is: does the hon. leader of the third party feel that that participation was not one that was representation for his party?

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I certainly think that it was representation for our party and for our caucus. We said at the time that we thought it was a breath of fresh air, and it was, but when we actually won some votes in the committee on the recommendations, the government kept the report secret for a couple of months and then decided which recommendations it was going to take. You know, we appreciate the representation, and we're going to continue to take advantage of it, Mr. Minister, but, you know, in the end the government does what it wants.

The Speaker: It sure would have been nice, though, if both would have kept to the subject at hand.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will stick to the subject at hand.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. MacDonald: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, I have a question, please, in regard to your concern about question period. Given that we've seen a big expansion in the size of the cabinet, that we see now parliamentary secretaries that we're not to pursue in question period, that we see the increase in the size of the

government budget, do you think there should be an increase in the number of minutes that are allocated to question period on a daily basis? If I was to amend this Motion 8 to increase the length of question period to, say, 70 minutes, would you support that amendment?

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, hon. member. As some ministers are fond of saying, I'm not going to answer hypothetical questions, but it sounds like a good idea. If and when you make the motion, I'll read it, and we'll make a decision. I think one answer might be expanding the number of minutes in question period, but I still believe that to have the proper give-and-take and to elicit the answers that you're looking for, you need a bit longer for each question as well and more latitude.

4:00

Mr. Oberle: Well, Mr. Speaker, continuing in that vein, then, the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar commented on the increased size of the cabinet, which would lead one to correctly conclude that there are fewer private members in the Chamber given that the total number is 83. I wonder if I might ask the hon. member if it wouldn't be fair by that measure to in fact decrease the number of minutes or if he thinks that it's relevant at all that we be talking about the number of minutes of question period.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much. I think that the grossly enlarged cabinet is simply proof that the Klein revolution is finally over.

Mr. Danyluk: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member also talked very much about his time allocation being decreased in the ability of his preamble and being able to ask a question. As you are well aware, there are sometimes opportunities on this side of the House when the answer could be a little bit longer. Does he believe that there should be a little bit of equity in the amount of time if there was more opportunity for the preamble?

Mr. Mason: I'm not quite sure what the hon. minister meant, but it sounds fine to me. Question period is a bit like the porridge and the three bears. You know, it shouldn't be too hot and it shouldn't be too cold; it should be just right.

The Speaker: We'll move on now to hear from the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Ms Blakeman: May I be recognized, Mr. Speaker, not to speak on this, but I'm aware that there was some desire on the part of the government to adjourn early, and I'm willing to put that motion forward at this time, to adjourn the business of the House until 1:30 on Monday.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:02 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Blakeman	Kang	Taylor
Chase	MacDonald	

Against the motion:

Allred	Groeneveld	Notley
Benito	Hancock	Oberle
Bhardwaj	Johnson	Olson
Danyluk	Knight	Prins
Doerksen	Leskiw	Rogers
Drysdale	Lund	Sandhu
Elniski	Mason	Sarich
Goudreau	Mitzel	VanderBurg
Griffiths		
Totals:	For – 5	Against – 25

[Motion to adjourn lost]

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, so much for trying to do the government members a favour.

Mr. Mason: You're so underappreciated.

Mr. Taylor: I know. It's tough, isn't it, hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood? It makes you feel sometimes like the Rodney Dangerfield of the House. You know: no respect. Of course, if we were in committee, I could loosen my tie right now, but we're not, so I can't.

We were under the impression that the members of the government benches opposite and over here beside us were really eager to get out of here this afternoon and get down to Calgary for an event there. Apparently, things have changed. Whatever. No skin off our teeth. We will continue the debate on Government Motion 8: "Be it resolved that the following temporary amendments be made to the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta." You all have them in front of you in Orders of the Day.

Quite a bit has been said already here today, and I'll try not to go over old ground. I'm sure if I do, the hon. government whip opposite will try to call a point of order on it. He's done that a couple of times already this afternoon. We'll see how far I get before he stands up and attempts it again. I guess I've heard here now as the debate has gone on this afternoon some fairly detailed arguments on some of the standing order amendment proposals themselves, some fairly detailed arguments on procedures, some fairly detailed parliamentary arguments. I'm well aware, Mr. Speaker, that it is currently 15 minutes after 4 o'clock on a Thursday afternoon, and we have only an hour and 15 minutes left in debate for this week.

By the way, if I had known that the whip was on a motion of adjournment and all the government members opposite were going to vote against it, I would have been quite happy to vote against it, too. I'm quite happy to stay here until 5:30, if that's what they would like, to give this full and frank debate.

However, having said all that, I'm quite sure that we are at the point now where a number of hon. members in this House would like to have a little bit of a sense of perhaps the bigger picture, that sort of thing, so I'm going to give you and all members in the House here today and everyone who wants to read *Hansard* at a later hour or a later date, I guess, an overall sense, an overview of what this looks like to me going forward.

I don't really care if we stay here until 5:30 this afternoon, and I don't really care if we have night sittings for the rest of the spring session, and I don't really care if we vote down these proposed amendments to the standing orders and do night sittings all this fall

because really, as I said, it's no big deal. It's no skin off our teeth because, heaven knows, this Legislature, this Assembly, really doesn't spend all that much time sitting, you know, in the context of a calendar year, anyway. We could, I suppose, rejig things, and for a few brief shining moments there last year I thought maybe we were actually going to try and do this.

We could rejig things so that this Legislative Assembly acted like a House of Assembly, acted like a house of democracy, and sat on a regular basis: three weeks on, one week off, take the summertime off, take a month off at Christmas, because nothing legislative or governmental happens over Christmas – we all know that – sit here for three weeks, go back to our constituencies for a week, reconnect with our voters, with our constituents, with the people of Alberta, and then come back in a week hence and continue to make good law and debate issues and create policy that works for all the people of the province of Alberta. That would be democracy, to actually work it out here on the floor of the House of Assembly as opposed to doing it in the Conservative caucus.

It's been interesting having become the Official Opposition critic for Health and Wellness now. Look, I know some of my colleagues like to call themselves shadow ministers. I'm not going to be pretentious about this. I am part of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. It is part of my job here for the next four years to oppose, so I'll call myself a critic. I'll call a spade a spade.

As the health critic it's been interesting over the last couple of days to listen to the minister who promised that he wasn't going to announce anything about his new three- and six- and nine-month planning windows for changing, reforming, jump-starting, whatever he calls it, health care in this province before it had all been discussed and decided by the Conservative caucus. He's made the point a number of times that the Conservative caucus, the government caucus, will be in touch with the people of Alberta and will bring it all back.

Leaving aside that he spent a good hour yesterday announcing that he really had nothing to announce yet, you know, announcing a plan to make a plan to make a plan, announcing a plan of inaction, we did get one very, very clear piece of information, and that is that everything is going to be run through the government caucus. Then it'll be brought to the people; then it will be brought to the floor of the Assembly; then it will be brought to some level at which we can at least kid ourselves that we're applying a little bit of democracy here.

4:20

I'm amazed, Mr. Speaker, at how much the operation of this Assembly under the old regime, which really is the new regime with a different captain in the wheelhouse, and again under the new regime with a different captain at the wheelhouse after a few months there of promise that it might be different, looks like Upper Canada. Yes, creepy, bummish eastern Upper Canada in the 1830s during the time of the Family Compact, when the governor – and it was always a he – appointed by the Queen, and his buds, the rich and moneyed elite of Upper Canada and those with power and those who liked to flit about in the flame of power, made all the decisions behind closed doors. I think, if I remember my high school history correctly, oh, once or twice a year they brought the colonial Legislature, the Legislative Assembly, into session to rubber-stamp everything that the big guys, the big dogs, had already decided on.

Ultimately it resulted in a failed revolt, which resulted in whatever they called royal commissions back in 1837, Lord Durham, which resulted in putting the British colonies of British North America on the road to Confederation and the creation of the dominion of Canada. So I guess when you argue it in those terms, there's

actually hope for this process yet. We might actually end up 30, 40, 50 years from now with something productive out of that. God knows, we've been waiting almost 40 years already.

Anyway, it reminds me a whole lot of that. It does not remind me of a functioning democratic House of Assembly. It does not remind me of the kind of House of Assembly that I hoped I would be joining or hoped that I would have the opportunity to be part of at some point, where people ran for election on whatever party brand they felt most comfortable aligning themselves with but once elected came into the Assembly and worked in a bipartisan or multipartisan fashion to create good legislation that worked for the people of Alberta, that put behind themselves some of the comments that we still hear flung back and forth across this green space in the middle of us that I'm told – I think, Mr. Speaker, you told us this in a vignette sometime during the 26th Legislature – is actually the length of two swords so that the two sides couldn't get into an armed combat.

Ms Blakeman: And the Sergeant-at-Arms can come up the middle.

Mr. Taylor: And the Sergeant-at-Arms can come up the middle. Thankfully, he's the only one with a sword because, you know, when I have been in this House over the last three and a half, four years, there have been times when I thought that if we were armed, there would be trouble and that carpet would be red, not green. But I digress, and I'd better get back on topic before the government whip opposite rises on a point of order because he's wont to do that this afternoon. Maybe if he'd voted for adjournment, he'd be a happier man. I don't know.

In any event, I was thinking about this the other day as I was starting to work on what eventually, if we ever get through this, I suppose, would be my response to the Speech from the Throne. I was inspired by listening to some of the maiden speeches by some of the new members. I heard a great deal of passion and commitment and hope and aspiration among the newcomers here, those who've spoken so far, and I thought to myself: please, you know, keep that idealism; keep that passion because this is a House that at its worst can infect your soul with utter cynicism but at its best can make you feel alive and vibrant and like you are actually leaving the world a better place than you found it. I'd like to think that that's why everybody who sits in this House ran for elected office, at least the first time. I think that kind of commitment and idealism has rubbed off of some people, and maybe it was never there in the case of a couple. I don't know, but I'd like to think that it was, and I will choose to think that it could be again.

We could do so much in this House if the Conservatives were not so afraid of whatever it is that they're afraid of: democracy breaking out, alternate points of view, recognizing that this is a diverse, pluralistic society that we live in now with many, many points of view, all which have an equal opportunity or should have an equal opportunity to be heard at the table. We had for a few brief months there a bit of promise that maybe that sort of attitude was going to break out, but that has been snuffed out and clear-cut like the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development's policy for controlling the pine beetle. Just cut it down, a 30-mile swath from one end of the province to the other.

I don't know, Mr. Speaker. I don't understand. I mean, I do understand the desire by the members opposite to try and get their budget passed before they have to pass special warrants for billions more. We got an indication earlier this afternoon from the President of the Treasury Board that the budget is going to be \$35.4 billion this year because he said what's in subsupply is 1 per cent of it. That's a heck of a big budget. I understand, you know, that it's a

little embarrassing to do all of that without any debate whatsoever and then come back after the fact. So I understand you need to get this budget passed.

I understand the overall, the overarching need to get a budget passed. I don't understand calling an election for March when you know that your fiscal year starts April 1, and there's no way on God's green earth, if you have an election and you're on the campaign trail for 28 days in February, that you're going to get the budget passed in time. I mean, I understand the concept if you make your bed, you lie in it, but I'm willing to co-operate. I'm willing to help out with getting the budget passed, with getting other key pieces of legislation passed, but throw us a bone here, guys. We do have people to represent. We do have people who voted Liberal and New Democrat, and we do have people who have no representation in this House whatsoever, who voted Green and Wildrose Alliance. We must remember that the party that won the election on March 3 was none of the above, and that's the party, Mr. Speaker, that 60 per cent of Albertans voted for by staying home. That is a damning indictment of the failure by all of us to engage the voters of the province of Alberta, and I think we need to do better.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Is there another government member who would like to participate in terms of the rotation? If not, then I'm going to recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and then the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on this motion as the House leader for the third party. I have to start, of course, by reminding the members that I attended my first meeting of the House leaders two weeks, maybe three, after first getting elected and was then presented with the enjoyable process of having a conversation about the merits of a set of rules which had been used one time only in the past, at a time when I was not in the House. So it was a bit of a challenge to really engage in that discussion. However, in deference, I guess, to my new role as a politician far be it from me to back away from the opportunity to speak, even if it's about something that perhaps I don't know that much about, but I will do my best.

4:30

I think I want to talk just about a couple of points only. The first, of course, is about the merits of the temporary standing orders, not how they operated on a detailed basis – because, as I said, I haven't had the opportunity to witness that – but rather what I've been told about them and the process that led to them in the previous session by MLAs who I've discussed it with. I just want to mirror a number of the comments made by the other members already in that these temporary standing orders were clearly the outcome of a great deal of initially good intentions on the part of the government as a result of the then new leader's apparent dedication to opening up the process in the Legislature and enhancing democracy and enhancing participation and also, I think, good intentions on the part of the then House leaders, who I understand spent not an insignificant amount of time working on the negotiation and the development of these temporary standing orders. It was, I understand, to use a phrase of one of the members, a collaborative approach. The fact that those temporary standing orders derived from that process should be given some respect and deference. It's unfortunate to see the temporary standing orders just being wiped aside without some ongoing respect for the good faith, the good intentions, and deference to the process that led to them.

I appreciate that there was an election, obviously, from when they were previously negotiated and now and that obviously the makeup of the House has changed in terms of the numbers in opposition and in government. While I appreciate that this Assembly is in many respects a tool of the governing party, that party which wins the greatest number of seats, to achieve their governing objectives and, indeed, their own political objectives sometimes, in this particular case we're not talking about a motion or a bill with respect to governance of the province. We are talking about rules of this House. In that case I think that it is not simply the interests of the government that need to be considered, but bearing in mind what this institution is, it is in fact the interests of democracy that must be considered and the opportunity to facilitate the full participation of all members.

I don't believe, with that being the primary objective that this House should be considering right now, the results of the last election should factor into this consideration, with one exception. That exception is that we, unfortunately, are all here today as a result of an election that saw the lowest electoral and voter turnout in the history of this province and in the history of this country. To the extent that this body is focused on enhancing the democratic process, it is that thing that we need to take into account. We need to focus our efforts on how to ameliorate that rather unfortunate statistic and enhance the democratic process. If we don't start here, how can we have a meaningful discussion about enhancing it across the province? I think that that consideration needs to be applied to the respect that is given to the temporary standing orders and the process that led to them in the first place.

In terms of a couple of key issues that have gone by the wayside as a result of the loss of the substance of the temporary standing orders, I want to talk just a brief moment about the issue of the evening sittings. I understand the timelines that the government believes it's under with respect to trying to get all the work done because the session started so late as a result of the election. However, I do know that in our conversations between the House leaders – and I do believe the House leader mentioned that when he was speaking to the motion, so I believe it's appropriate – there was talk about going back to the prohibition on evening sittings in the fall. One point that I am concerned about here is that I don't see that reflected in this motion. I would rather see an opportunity for us to know, as previously stated by members, that the prohibition on evening sittings will be the rule, not the exception.

The second thing that I want to talk about is the changes to the rules and processes around the way Committee of Supply operates. Again, I speak as one who has not ever gone through the process of Committee of Supply, but my understanding is that although there were some unintended difficulties that arose from the way the rules operated last time, the ability for the opposition members to have uninterrupted free time with the cabinet ministers, with whom they were engaging in a way that didn't result in a loss of floor time and in a way that allowed for flexibility in the length of time that was dedicated to specific ministries, actually allowed for a much more effective and substantive review of the budget.

I have to be honest. My understanding of how this process works in other provinces is such that I was quite surprised to learn the way it works here: the very small number of hours that are dedicated to review of the budget and the very restricted circumstances in which that review takes place. The motion as it stands now will continue that process and again result in a reduction in the quality of accountability that we in the opposition are able to achieve for the benefit of not only our own constituents but all Albertans.

Finally, I want to talk just a bit about, as has been mentioned before, the 45-second rule I believe it's called. I do believe that,

again, we need to give every opportunity for there to be a full and fair debate back and forth between the members of the opposition and the government leaders. I do believe that at this point the inability to recontextualize supplementary questions really limits the quality of the debate that we experience in the House. If there are concerns on the opposite side of the House here with respect to how the 45-second rule worked in the past, I would rather see us find a way to deal with the concerns that the opposition has with the rules that are in place now, that have been in place in the past, and deal with the concerns that the government has in order to bring about a resolution that works for both parties and does ultimately result in a better form of debate. I do believe that the way the rules exist now, we are unfairly limiting the ability of the opposition to engage and hold accountable members of the government.

Those are all my comments. Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Then I'll call on the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm the new kid on the block, but I think I'm learning something different in the House here than what I thought the rules would be from out there. I thought it was all for fair play, for democracy. I heard that three weeks sitting and one week in the constituency, you know, was the best for all of us. I don't know why we are not agreeing to the temporary standing orders which were supposed to be in place.

I heard time and again today: the majority rules, the majority rules. I think the opposition should be given a fair chance to do their job, too. I think being one week in the constituency will give us time to connect with our constituents and spend more time with family. I'm going tonight, and I will be busy three days. I won't have much time to get anything done for my constituents, only going to functions, going to weddings, to parties. I think the Legislature sitting three weeks and one week off would be the best way to go. And I think the opposition should have more time for questions.

That's about it, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Thank you very much, hon. member. Standing Order 29(2)(a) still applies. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

4:40

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to have this opportunity to participate in the discussion on Motion 8 as presented on the Order Paper. Certainly, I've been listening with interest to the comments from all sides of the House, from each respective party. These are the rules that are going to govern our discussions and debates here for the next – did you say four years, hon. member?

Mr. Taylor: Well, I did.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. It could be as short as this year, but it could be as long as four years.

We saw some of the changes, and other hon. members talked about some of the changes that were initiated and what a difference they made. They certainly did make a difference, and I'm going to get to that in a moment.

First, I would like to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre for her motion earlier. Certainly, when the 25 government members, Mr. Speaker, voted against the hon. member's motion, I can only conclude that none of them are Calgary Flames fans. I thought they would be in a great rush to get to Calgary to hear the hon. Premier's

address this evening. It confirms to me that it is very difficult to get 25 Progressive Conservative MLAs into one of those new government planes. I will go to the library and check this date, April 17, and the passenger manifest down there and see if there is a government plane leaving quickly after the session is adjourned.

However, Mr. Speaker, regarding Government Motion 8 . . .

Mr. Oberle: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. member, we have another point of order from the hon. Member for Peace River, with a citation, I'm sure.

Point of Order
Factual Accuracy

Mr. Oberle: Yes, Mr. Speaker. We'll go with 23(i), imputing false or unavowed motives. I just wish to point out and I wish to have the hon. member understand that there is no government plane taking this caucus to Calgary immediately after the session. It's a private plane, chartered. Surely the member would understand that the use of taxpayer-funded aircraft for a party function would be against the rules of this House. I wouldn't want to leave anybody with the impression that that's the intention today.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood on this point?

Mr. Mason: Yes, on this point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would submit that this is not, in fact, a valid point of order. The hon. government whip seems a bit zealous with his points of order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar did not say that there was a government plane, only that he was curious about that possibility and would be looking into it. I think we do not want to have legitimate debate constantly interrupted on erroneous points of order. He's new, so I'll give him a little bit of credit, but, you know, he's a little bit too keen for me.

Thanks.

The Speaker: Well, hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, the chair heard what the hon. member said. Perhaps you could clarify your comment to satisfy the hon. Member for Peace River. Then we can go on with hearing the rest of your submission.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, to the hon. member and to members of the House, I appreciate his clarification of the government's use of – and I didn't call it a jet. I called it the government plane. It's a new plane. I've forgotten, and I should know how many seats are in it. I do know what it costs.

The Speaker: Please, hon. member, the point being made was that there's no such plane being used. Okay?

Ms Blakeman: No such government plane.

Mr. Mason: They've chartered one.

The Speaker: You're not helpful. It's Thursday afternoon. This is not helpful.

I heard very clearly the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar say that certain members of this Assembly were going to Calgary on a government plane. The hon. Member for Peace River stood up and said: "Absolutely no. That would violate every rule that exists on planet Earth associated with this Assembly." The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar came back and basically said: government

plane. I think the clarity here is that there is no such thing as a government plane in the air at this point in time.

I really want to hear what the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has to contribute to this debate.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. I'm sorry for any confusion with my earlier statements regarding planes, government planes. I'm not going to ask, Mr. Speaker, who's paying for the charter. I'm just not going to go there. I'm going to discuss Motion 8.

The Speaker: Hon. member, you don't have to ask. The hon. Member for Peace River made it very clear that it was the political party that's paying for the plane.

Mr. MacDonald: Oh, okay.

The Speaker: Please proceed now.

Debate Continued

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. Mr. Speaker and all hon. members of the House, I have gone through Motion 8 at length and in detail, and I have, certainly, questions, some of which we discussed earlier around the length of question period and why, since we've seen the dramatic increase in the size of cabinet and over the last number of years the dramatic increase in the size of the budget of that cabinet, we wouldn't increase the length of question period from 50 minutes to 70 minutes. Then each respective opposition party would of course have more opportunity to hold the government accountable. Maybe we can get some clarification from the House leaders on what sort of discussions took place regarding this, but I think it's a good suggestion. Regardless of whether we're going to start at 1 or 1:30 or 10 to 2, it's the opportunity, the length of time that we have to direct our questions and hold the government accountable.

Now, certainly on the policy field committees I would share other hon. members' opinions. I think they were worth while. I hope they continue in a format that was similar to what we had prior to the provincial election, but certainly I would like further clarification, Mr. Speaker, regarding the tentative Standing Order 52.04. That reads: "An order of the Assembly that a Bill, regulation or some other subject matter stands referred to a Policy Field Committee shall take priority over any other hearing or inquiry." I don't really know if that is necessary. I know the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood has asked. I have asked on many occasions. I have demanded public inquiries unsuccessfully. The Minister of Energy would be aware of that.

What would happen if there was a public inquiry into a matter of considerable public concern? Could that hearing or that inquiry be cancelled or postponed until a policy field committee had their say in the matter? I'm not saying that anything would be sinister here, Mr. Speaker, but could the large government majority on that policy field committee use this standing order, if we allow it to proceed, to halt a public inquiry or any other hearing? Perhaps the Government House Leader can clarify to the House and to Albertans. Would a policy field committee have the right to override an Alberta Utilities Commission hearing?

Earlier this afternoon we talked about Bill 46 and the ringing of the bells, but there was a lot of information that was not discussed around Bill 46. I know I have limited time, but we have to be very careful whenever we talk about bills such as Bill 46 and the fact that closure was invoked. There were a series of government amendments. There was no time to debate them. We had to force them through the Legislative Assembly. These are important points, Mr. Speaker.

Now, also, the policy field committees may – they're not obligated, but they may – examine annual reports referred to them by the Assembly. I'm wondering if I could have more detail on what reports we have in mind for the policy field committees to discuss. If we're looking at the annual reports of each government department, provincial agency, Crown-controlled organization, board, or commission, I'm told now by other hon. members of this Assembly that government members routinely review these reports internally. I'm just curious. What reports do we have in mind here? Certainly, Public Accounts gets an opportunity – and I'm going to get to that later on – to now go through the annual reports of not all but most government departments. With this expanded cabinet we're going to have a limited opportunity, but we will hopefully do our best.

4:50

The public hearings. Getting back to public hearings and the policy field committees, the policy field committees may conduct a public hearing. Now, I would be curious to know what – and I'm going to follow this again at some point in the future. I don't mean to be picking on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, but I would be curious if he was to submit a motion to have a policy field committee which he would be a member of conduct a public review into electricity prices, for instance, or auto insurance. This whole committee would be subject to that word "may," not "shall" but "may."

In the next paragraph in this motion, 52.06(2), "a Policy Field Committee shall be required, prior to reporting" to the attention of the Assembly any matter, such and such, "to inform the government department or authority." There are two sets of rules here, and I find that quite interesting, and I would appreciate an explanation. I know it was in there before.

Now, getting to Public Accounts, Standing Order 53 will be struck out, and the following is to be substituted. If we go back to the previous standing orders – and you'll have to have some patience with me, Mr. Speaker and hon. members of this Assembly – let's look first at the standing orders that were effective August 24, 2006, and at what they had to say about Public Accounts. I'm going to quote Standing Order 53: "Public Accounts, when tabled, stand referred to the Public Accounts Committee."

If we look at the standing orders that were effective April 17, 2007, we see a significant change, and I think it was a change for the better. It reads:

53(1) Public accounts and all reports of the Auditor General shall stand permanently referred to the Public Accounts Committee as they become available.

(2) The Government shall respond to a report of the Public Accounts Committee within 150 days of the date on which the Committee reports.

Now, this is to continue with these proposed changes that are detailed in Motion 8, Mr. Speaker, and I think it is good, and as chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts this has really been a step in the right direction.

I think there's a lot more we could do with the committee, but when we look at the standing order changes in 2007, there were several changes made to the scope and the mandate of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. To the House leaders, two of whom were present today – and Mr. Martin was also involved in this – I would like to say publicly that this was indeed a step in the right direction.

Now, it's a little over a year ago, March 7, 2007, that these changes were made. In doing this, we expanded the mandate of the Public Accounts Committee and included reviewing and reporting on the public accounts of Alberta, all reports of the Auditor General, and any other matter referred to it from time to time by the Legisla-

ture. Our mandate was extended to all public entities funded by government, including agencies, boards, commissions, and regional health authorities. The committee, as hon. members know, may call and question ministers, senior department officials, or officials of agencies, boards, and commissions of the government and such others as may be necessary for the full pursuit of its duties. These changes are important, and I would remind all hon. members of this House that previous to that, the committee had only met with ministers of the Crown.

The committee certainly sets its own agenda and may sit now whether or not the House is in session. One of the first meetings we held outside session was with the hon. minister of municipal affairs and housing when he was in a former role as chairperson of the Northern Alberta Development Council. That was our first meeting outside our usual routine, and I think it provided the taxpayers, who are funding the Northern Alberta Development Council, with a really good explanation as to where their money was being spent and why.

Certainly, necessary resources have been provided for staffing to ensure that adequate support for the committee's expanded mandate was met. I think we have to recognize the role of the current and former Speaker in this. It certainly is appreciated, and I'd like to be on the public record indicating that.

Now, all reports of the Auditor General shall stand permanently referred to the Public Accounts Committee. Previously these reports were used by the committee in its work, but they were not automatically, as far as I know, ever referred to the committee. The committee may report to the House, Mr. Speaker, and the government shall respond to a report of the Public Accounts Committee within 150 days of the date on which the committee reports. Previously there was no requirement for the government to respond to the committee's recommendations.

Another change to note has been that the deputy minister and departmental officials have appeared before the committee without the minister in attendance.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we're going to now have the opportunity to deal with Standing Order 29(2)(a). The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar just what he thought about the provision he referred to with respect to the ability of the government to refer business to a policy field committee, which would then take precedence over its other work, and whether or not he felt that the government would necessarily have to use that expedient. If they, in fact, had a majority on the committee, could they not, then, just cancel the hearing or the other proceedings if they wanted to do that?

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, hon. member. Yes, I do have that concern and that reservation – and I hope it's unfounded – that a policy field committee could take priority over any form of a public hearing, including, you know, one that is going on with the Alberta Utilities Commission, in its former life the EUB. We all know the horrible examples of a government agency spying on innocent citizens and the whole carrying-on over the 500 kV line through central Alberta. Where this is going to lead, hon. member, I don't know, but that is an example.

When you look at the policy field committees, I would much prefer them to be concentrating on the budget and where we're

spending the money. Incredibly, if we adopt this motion, I would remind all hon. members that in the 60 hours we will on average debate or discuss over \$500 million each and every hour in government expenditure. Five hundred million dollars. That's hardly enough time.

5:00

The hon. Minister of Education and Government House Leader certainly knows, Mr. Speaker, how big the budget is going to be next week. We've seen a 16 per cent increase in government spending since the hon. Premier has taken over as Premier. The budget is getting larger. It's probably going to be well in excess of \$33 billion, so each and every hour that we are debating the budget, it will be an hour for \$500 million plus. I don't think that's adequate. I would much prefer to see some of this work, I think, go back to the policy field committees because, certainly, it's not an adequate time to scrutinize that budget. We only have to look at the supplementary supply that's on our desks to realize that budgeting and focusing on a budget is not a strong suit of this current government.

Thank you.

The Speaker: There being no additional speakers on my list, shall I call on the hon. Government House Leader to close the debate?

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be very brief. There have been a couple of references to things that are not in the proposed standing orders, and certainly I acknowledge that; for example, the night sittings. One of the objectives of the new rules last year was to make the House a little bit more family friendly for members, and doing away with the night sittings was seen as a way of accomplishing that. I'm still very alive to that concept, but I have heard from a number of members in the House that they're in town from long distances, and it's more family friendly for them to be able to do the business of the House when they're here and then go home. That's a piece of business that I think still is on the table for discussion. We have the opportunity to not have night sessions in the fall, and that's my hope and my wish and my desire as House leader, but we have the opportunity to discuss that and deal with that particular issue going forward.

With respect to constituency weeks it was very clear. We've been out in the constituencies for a period of time this year already, consulting with our constituents. We need a period of time now to get the budget passed. I've heard how important it is for us to discuss the budget in here. We've tried to set some time to do that, so unfortunately the constituency week this spring, that we would've liked to have had and probably would like to see built into the process over time in permanent standing orders, isn't available for this sitting, but we have built it in for the fall.

There were a number of other issues. Quite frankly, the question of minority reports I thought was included in the piece on policy field committees. I see that it's not. That's a subject we can have discussion on.

In short, this is not definitive. This is to get orders in place for this spring so we can deal with committee of supply. I've made a commitment to talk with others – if they wish to or not is up to them – but then to go forward to the Standing Committee on Privileges

and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing to work out the other issues. I will hold to that, and others may participate as they so desire.

The Premier has made a commitment to work with the Legislative Assembly to have it more family friendly. I'm certainly continuing to work on that, but I would ask the House to now adopt these rules so that we can move on with the spring sitting, know what the rules are for the spring sitting, and deal with Committee of Supply as the major business of the spring sitting.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 8 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:04 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Allred	Goudreau	Mitzel
Benito	Griffiths	Oberle
Bhardwaj	Groeneveld	Olson
Boutilier	Hancock	Prins
Danyluk	Johnson	Rogers
Doerksen	Knight	Sandhu
Drysdale	Leskiw	Sarich
Elniski	Lund	VanderBurg

Against the motion:

Blakeman	MacDonald	Taylor
Kang	Mason	

Totals:	For – 24	Against – 5
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[Government Motion 8 carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, April 21.

The Speaker: Before the vote is called, does the hon. Government House Leader have any indication as to what the answer might be to the question asked earlier? Is the time suggested for the budget delivery speech on Tuesday next?

Mr. Hancock: Not as yet, Mr. Speaker, but that will be my first order of business as I leave here.

The Speaker: Thank you. I think it would be a courtesy, then, for all members of the Assembly to somehow be notified as soon as possible of the exact timing with respect to that matter.

[Motion carried; at 5:17 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 27th Legislature - 1st Session (2008)

Activity to April 17, 2008

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 200 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills with lower numbers are Government Bills. Bills numbered Pr1, etc., are Private Bills.

* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If it comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel for details at (780) 427-2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned a chapter number until the conclusion of the fall sittings.

1 Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement Implementation Statutes Amendment Act, 2008 (Stelmach)

First Reading -- 9 (Apr. 15 aft.)

Second Reading -- (Apr. 16 eve., adjourned)

201 Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act (Mitzel)

First Reading -- 59 (Apr. 17 aft.)

202 Alberta Volunteer Service Medal Act (Cao)

First Reading -- 59 (Apr. 17 aft.)

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