



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, April 23, 2008

Issue 8e

The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta

## The 27th Legislature

First Session

Kowalski, Hon. Ken, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, Speaker  
 Cao, Wayne C.N., Calgary-Fort, Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
 Mitzel, Len, Cypress-Medicine Hat, Deputy Chair of Committees

<p>Ady, Hon. Cindy, Calgary-Shaw (PC),            Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation</p> <p>Allred, Ken, St. Albert (PC)</p> <p>Amery, Moe, Calgary-East (PC)</p> <p>Anderson, Rob, Airdrie-Chestermere (PC),            Parliamentary Assistant, Solicitor General and Public Security</p> <p>Benito, Carl, Edmonton-Mill Woods (PC)</p> <p>Berger, Evan, Livingstone-Macleod (PC),            Parliamentary Assistant, Sustainable Resource Development</p> <p>Bhardwaj, Naresh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (PC)</p> <p>Bhullar, Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Montrose (PC),            Parliamentary Assistant, Advanced Education and Technology</p> <p>Blackett, Hon. Lindsay, Calgary-North West (PC),            Minister of Culture and Community Spirit</p> <p>Blakeman, Laurie, Edmonton-Centre (L),            Official Opposition House Leader</p> <p>Boutilier, Guy C., Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (PC)</p> <p>Brown, Dr. Neil, QC, Calgary-Nose Hill (PC)</p> <p>Calahasen, Pearl, Lesser Slave Lake (PC)</p> <p>Campbell, Robin, West Yellowhead (PC),            Deputy Government Whip</p> <p>Chase, Harry B., Calgary-Varsity (L),            Official Opposition Whip</p> <p>Dallas, Cal, Red Deer-South (PC)</p> <p>Danyluk, Hon. Ray, Lac La Biche-St. Paul (PC),            Minister of Municipal Affairs</p> <p>DeLong, Alana, Calgary-Bow (PC)</p> <p>Denis, Jonathan, Calgary-Egmont (PC)</p> <p>Doerksen, Arno, Strathmore-Brooks (PC)</p> <p>Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC)</p> <p>Elniski, Doug, Edmonton-Calder (PC)</p> <p>Evans, Hon. Iris, Sherwood Park (PC),            Minister of Finance and Enterprise</p> <p>Fawcett, Kyle, Calgary-North Hill (PC)</p> <p>Forsyth, Heather, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)</p> <p>Fritz, Hon. Yvonne, Calgary-Cross (PC),            Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs</p> <p>Goudreau, Hon. Hector G., Dunvegan-Central Peace (PC),            Minister of Employment and Immigration</p> <p>Griffiths, Doug, Battle River-Wainwright (PC),            Parliamentary Assistant, Agriculture and Rural Development</p> <p>Groeneveld, Hon. George, Highwood (PC),            Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development</p> <p>Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC, Edmonton-Whitemud (PC),            Minister of Education, Government House Leader</p> <p>Hayden, Hon. Jack, Drumheller-Stettler (PC),            Minister of Infrastructure</p> <p>Hehr, Kent, Calgary-Buffalo (L)</p> <p>Horne, Fred, Edmonton-Rutherford (PC)</p> <p>Horner, Hon. Doug, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert (PC),            Minister of Advanced Education and Technology</p> <p>Jablonski, Hon. Mary Anne, Red Deer-North (PC),            Minister of Seniors and Community Supports</p> <p>Jacobs, Broyce, Cardston-Taber-Warner (PC)</p> <p>Johnson, Jeff, Athabasca-Redwater (PC)</p> <p>Johnston, Art, Calgary-Hays (PC)</p> <p>Kang, Darshan S., Calgary-McCall (L)</p> <p>Klimchuk, Hon. Heather, Edmonton-Glenora (PC),            Minister of Service Alberta</p> <p>Knight, Hon. Mel, Grande Prairie-Smoky (PC),            Minister of Energy</p> <p>Leskiw, Genia, Bonnyville-Cold Lake (PC)</p>	<p>Liepert, Hon. Ron, Calgary-West (PC),            Minister of Health and Wellness</p> <p>Lindsay, Hon. Fred, Stony Plain (PC),            Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security</p> <p>Lukaszk, Thomas A., Edmonton-Castle Downs (PC),            Parliamentary Assistant, Municipal Affairs</p> <p>Lund, Ty, Rocky Mountain House (PC)</p> <p>MacDonald, Hugh, Edmonton-Gold Bar (L)</p> <p>Marz, Richard, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (PC)</p> <p>Mason, Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),            Leader of the NDP Opposition</p> <p>McFarland, Barry, Little Bow (PC)</p> <p>McQueen, Diana, Drayton Valley-Calmar (PC),            Parliamentary Assistant, Environment</p> <p>Morton, Hon. F.L., Foothills-Rocky View (PC),            Minister of Sustainable Resource Development</p> <p>Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),            Deputy Leader of the NDP Opposition,            NDP Opposition House Leader</p> <p>Oberle, Frank, Peace River (PC),            Government Whip</p> <p>Olson, Verlyn, QC, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (PC)</p> <p>Ouellette, Hon. Luke, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (PC),            Minister of Transportation</p> <p>Pastoor, Bridget Brennan, Lethbridge-East (L),            Deputy Official Opposition Whip</p> <p>Prins, Ray, Lacombe-Ponoka (PC)</p> <p>Quest, Dave, Strathcona (PC)</p> <p>Redford, Hon. Alison M., Calgary-Elbow (PC),            Minister of Justice and Attorney General</p> <p>Renner, Hon. Rob, Medicine Hat (PC),            Minister of Environment, Deputy Government House Leader</p> <p>Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)</p> <p>Rogers, George, Leduc-Beaumont-Devon (PC)</p> <p>Sandhu, Peter, Edmonton-Manning (PC)</p> <p>Sarich, Janice, Edmonton-Decore (PC),            Parliamentary Assistant, Education</p> <p>Sherman, Dr. Raj, Edmonton-Meadowlark (PC),            Parliamentary Assistant, Health and Wellness</p> <p>Snelgrove, Hon. Lloyd, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),            President of the Treasury Board</p> <p>Stelmach, Hon. Ed, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (PC),            Premier, President of Executive Council</p> <p>Stevens, Hon. Ron, QC, Calgary-Glenmore (PC),            Deputy Premier, Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations</p> <p>Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (L)</p> <p>Taft, Dr. Kevin, Edmonton-Riverview (L),            Leader of the Official Opposition</p> <p>Tarchuk, Hon. Janis, Banff-Cochrane (PC),            Minister of Children and Youth Services</p> <p>Taylor, Dave, Calgary-Currie (L),            Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition</p> <p>VanderBurg, George, Whitecourt-St. Anne (PC)</p> <p>Vandermeer, Tony, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (PC)</p> <p>Weadick, Greg, Lethbridge-West (PC)</p> <p>Webber, Len, Calgary-Foothills (PC),            Parliamentary Assistant, Energy</p> <p>Woo-Paw, Teresa, Calgary-Mackay (PC)</p> <p>Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC),            Parliamentary Assistant, Employment and Immigration</p> <p>Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene, Edmonton-Mill Creek (PC),            Minister of Aboriginal Relations,            Deputy Government House Leader</p>
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[Errata, if any, appear inside back cover]

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 23, 2008

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mrs. Leskiw moved that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To His Honour the Honourable Norman L. Kwong, CM, AOE, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Adjourned debate April 23: Mr. Zwodzdesky]

**The Deputy Speaker:** We will continue this afternoon's reply to the throne speech. I would like to recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a new member it is an honour to rise today on behalf of the constituents in Edmonton-Ellerslie and address the members of this Chamber in my maiden speech. I would like to congratulate each of my colleagues in the Assembly on their electoral success. It is a tremendous honour to be part of the 27th Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by talking about my family and their journey to Canada from India. I came here along with my family in 1976 as an 18-year-old young man. My dad was a diploma holder in mechanical engineering, but when we arrived in Edmonton, he was unable to get his credentials recognized and ended up working for CN Rail at the Calder shop as a heavy-duty mechanic.

I ended up going to Ross Sheppard high school in grade 10, where I thought I was not appropriately placed because, number one, I had a problem with the language, and secondly, I was two or three years older than most of the grade 10ers. So school wasn't really enjoyable for me, you know, for various reasons. My language ability back then was "yes, no." That's about all I knew about English back then.

I developed a keen interest in cars, and I started to really enjoy cars. After grade 10 I dropped out of high school and started in the trade of automotives. Soon after I started in the trade, I realized that without a formal education it was really tough to make sense of the words. Crankshaft didn't mean much to me, and differentials didn't mean much to me. But I was trying to be a tradesman, so I started upgrading and started taking some night classes. I was lucky to find employment with one of the automotive firms in Edmonton. They signed me up as an apprentice because the entrance requirement to be an apprentice back then was only grade 10. I continued apprenticing. At the same time, I continued upgrading my education. In 1983 I completed my apprenticeship and became a journeyman automotive mechanic.

I was always driven and passionate about education, so I kept pursuing my high school and completed enough course work to be able to go to the University of Alberta. I was married in '82, and I had two children when I started university. In 1989 I graduated from the University of Alberta with a double major in mathematics and vocational education as well as a minor in physical education.

I got my first teaching position in 1989 in Pincher Creek, where I ended up teaching math and physical education in the language I couldn't speak 13 years earlier. I felt it was really, really great that, hey, I was instructing in the language which I knew very, very little about 13 years earlier.

From there I had the opportunity to teach and set up the shop in Whitecourt to teach automotives, and I decided to pack up my family from Pincher Creek and move over to Whitecourt. I had a wonderful time for four years in Whitecourt. I started out teaching automotives and setting up the shop. As well, I set up a program called the co-op program, which is equivalent to the RAP program, as we know it today. I had the opportunity to meet our hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, who was the mayor at the time. I taught his older son, so I developed a good friendship with the member during my stay in Whitecourt.

That's where I really started to get involved in the community, outside the school and inside the school. I was involved with the extracurricular. I was always a player. I coached soccer there, I coached volleyball there, I coached track and field there, and it was really, really enjoyable. At the same time, I started work on my master's program at the University of Alberta, so we would drive in one evening a week and take courses at the U and then go back to Whitecourt. It was really, really a great time.

From Whitecourt the opportunity came up. I taught in Red Deer for one year. Not that I couldn't hold a job; it was by choice. Then I ended up teaching in Calgary for one year. But Edmonton has always been home for me, so when an opportunity came to teach for Edmonton public schools, I came to Edmonton. Up until my last election I was teaching for Edmonton public schools at J. Percy Page high school as an automotives teacher as well as a RAP co-ordinator for Edmonton public schools.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, I'm quite passionate about a few things. Obviously, public service is one of them. I would like to thank all of the people who helped me succeed in my bid to be in this Chamber here today. To begin with I would like to thank my daughter, Sarah. On top of planning her wedding this summer, she took total control of my campaign and ran my office very, very efficiently. I would like to thank my brother. On top of completing his master's and writing a thesis, he as well as his wife, Amanda, were door-knocking with me four times a week. My sincere thanks to them and, of course, both of my sons, Steven and Neeraj, as well as my wife and my mom and dad, who were extremely proud to see me win the election.

As we enter the new century for Alberta, we face many challenges as a government. There are foundations to be laid for the future of this province. Mr. Speaker, I have been a resident of southeast Edmonton for 30 years. In fact, my entire adult life I lived in this area and was very, very actively involved in the community, coaching soccer for Juventus Soccer Club, being involved with the Leduc Track Club, and many, many other organizations as a volunteer.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk a little bit more about my passion. Obviously, I'm passionate about education, being an educator. I'm passionate about seniors. I had the opportunity to meet a number of seniors on the doorsteps, and of course Mill Woods and southeast is also home for quite a large number of seniors. Of course, I'm passionate about the youths. Being involved with them for a number of years, I have a keen passion for them as well.

Having taught in the constituency for a few years has given me first-hand knowledge of the opportunities and challenges Edmonton-Ellerslie faces. My constituency has rapidly developed over the past few years. While this is very positive for the residents, this eco-

conomic prosperity has brought a number of challenges with it. One only needs to drive to South Common to experience some of the growth pressures in my constituency. I'm grateful that I have an opportunity to work alongside this government to further enhance the quality of life in my constituency.

7:40

We have experienced considerable growth in housing. The number of dwellings constructed has increased by 20 per cent since 2001. If this trend continues, Mr. Speaker, by 2010 we could experience an increase not felt since the community was first developed 35 years ago. This brings with it prosperity as well as pressures.

More and more people are building their lives here and enjoy the benefits of living in my constituency. There are many young families in Edmonton-Ellerslie beginning the journey of their parenthood. Mr. Speaker, child care is a top priority for myself and my constituents. Through access to quality and affordable child care we will make sure that families all over Alberta are not overburdened. As their provincial representative I'm glad to be given the opportunity to work through this Assembly to provide quality services for young families and their children.

While these families grow older, new requirements will arise that we as a government can help them with. The education system will be a top priority for their children. I'm very, very pleased to say that a school has been announced for the Edmonton-Ellerslie constituency.

Mr. Speaker, education is an especially important topic for me. As an educator for almost two decades I have first-hand knowledge of the needs of our education system. It is a demanding profession that requires the best and the brightest educators to ensure our children succeed. It was a great day when the teachers' unfunded pension liability fund was taken care of by the government of Alberta, including mine. I look forward to promoting other initiatives that will ease the burden for teachers and attract more individuals to the profession.

We should always promote further education for our young adults. This will be a benefit for every Albertan as year after year graduates will flood to the workforce and assist with our skilled labour shortage. Mr. Speaker, it was particularly satisfying for me to establish a youth link program to educate and train high school dropouts as well as new immigrants with help from the HRDC and the Mennonite Centre of Edmonton. I was very, very pleased, and a number of the people who graduated from this program ended up getting employment in the industry.

I'm eager to bear witness to the construction of NAIT's Ralph Klein campus in my constituency. This is a tremendous step forward for the trades industry and will benefit our province for years to come. While the trades industry awaits the graduation of capable employees, we could use available resources to fast-track our new immigrants into the skilled workforce. This can help alleviate some of the staffing issues that many businesses face.

Many of Alberta's new immigrants have built their homes in my constituency. They have been a blessing to our province. By adding other ideas, experiences, customs, and traditions, we are able to increase our knowledge base considerably. The newly created Ministry of Culture and Community Spirit will provide the various ethnicities around the province with the support they need. In turn, the ministry can educate Albertans about our new residents.

The province has a long history of supporting its citizens. We will continue to support Albertans, including our aging population and those unable to care for themselves. While Alberta is one of the youngest provinces in Canada, we're also home to many seniors.

I'm eager to investigate ways to reduce the burden for our aging population, including the possibility of eliminating the education portion of their property tax. While the entire issue needs to be considered with long-term sustainability in mind, it may be a helpful tool that will allow flexibility for those seniors living within their own homes to remain there if they choose to do so.

Stability during hectic times will help secure those Albertans who live on a fixed income and are less able to adapt to times. Our government will look to provide support for those who do not have the means. In order to foster good economic resources, orderly conduct needs to be provided. Drugs, crime, and abuse in any form needs to be dealt with, sometimes before it can take off. With 300 additional police officers, adding more staff to prosecute and keep criminals off the streets, and increasing the amount of treatment beds, the government of Alberta has shown that it is willing to take proper steps to reduce crime. This government's dedication to safer communities is remarkable. If we remain vigilant and promote alternatives, I believe we can tremendously reduce the criminal element in Alberta. We will take it harder and harder to those who commit crimes and continue this activity.

Having taught in a young offenders' centre for a number of years, I have learned that the same offenders keep coming back to the young offenders' centre, for whatever reason. If we can provide them with proper treatments and proper guidance, I'm very, very positive that they can be productive citizens of Alberta. [Mr. Bhardwaj's speaking time expired]

Mr. Speaker, as Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, we will have countless opportunities to develop a framework for this province. Our ideas and hard work will shape the future for generations to come. It is an honour and a privilege to be part of this government because it is a great, great time for Alberta. Our strong economy will carry this province, even this country, for years to come, but it will take the hard work and innovative ideas of this Assembly to see its fulfillment. I am privileged to be part of this Assembly as we embark on this journey.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. We have a 15-minute speech and then five minutes after that for a comment and question period, so I guess you used some of that five minutes of Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions, comments?

All right. Now I would like to recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Premier, ministers of the Crown, government members, the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, my opposition colleagues, the leader and the member of the NDP, ladies and gentlemen of the gallery, it is a great honour and a privilege for me to rise in the House today. My name is Darshan Singh Kang. I was born in India on May 2, 1951, and still have a younger sister and her family living in India. My mother and my brother's families live in the constituency I'm so proud to represent, Calgary-McCall. I'm happily married to my wife, Sharanjit, and we have three grown-up children. My sons, Parminder and Gurminder, and my daughter-in-law, Rajvinder, and grandson, Saajan, live in Calgary. My daughter, Kulwinder, and her husband, Raj, and my granddaughter, Jeeya, live in Brampton, Ontario. They all came to help me on my campaign.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud today to first of all express my best wishes and congratulations to all of us who first came together in this House on April 14. This was also a special day for Sikhs worldwide as we celebrate Vaisakhi, the birth of the Khalsa. It was truly remarkable for these two events to happen on the same day in

our province. I also want to congratulate all the members of the Sikh faith on the birth of the Khalsa.

Fellow Albertans, I came to Canada in September of 1970 from India. I was only 19 years old and had no family here for any guidance or support. I moved to the great city of Calgary in December of that year, and my wife followed in 1970 from the United Kingdom. We have lived in the city of Calgary and in the constituency of Calgary-McCall for over 30 years.

7:50

Mr. Speaker, since arriving in Canada over 37 years ago, I along with my family have participated actively in Liberal Party politics and community association activities. I have enjoyed the benefits of being a proud Canadian, proud Albertan, Calgarian, and a proud member of the Sikh community.

In my earlier life I worked in the city of Calgary, the coal mines at Coleman, Alberta, and Sparwood, B.C. I have also driven the streets of Calgary as a taxi driver. I was a welder for CP Rail and, after that, a realtor in both the residential and commercial sectors in this province. I have gained much from those experiences and also as a resident of northeast Calgary.

Mr. Speaker, today I stand before you as the MLA of the great community of Calgary-McCall, made up mostly of the communities of Martindale, Castleridge, Falconridge, Coral Springs, Taradale, Taravista, Taralake, Saddle Ridge, and Saddlebrook, where Canadians from all corners of this nation and the world have come to reside and call their home.

Calgary-McCall is a very diverse and vibrant community and contributes much to the economic growth of Calgary and Alberta. This area has a large immigrant population. Many of the voters and citizens have come to Calgary because of the untold opportunities for economic gain. They have a wonderful quality of life, a great place to raise a family and grandchildren. We have the freedom to practise our religious beliefs and to contribute to the betterment of the Canadian way of life.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that we have places of worship for most of the different religious faiths in Calgary-McCall. There's also a large Muslim community in Calgary-McCall, and I would like to congratulate my Muslim brothers, sisters, and children of the Ahmadiyya faith for building the largest Bait-un-Nur, House of Light, mosque in Canada in Calgary-McCall, which will be opening for prayers and community activities in June of this year. The mosque will emerge as a glorious Islamic icon of Calgary, illustrating the cultural and religious diversity of Canada in the constituency of Calgary-McCall.

I would also like to congratulate all those citizens of Calgary-McCall for their long and hard work for bringing the proposed new Genesis northeast rec centre to the community in the heart of Calgary-McCall, where people from all walks of life and backgrounds can come to enjoy the services provided at the proposed centre. This will further break the barriers between different communities and will promote harmony and diversity and bring the communities closer than ever. It will also help Albertans maintain active and healthy lifestyles.

Mr. Speaker, my past volunteer work has been a source of great joy and satisfaction for me and my family and my friends. With them, I had the opportunity to fund raise close to a million dollars for the Guru Nanak vision clinic for the Children's hospital in Calgary from the Sikh community alone, help in disaster relief work for Bangladesh, and participate in the religious activities of the Sikh community in Calgary.

Mr. Speaker, Calgary-McCall has its challenges. My constituency is adjusting to the pressures of a growing city and being a home to

Canadians from all corners of the world. As their new MLA I will reach out to all my fellow Calgarians of the various ethnic communities. As a visible minority myself I understand the challenges, and I believe we can work together with all communities and people as one voice to confront the issues we face in Calgary-McCall.

I will work hard to enhance our economy to protect jobs and the means of support for our families. I will work hard, with passion and conviction, with my fellow MLAs to find workable solutions for the protection of our environment, faster access to medical treatment and services, more funding for all means of transportation, more police officers, social programs to curb gang violence and violent crime, and to provide a high quality of life for all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents have phoned my office to inquire about government services, government funding, education needs, job opportunities, benefits for those with physical limitations, maintenance enforcement, as well as those who have just called to offer their congratulations and best wishes.

During the past 30 days over 46 nongovernmental organizations, associations, and self-help agencies have written to me to introduce themselves, provide information on the programs they administer, and offer assistance. I wish to open lines of communication and work on common issues and concerns in the community hand in hand with all organizations for a better Calgary-McCall. Presently, correspondence is being prepared for my review and signature, and arrangements are being made to set dates to meet and make operational my community outreach information and work program.

Mr. Speaker, Calgary-McCall has grown 28 per cent over the last four years, and it is important that these citizens become established in the constituency. The tremendous growth in housing and businesses requires services to meet the needs of our community with more schools for our children, curtail out-of-community busing, and provide safe parks and facilities for our children to run and play in: a quality of life for all to enjoy. I believe we need a plan to design new and more affordable facilities for our senior citizens of different ethnic backgrounds to meet the challenges of their health and personal needs. I want to ensure they receive the care and dignity they deserve.

Many of my constituents will need assistance with immigration matters in terms of the application process and with the foreign worker program, workers' compensation, and other social and humanitarian issues. I want them to know my door is always open, and I want to hear their concerns, dreams, and hopes for the future.

I thank almighty God, my family, my friends, and all those who supported me on my campaign physically, financially, and morally in this election. For those who didn't support me, I hope to demonstrate my ability to work hard for you and earn your vote next time. My responsibility is to represent all my constituents, and I will vigorously do that.

I would like to close by sharing something that was said to me by one senior Albertan 37 years ago. He said: welcome to Canada, God's country, and welcome to Alberta, the land of milk and honey. Mr. Speaker, these words were as true then as they are today, and I'm committed to keeping it that way.

Thank you, Canada, for allowing me to serve in this capacity as a servant of the people and making my Canadian dream become a reality. To be the MLA for Calgary-McCall in the great province of Alberta is a great honour and trust. Thank you.

[Remarks in Punjabi] Khalsa, pure, belongs to Waheguru, almighty God; and fateh, victory, belongs to Waheguru, almighty God. [as submitted]

**The Deputy Speaker:** According to our Standing Order 29(2)(a) we have five minutes for questions and comments.

Seeing none, I would like to just list off the hon. members on my list here: the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont, the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, and the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Now I would like to recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin, might I ask leave of this Assembly to introduce two guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Denis:** Mr. Speaker, sitting in the gallery opposite me are two individuals I've known for a long time, Mr. Blake Robert and Mr. Troy Wason. Blake is a native of Fort McMurray. Troy is a native of my hometown, Regina. Both of them are working in our communications office.

Thank you very kindly.

### Consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

*(continued)*

**Mr. Denis:** Mr. Speaker, I begin by saying that it is the highest honour of my career to be before you today as a member. When I embarked on the journey to elected office, the first comment I got was from my grandfather, and he said to me: "You were once a banker, you're a lawyer now, and you're going to be a politician with any luck. You'd better keep going to church."

All kidding aside and the wry sense of humour that I've obviously inherited from my grandfather, the past campaign has reminded me that all members here and all those who ran in this recent election deserve sincere congratulations regardless of their partisan affiliation. Although we may not always agree and the discourse of politics may be fierce, Mr. Speaker, it's clear to me that all members here are not here for personal or financial gain but, rather, to advance the agenda that they believe is in the best interests of Albertans.

8:00

Mr. Speaker, like seven other members here I'm an immigrant but from Saskatchewan, although I think I may be the only one from Regina in this Assembly. When I moved to Alberta, I faced many challenges, but in my first few weeks something that I noticed was the amount of opportunity available to everybody in this province. I realized that behind every challenge is, in fact, an opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, since I moved to Alberta, I've been honoured to have been given the privilege to practise law, for the last eight years, and to operate a small business, and I've seen again testament to the amount of opportunities available to the people of this province.

Some fellow members have made comments to me about my relative youth. There are, in fact, three members here that are younger than me, and when I contacted the library, there were, in fact, 21 younger than me in this Assembly's history. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to be here as a younger member but also to provide a modern perspective to this institution.

Mr. Speaker, Calgary-Egmont is a rather diverse constituency. I'll give this House a bit of history here. It was first served by the late Merv Leitch, who was elected in 1971, and subsequently by David Carter, elected in '82, who is a former Speaker of this House. The third Member for Calgary-Egmont was the hon. Denis Herard, who was also minister of advanced education. He served with many

members of this House that are still here today, and I can tell you, from being around him, that he always had the constituency's best interests at heart. I'm proud to follow in his footsteps. They are big shoes to fill. The similarity between my last name and Denis Herard's first name did come up during the campaign. In fact, when I went to one door, the woman there indicated to me that she had voted for me for the last four elections. I asked her if she would vote for me a fifth time, and she said: yes, I would. So I hope that she did.

Mr. Speaker, Calgary-Egmont is a rather diverse urban constituency. It includes a small community named Ramsay just east of the downtown, the inner-city neighbourhoods of Highfield and Manchester, which are predominantly industrial areas, my home area of Kingsland, as well as Fairview, Acadia, Willow Park, Maple Ridge, and Riverbend.

Calgary-Egmont has a significant seniors population. During the campaign I was pleased to visit the Francis Klein Centre with the Premier, and when I spoke to many seniors there, they indicated to me that no Premier had ever visited there before.

There are also many schools in the area. I've been pleased to have twice visited the Foundations for the Future Charter Academy in Acadia and just this Friday visited the St. Augustine school in Kingsland, which was celebrating its 50th anniversary.

Mr. Speaker, like in my own history there are many challenges in my constituency, also challenges in any institution, profession, or any of our individual lives, also in our province. Again, every one of these challenges presents an opportunity.

My family, who emigrated to Saskatchewan as Germans from Russia, encountered many challenges as they moved to a strange and, as we were reminded this week, very cold land at times. But as the Member for Calgary-Montrose stated in his maiden speech, my ancestors also had a vision of creating a better life for their children and for their grandchildren and persevered, knowing that the future opportunities were greater than the challenges that they faced.

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech sets out numerous priorities for our government and addresses many of the challenges ahead. One such priority is health care, which I would say was the number one issue at my doors this election. We spend more money per person on health care than any other government in Canada, but the spending of more money, which is the way we've always done it, isn't the solution to improve wait times. A new approach is required. One thing that will shorten the queue is to attract, train, and retain health care professionals. Yesterday's budget does just that by graduating 68 more physicians, 625 more registered nurses, and 441 more licensed practical nurses by 2012. As well, this government is establishing health care high schools to educate the next generation of professionals.

Mr. Speaker, this throne speech spoke of the elimination of health care premiums as of January 1, and the finance minister's budget yesterday makes this a reality. It was the past government of Premier Ralph Klein that experienced great challenges to bring our financial house in order. It is because of the tough choices made over the past 15 years that Alberta has been the lowest taxed province in Canada and remains so and becomes even more so today. Alberta has unprecedented opportunities and is a leader on a national and international scale by placing even more money where it belongs: in the hands of individual taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, despite this province's success we must never become complacent and take our success for granted. The throne speech stated, "While others talk, Albertans act." We must be vigilant in responding to and anticipating the challenges ahead. We have an obligation to lead our nation and lead on a global scale. This government is taking steps to do so, and I highlight Bill 1 of

this session. The TILMA Implementation Statutes Amendment Act, 2008, will eliminate many nontariff barriers between Alberta and British Columbia. This is an example of Alberta's leadership, and this will serve as an interprovincial model throughout our entire country as other provinces sign on.

Mr. Speaker, one of the largest challenges ahead is not a partisan one and has already been noted by the members for Airdrie-Chestermere and Edmonton-Riverview. It is low voter turnout. It is disappointing to me that 41 per cent of people showed up at the polls. To put this into perspective, 76 per cent of people voted in Saskatchewan's election last year, 62 per cent in B.C.'s 2005 election, and back home 62 per cent of Albertans voted in the last federal election. What bothers me even more is that a fewer percentage of younger people voted. I didn't really internalize this statistic until since the election, when I've gone out to eat and I've often asked the server if he or she voted. More often than not the answer is no, whether it was because they didn't feel it was important to vote or because they didn't think their vote would matter or because the parties didn't appeal to them or even us as individual candidates didn't appeal to them.

Not as a government but as an Assembly we must work harder to increase voter participation. I believe that with the right to vote comes the responsibility to exercise that right. I put to each one of you: what can we do to bring more people to the polls? This is something that we cannot ignore. We must engage as many residents as possible in this process. Clearly, although many young people did not vote, there are members of this House that did not simply sit back and ignore this issue. I point to the numerous members under 40, not just in my own caucus, Mr. Speaker.

Notwithstanding the overall turnout I was incredibly pleased with the amount of new volunteers that came out to help in our campaign. I must mention one door that I knocked on. When I told the occupant that I was my party's candidate, her first reaction was to tell me to find another door. I listened to her for about 20 minutes, and later she ended up becoming not only a supporter but a volunteer on my campaign. After the election I asked her why. She said because I took the time to listen to her and because she felt I cared about the community. This is something I'll take with me for the rest of my tenure in this House.

I cannot conclude this address without paying thanks to some people who supported me in the last campaign. I could not possibly name them all, but some deserve particular attention: Marguerite Denis, my mother, who is a teacher by profession, who has been my greatest educator; Brian Denis, my father, who I might indicate is a former member of the Canadian Forces; my surviving grandparents, Phil and Helen Hauk, who are still active in their 90s and show a model of service to our society – I note that my grandfather is contacting me on a regular basis now about government issues – and, finally, my good friend Mr. Pierre Poilievre, who is the Member of Parliament in Ontario for the constituency of Nepean-Carleton. During a tough day on the campaign he reminded me of the words of Theodore Roosevelt:

Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs even though checkered by failure, than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much because they live in the gray twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat.

Mr. Speaker, let us all remember these words as we go forward.

I look forward to working with all members of the 27th Legislature of this Assembly. Let's all not forget the tremendous opportunity before us. Mr. Speaker, rock and roll.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Again, we have Standing Order 29(2)(a). We

allow for five minutes of comments and questions. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you. Hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont, are you still going to church?

**Mr. Denis:** Yes. I'm a member of Centre Street Church in Calgary, actually.

**Mr. Mason:** How old are you, hon. member?

**Mr. Denis:** I was born on September 22, 1975, at the Pasqua hospital in Regina. You can do the math.

**Mr. Mason:** You are a young man.

**8:10**

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other member?

Seeing none, I would like to recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I was born on September 20, 1953. I am somewhat older than the Member for Calgary-Egmont. In fact, I'm old enough that I knew the bride when she used to rock and roll. I want to thank the bride and the daughter and the son for their continued patience and forbearance in putting up with this job and the hours that we keep and the dual residences that we keep and the travel that's involved with this job and all the rest of it. They have shown extreme patience for the last almost four years now. Of course, it's me; they had to show extreme patience before I got elected. I really, really, really do appreciate their support.

I also want to thank all the people who volunteered on my campaign. There were over 200 of them. Some volunteered on virtually a daily basis. Some came out once or twice. A bunch came out in between that. Together they helped me get re-elected, and for that I am very appreciative.

Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise in this House and respond to the Speech from the Throne, and it's an honour to have been able to listen to the speeches in response to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech from the Throne thus far from our new colleagues in this House. I think all members would agree that there have been some very, very good speeches that have expressed passion and commitment and hope for the future and a desire and an eagerness to serve the public. It is my hope that our new colleagues hold on to these qualities. This is a profession the conduct of which often inspires cynicism in the public and, if we are not careful ourselves, can foster cynicism in ourselves.

Now, as a former journalist I know a little something about cynicism. It is a kind of religion in the ink-stained wretch trade. It's a professional cynicism, a kind of psychic armour that helps you sometimes to withstand some of the stuff that you have to deal with. I understand that journalists in Canada don't very often have bad things happen directly to them. There are many places around the world where being a journalist can get you shot or put your life in jeopardy in other ways, but Canada, thankfully, is not one of them.

However, as a journalist you do see bad things happening to other people over and over again. I believe I was 22 when I covered my first senseless high school shooting, not in America but somewhere in suburban Toronto, in Brampton, and I've covered far too many since and far too many other tragedies and bad stories, as well. As a journalist you, of course, also see good things happening to others from time to time, but as we all know, good news doesn't make

news the way bad news does. So cynicism plays and has played, certainly, a part in my life.

Cynicism can protect you. It can also embitter you. A little cynicism in moderate doses in the right circumstances can also actually keep you from being affected too deeply by the negative. Too much cynicism does exactly the opposite. A little cynicism in the face of hardship or hurdles can actually put a bit of a spring in your step, a little fire in your belly, give you what you need to fight on. Too much cynicism can make a person discouraged, can make a person apathetic, can make a person just want to give up.

I'm talking about cynicism, Mr. Speaker, because we saw cynicism in the electorate in this past election. Just about 60 per cent of voters didn't bother to vote, didn't bother to show up and vote. I think I said in the House one day last week that the party that really won this election was none of the above, with 60 per cent voter support, the support of the voters who did not vote. For the rest of us – it doesn't matter; Conservatives, Liberals, New Democrats, Greens, Wildrose Alliance, anybody else who ran under any other ticket in any constituency in the province of Alberta – we failed. We failed to engage 3 out of 5 Alberta voters. I think we failed to make them feel empowered. I think we failed to make them feel like there was a point to voting.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont, I'm glad that you brought this up in your maiden speech a few minutes ago because I really think that this is central to where we are today and where we go from here. We owe it to ourselves, again, whether we're Conservatives, Liberals, New Democrats, whatever, to figure out not only why we didn't engage the voters, why we didn't make them feel empowered but what we are going to do, the 83 of us, over the next four years to change that.

It is a good time to talk about some of the things that I heard on the doorstep as I was campaigning for re-election in the fabulous constituency of Calgary-Currie. I'm sure that the MLA for Edmonton-Centre is going to get on my case at the earliest possible opportunity about using the term "fabulous constituency" because as we all know, the Member for Edmonton-Centre always likes to welcome all of us to her fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre when we're here in this building and on the Legislature Grounds.

Calgary-Currie is a fabulous constituency. I have come to feel very much a part of it, to feel a very deep respect and love for the communities in my constituency, and I'm darn proud to represent them. I've always said from the time I woke up the day after the last election, in 2004, that until the next election comes along, I represent every one of my constituents, whether they voted for me, against me, or didn't vote at all, whether they're old enough to vote or not. But we still come back to this notion of so many constituents in my constituency and in your constituency who just didn't bother to vote, and I think there are some clues in what we heard on the doorstep. I'll just run down a few for you.

Health. I heard about health care more than I heard about anything else. I'm sure you all did. One of the things that I heard was that we've been talking about health care for 15, perhaps 20 years as a society, as a province, as voters, as constituents, and throughout that time things have gotten worse. The wait times have gotten longer; the ordeals in emergency rooms have gotten more difficult; it's become harder and harder to find a doctor, et cetera, et cetera. We all know what that's all about because unless we didn't do any door-knocking at all, we've all heard about it from our constituents. Things just keep getting worse. What are we going to do about that?

Affordable housing and homelessness. That would easily be the second most common issue to come up on the doorstep in Calgary-Currie because the cost of housing has gone up astronomically over

the last four years in Calgary-Currie and inner-city Calgary, and it's had a tremendously positive impact on many of my constituents and a tremendously negative impact on many others. You know, the message that I keep hearing is: "It never used to be like this. People used to be able to afford houses."

People in my constituency who have paid off their mortgage, who are sitting pretty, are going to be fine until the time that they decide to, you know, move into smaller digs, into an apartment, into assisted living, something like that. They don't have to worry about the mortgage. They don't have to worry about the price of their house, except the sale price, but they ask me: "How are my kids ever going to get back into this neighbourhood? How are my kids ever going to get back into a house close to their mother and me when the average selling price is over \$600,000?" That's not a starter home by anybody's definition, not even the people in Mount Royal.

So how can we square our burgeoning homeless population with our booming economy? And that just doesn't make sense, that in a province this wealthy, this well to do, we should visibly see more and more homeless people on our streets. What are we going to do about it?

Education. We know that it's the key to our future, to our future success, our future well-being not only as individuals but as a society. Twenty-five years ago Canada ranked second in the world among OECD member states in the percentage of its citizens attending university; today we rank 18th. Alberta's participation rate in postsecondary is the second worst in this nation, the 18th, and we are the ninth. What are we going to do about that?

Environment and climate change. People want answers. People want action. And, yes, a lot of people really want us to fix it without their having to give up anything themselves. You know, that's human nature. We never want to give up our creature comforts or our lifestyle if we can possibly help it, you know. We'll negotiate with the Almighty right up until the bitter end to try and keep what we've got. It's human nature. We faced that very natural obstacle in the past as people, as humans, about what were then some pretty thorny problems, and we did something about them then. What are we going to do about this?

#### 8:20

Quality of life and the overall sense that for all the resources at our fingertips here in Alberta – natural, financial, human, intellectual, creative – we ought to be able to get more out of it of lasting value than we seem to be. What are we going to do about it? As one of my colleagues opposite said this afternoon, the throne speech is a road map, not a prescription.

So even though as a member of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition my job is to oppose, I'm not going to criticize the throne speech right now. I'll save the criticism. Lord knows you'll hear plenty of it over the next few weeks and the next four years. I'll save my criticism for the specifics, for the budget debate, for debate on various bills that come forward to the House in this session and in the fall and beyond. Right now – right now – instead of opposition let this be provocation to us all. Without regard to where you sit in the House, without regard to party allegiance or affiliation, what are you going to do for the next four years? What are we going to do to give Albertans the sense that what we do and their involvement in it matters?

You know, there's been much talk, at least in the circles that I travel, in the last little while about Barack Obama and *The Audacity of Hope*, his message, and I get many questions about why no politician in Canada is seemingly capable of delivering such a message. Well, you know, first of all, I don't believe that that's true. I think we are capable of delivering such a message, but consider our



different circumstances. America is not a good place to be. It's not in a good place right now. Americans are losing their homes. They're losing their jobs. There's 18 per cent unemployment among returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. America is an economy in retreat in many ways, and I think that down in the United States there is a national desire to try and regain, get back, a sense of direction, a desire to find their way again.

Well, we don't compare, not in Alberta, possibly not anywhere in Canada but certainly not in Alberta. Times are good here. Oil is almost \$120 a barrel. We have too much work, not too little, and so much money that we can try to spend our way out of any problem we have, or at least use it to paper over our problems for a while. If we've got money left over after that, and very often we do, we can go out and buy ourselves a shiny new toy of some sort. What we don't have is a clear purpose, a shared focus, a common cause as a people that jazzes us, that gives us a buzz, that turns us on, that makes us excited about going forward.

We're a little bit stagnant, more like America was at the end of the '50s, when John F. Kennedy came along. He, too, brought a message of hope, but he brought a message of hope out of stagnation rather than hope out of a place of despair, if that's not too strong a word to describe America right now. It might be, but it's the first word that comes to mind. He brought a message of standing in the possibilities, a sense that it was worth getting involved and getting engaged again. So I put it to you; I put it to me: we don't need Albertans to be in a bad state and in troubled times before we can succeed in engaging them with a message of hope. But it is our job to do exactly that – engage the people of Alberta with a message of hope, a clear purpose, a common cause, a sense that tomorrow is exciting because of the possibilities in which we stand as Albertans – or else this cynicism we saw in the last election, the cynicism that saw 3 out of every 5 voters stay home, will set in even more deeply. Then, Mr. Speaker, we will be in a bad state.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** According to Standing Order 29(2)(a) after the speech we have five minutes for questions and comments. Any hon. member?

**Mr. Denis:** Just a quick question, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering if the Member for Calgary-Currie could indicate who his MLA is and if he's brought some of his concerns to that person.

**Mr. Taylor:** Let me see now. My MLA would be – and we're not supposed to use names – the Member for Calgary-Egmont, and I would be the MLA for the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow. We do have a certain responsibility, I think, when we sit in this House and when we have the opportunity to put MLA after our names to bring our concerns to ourselves and solve our own bloody problems.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other member? The hon. minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Thank you. Many people talk about the poor voter turnout and "Woe is me" about it. Do you just naturally assume that all people stayed home as a protest vote? Or are there people that possibly are quite happy with how the world is going right now?

**Mr. Taylor:** Mr. Speaker, I can only respond to that by referring back to how I was brought up, which was that you have a duty as a citizen in a free land, in a democracy to get out and vote in every

single election whether you're happy or not. If you're happy, you vote to put the party that was the government back in. If you're unhappy, you vote for the other guys. But you vote.

Sure, there were some people – I don't know how many – who stayed home because they just didn't feel like it and some people who stayed home because, I guess, they were happy with the status quo. But we know as well that there were a lot of people who stayed home because they didn't see anybody up there who spoke to their hopes and their dreams and their aspirations and their needs.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other member?

Seeing none, I will recognize the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Berger:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great pleasure and an honour to be here this evening to deliver my maiden speech before you. As I stand in this legislative Chamber, I can't help but be reminded of the great honour it is to be a part of the legacy of the elected officials in this province and to have the privilege of representing the people of Livingstone-Macleod and, ultimately, the people of Alberta. I'd like to thank the past MLAs from my area: most recently David Coutts, LeRoy Fjordbotten, and Frederick Bradley for doing an impeccable job of representing my constituents in the past.

I grew up on and continue to operate a mixed farm and ranch operation southwest of Nanton in the beautiful foothills of southern Alberta's eastern slopes. For this I am truly lucky and privileged. The reason I say lucky is because like everyone else here my family immigrated. My paternal grandfather and great-uncle came to the area that we live in completely by chance. They sailed from Norway in 1900, went to North Dakota to seek their fortune, looking for land and opportunity.

Being that they were too late to file their purchase, they worked in local stores for about a year, until one Sunday afternoon in 1901 at the local train station they saw an advertisement about the new west in Canada that was being opened up. Tickets could be purchased for 1 cent per mile. Having no map of Canada and no idea where they were looking, they inquired of the ticket agent as to where they might go. His answer was that he couldn't sell them a ticket unless they knew where they were going. As they were discussing their dilemma, a man walked up and asked for a ticket to Nanton. They asked the agent where Nanton was, and he said it was as far as they could go before reaching the mountains at the time and that it was a good area for farming. Being that they came from Norway and were missing their mountains and wanted to farm, they bought tickets to Nanton. It was quite an interesting way to get somewhere.

They came to a place in search of opportunity, dreams, and hopes of a better life for themselves and their future families. Mr. Speaker, I'm truly thankful because I believe this place, later to be named Alberta, has provided and continues to provide an abundance of all of what they were seeking. Four generations later the opportunities are just as bright or even brighter for my children as we journey through Alberta's second century.

8:30

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of my history of public service, having spent 15 years on the council of the MD of Willow Creek, nine of those as reeve. It is a similar past to that of my maternal grandfather, who was a councillor and reeve for the MD of Clear Lake in the 1920s. What I've witnessed being on various boards and committees is Albertans' desire to continually improve and work towards a

better future. Problems are viewed as opportunities to change what needs changing, yet in Alberta we are pragmatic in the fact that we will not fix what is not broken. Albertans have endorsed this hon. Premier with 72 seats in this House to continue the work outlined in the throne speech.

Mr. Speaker, as outlined in His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor's Speech from the Throne, one of the toughest issues facing Albertans through this unprecedented growth is our land use. I'm very pleased to have been appointed as parliamentary assistant to the hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, the ministry developing the land-use framework. It is an opportunity for both urban and rural Albertans to work collaboratively to preserve, restore, and develop our resources in a sustainable way.

Land use in Alberta has for too long been thought to be just a rural issue. Mr. Speaker, the very land our cities and towns sit upon was once rural, and most of it was the very best land, the best quality. In order to preserve what we see as the greatest landscape in the world, both urban and rural communities in Alberta will have to, and need to, work together to strike the right balance. As discussed in the throne speech, I am very much looking forward to our government taking more of an active role in resolving conflicts amongst the various land uses and land users and improving the way land decisions are made in Alberta.

Livingstone-Macleod is located near Alberta's southwest corner, reaching from Nanton to the Crowsnest Pass and stretching across three municipal districts: Ranchland, Pincher Creek, Willow Creek. It also includes two groups of First Nations: the Blood tribe First Nation and the Peigan First Nation. Established in 1997, Livingstone-Macleod faced substantial changes with respect to original electoral boundaries, and many communities currently comprising the riding were historically part of several different electoral divisions.

The makeup of my constituency is unique, and over time its people have built an interesting history. Pincher Creek's roots started with a group of Montana prospectors who camped in 1868 along a creek north of their border. When the prospectors finished their camping and vacated the area, they left behind a pair of pinchers used for shoeing horses. What these gentlemen failed to realize was that the very pair of rusty pinchers would in 1874 be discovered by North West Mounted Police and evidently go down in history as the foundation for the town by the name of Pincher Creek.

Mr. Speaker, I'm fascinated by the stories and the history of my constituency; however, I am not here today to be a storyteller. I want to talk to you about Livingstone-Macleod as it is today by looking at some of its key industries, unique resources that make my constituency truly one of a kind. With its location near the Rocky Mountains, but not in a national park, visitors and investors from across the country have been flocking. In fact, Livingstone-Macleod is becoming the playground of the fastest growing city in Alberta. With growth there have been significant changes to the landscape, and over the last few decades the primary land use in my constituency is changing, with a large focus now being placed more on recreational activities.

The eastern slopes of Livingstone-Macleod have gained a reputation for being one of the most beautiful areas. They're accessible, with trails for snowmobiles and ATV activity, not to mention the best hiking, cross-country trails, and fishing spots in this province. The beauty of the land is nearly blinding, but aside from the nature walks and the recreational activities my constituency contains various historical sites, some of which I would like to briefly highlight.

Livingstone-Macleod is home to the famous Head-Smashed-in

Buffalo Jump, a UNESCO world heritage site since 1981. It is also one of the world's oldest, largest, and best preserved buffalo jumps known to exist today.

My hometown of Nanton houses the Lancaster bomber museum, which honours all those associated with bomber command during the Second World War and commemorates the activities of the British Commonwealth air training plan.

The Fort Museum of the North West Mounted Police in Fort Macleod and the replica of the original barracks, built with a centennial legacy grant by this government, is another fantastic exhibit. These exhibits draw you to a time when the North West Mounted Police, Blackfoot Indians, and pioneer settlers were the only inhabitants of our area, an era which played a very significant part in the history of our province. Not only was Fort Macleod the first police post in Alberta; it is about to regain its proud police heritage with the soon to be built Alberta police training college announced by this government in 2006, with the capacity to train 1,400 municipal police and peace officers.

Finally, the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre remembers the greatest landslide in North American history, which in 1903 killed over 70 people in the town of Frank when 82 million tonnes of limestone came crashing down from Turtle Mountain. Just as an aside to that, the grandfather and great-uncle were sleeping on the ground at Parkland. It took them a week after they felt the ground rumble till they got the news of why the ground was rumbling in their sod hut.

It is not only the history and the topography of the land that makes it amazing; it's also the climate. Due to its unique location near the Rockies Livingstone-Macleod has been blessed with warm chinook winds, which serve as the base to house the largest wind farm in our nation, located in the municipal districts of Pincher Creek and Willow Creek. With energy consumption on the rise and increasing pressure to hone in and develop renewable energy sources, I fully support the recent comments in the throne speech regarding the completion of a provincial energy strategy to increase development of alternative energy sources in this province. As a southern Albertan and a member of this government I'm proud to see progress on this front with the government taking action and recently lifting the 900-megawatt threshold on wind power. This opens the doors to making wind power an even more significant contributor to Alberta's energy mix.

Aside from the wind farms, which are a key aspect to my constituency, Livingstone-Macleod also has a prominent agricultural industry, which has been our mainstay for pretty much forever. Although agriculture has suffered in recent years through drought, BSE, poor commodity prices, I believe that as the world moves to a more carbon conscious centre, our agricultural industry will be heralded along with forestry as one of the biggest renewable carbon sinks we have.

However, with the industrial advancement of the energy industry – oil, gas, and wind power – the focus is shifting slowly from agriculture to other areas, thus diversifying the economy of Livingstone-Macleod as well as Alberta. This mix is making my constituency and our province stronger, and all of these elements can coexist.

As I wrap up, I want to thank all of you for your attention this evening as I depicted the history, the industries, and the landscape of Livingstone-Macleod. As well, I would like to thank my wife, Laurie, my children, Talia, Brita, and Joel, and my family and friends for their continuous support throughout this process. I feel like there is still so much I want to share with you; however, I'll have to save that for another day. In the meantime I urge all of you to visit my constituency, enjoy the trails, see the wind farms, go back

visiting the many historical sights located in southwestern Alberta, all the while continuing to explore one of Alberta's best kept secrets, Livingstone-Macleod. It is a place and a community that I am truly proud to represent in the Legislature.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Well, again, Standing Order 29(2)(a) allows for five minutes of comments and questions. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

8:40

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations to the Member for Livingstone-Macleod on his election and his excellent speech. Having lived and worked in the area myself, I have a fond, warm spot in my heart for the area as well. I had a medical practice there for seven years.

I guess my question would be related to eastern slopes development, and having recognized that there's a serious need for land-use planning and a land-use framework, whether he would support holding off on new developments in the eastern slopes until that plan is in place.

**Mr. Berger:** Hon. member, would I support holding off until the plan is in place? As one individual in here I don't know that I have that complete power. It would be nice, but I don't think I do. I think we do have the ability to have development as well as preserving things. We have to get the planning in place – that is true – but we are moving slowly forward in development as well. What is there now is why everybody likes the area the way it is. It has been looked after well. It can be better, and that's what we'll look for in the land-use framework.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other member? The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I certainly want to congratulate the hon. member on a great maiden speech. What he says about his constituency is certainly true. If there is, maybe, a spot almost as beautiful, it probably is Highwood, I think, out there.

My question, I guess, to the hon. member would be that I would like to know a little bit about his musical talents because he probably didn't get time to get around to talking about it. He comes from a very musical family. His father, Alvin, is probably as well known in Livingstone-Macleod, Highwood, and Little Bow for his musical productions and his amateur theatre. I just would like to know if he's following along in those footsteps. I would at least like him to comment on his dad's abilities.

**Mr. Berger:** Thank you, hon. member. No. As unfortunate as it is, I didn't take up the musical end of things. It went on to my son – it missed me completely – brothers, the rest of the family, but not me, the unfortunate one.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. McFarland:** Thank you. Congratulations to my neighbour, the newly elected MLA for Livingstone-Macleod. Seeing as how we're both in the agricultural business, I wonder if he could get around that darn Minister of Environment on those days when we get those howling winds off the mountains down in the Crownsnest Pass, if you'd have any control on some of these heavy 80 kilometre plus chinook winds that raise havoc with us. Do you think you've got any ideas there, Mr. New MLA?

**Mr. Berger:** Thank you, hon. member. Actually, with one of the wind farms that was approved when I was on MD council, we had someone from upwind come in and appeal it because they thought they weren't going to have wind when they wanted to build their wind farm. We explained that they're actually upwind, it won't be an issue, and we have no control of it anyway. The appeal was lost, but it's interesting that you bring that forward.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other member?

Seeing none, I would now like to recognize the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Doerksen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I feel both honoured and humbled to rise today and address the Assembly in response to the bold Speech from the Throne that was presented to this House last week. I'd first also like to congratulate my colleagues for their successful election last month, specifically and particularly our Premier, Ed Stelmach, for the very positive and strong leadership style that was so significantly endorsed by Albertans on March 3.

As a third-generation Canadian and Albertan I'm thrilled to represent the constituents of Strathmore-Brooks in this the 27th Legislature of the province of Alberta. I would like to also take this opportunity to thank my constituents for their support and their faith in me to represent their interests in this House.

Mr. Speaker, I'd be remiss if I also did not take time to address the unique political heritage of my constituency, and I'd like to acknowledge the contributions of the men who have previously stood in my place, most recently the hon. Dr. Lyle Oberg; prior to that, Tom Musgrove, who's already passed on; and prior to that, Fred Mandeville, who still lives in the town of Brooks. Their contributions to our constituency are both numerous and significant. They have made life better for the people I represent, and I hope to live up to the expectations that they have set.

I'd like to tell you just a little more about the rich communities that define my constituency, about the good and decent people who contribute to the mosaic of Alberta's proud agricultural heritage, the places in my riding where people live and work and play. My riding includes the counties of Newell and Wheatland, the rapidly growing town of Strathmore, and Alberta's newest centennial city, the city of Brooks.

Through the course of the election and prior to that we crisscrossed our constituency. We've been to Carseland, Nightingale, Strathmore, Chancellor, Cluny, Tilley, Cheadle, Hussar, Rainier, Rosemary, Gleichen, Bassano, Standard, Duchess, Brooks, Gem, Patricia, Scandia, Namaka, Lyalta, Rosebud, Rockyford, Rolling Hills – you get the drill. Mr. Speaker, we've been everywhere, in the constituency of Strathmore-Brooks, that is. Those are the people places in Strathmore-Brooks.

My riding includes Dinosaur provincial park, a UNESCO world heritage site and one of the most unique landscapes you'll see anywhere in Alberta or the world, for that matter. Rosebud School of the Arts, where a group of people had a dream and a vision for what could be and today operates under special legislation in the province of Alberta, offers a unique cultural and educational experience for the students who enrol in the program and for the patrons of the dinner theatre and the many people who enjoy that venue every year. This summer will feature *Fiddler on the Roof*, and I invite all of my colleagues to take in that program. It runs from May 30 to August 30, and if you haven't experienced Rosebud Theatre, you really need to do that.

My constituency also includes the Brooks campus of Medicine Hat College. Now almost 300 full- and part-time students each semester enrol in courses ranging from adult basic education and

ESL training to the new two-year LPN course and all four levels of electrical apprenticeship as well as a full complement of first-year university transfer courses. I believe that institutions like that, specifically the Brooks campus in our constituency, have a role to play as we look to provide educational opportunities for young people who have entered the workforce and will one day want to come back to supplement their experience with further educational training.

My constituency is also served by three local hospitals, in Brooks, Strathmore, and Bassano. Alberta's oldest hospital building is in Bassano. Completed in 1958, the Bassano hospital is the oldest active hospital building in Alberta. And speaking of time and place, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, 1958 was a good year and Bassano a good place as it was, in fact, the place and the time that the current Member for Strathmore-Brooks gasped his first breaths.

That, of course, leads me to want to talk about my family, and in terms of getting to this place and coming to be a member of this House, I very, very sincerely want to thank the contributions of my family, both my previous generations. My parents have been very supportive of most of the initiatives that I have been involved in and certainly taught me a lot about volunteering and giving of yourself, as many of you would speak to as well in terms of serving our communities and our fellow man. Certainly, that has been a motivating force in my life. Also, to my wife, Wanda, and our three boys, who have also been extremely supportive over the years and the years leading up to me seriously considering putting my name in to become the representative for Strathmore-Brooks.

8:50

Mr. Speaker, I have been inspired by my colleagues' impassioned replies to the Speech from the Throne over the past few days, and I thank you for that. That has certainly been an inspiration to all of us, and I think it really speaks to the diverse experience that we bring to this House and offer to the future of the province of Alberta. I must admit that I'm almost hesitant to add my thoughts to the well-crafted and intelligent perspectives of my fellow members. I certainly feel that I'm in good company.

In general, I would like to add a hearty ditto to much of what they have said in terms of the priorities and expectations they have voiced on behalf of their constituencies. These are certainly mirrored in Strathmore-Brooks as well.

Of course, I would like to add some of my own comments with respect to some of the specific themes within the Speech from the Throne. I'm excited to hear that this government intends to broaden the economic base of the province and will foster an environment conducive to entrepreneurship. Important to this is my belief that we must pursue aggressive investment in research and development within the agricultural and industrial and IT sectors to provide for a bright future for this province. In my opinion, this will play a key factor in implementing efficiencies and, more importantly, maintaining a competitive edge.

I must compliment the government on its accomplishments in recognizing the need to reduce the impact of interprovincial trade barriers. Reducing these barriers certainly benefits the interests of my constituents and, in fact, all Albertans. This is an important step, and my hope is that this initiative will lead to a stronger trade negotiating stance by our federal government, something that the beef and cattle industries of this province are calling for.

The abundant growth of agriculture and industry are essentially good-news stories that we can tell the rest of the world. This is a land of great opportunity, and I recognize and certainly acknowledge and have experienced some of the challenges that a number of my colleagues have raised with regard to the challenges in agriculture

at this point. As most of you know, that's been my background. I've made my living, as has my family, over many years in agriculture, and while there are challenges, it's the market that my constituents, my peers in the agriculture industry are looking to benefit from, and it's market signals that we want to respond to. As tough as those sometimes are, I believe our future looks bright.

I also find it intriguing that as a province we will pursue a policy of clean energy development, one that will safeguard our environmental resources and heritage. This complements the good stewardship exhibited by this government in creating sound water management policies. This resonates within my constituency, Mr. Speaker, as Strathmore-Brooks is the home to both the Western and Eastern irrigation districts. The Eastern irrigation district is the largest irrigation district by area in the province.

Our constituency truly is a place where water works wonders. These initiatives are responsible for providing lifelines of water to the communities I represent. They have created an oasis for the farms, crops, livestock, and residents of Strathmore-Brooks. They are also agents of community and recreational development, funding private initiatives such as the campgrounds at the Rolling Hills reservoir and the Crawling Valley reservoir, full-service facilities available to all Albertans for camping, fishing, and a complement of water sports benefiting from irrigation initiatives in my constituency, and certainly positive areas and positive areas for growth as our province grows.

Too often we hear negative stories, Mr. Speaker, about the uses of Alberta's water resources. I would like to tell you that there are good-news stories to be told as well, stories told in the narrative of proud farmers who can still pursue the agriculture ambitions this great province is founded on. Today my constituency and all of Alberta, for that matter, are benefiting from the vision a group of people had around 1914 to divert water for irrigation from the Bow River at Bassano. I say this because I believe that we have many new avenues to pursue when exploring the exciting prospects of Alberta's future. Within the boundaries of Strathmore-Brooks I envision a scenario where the goals of industry, agriculture, and human resources become further integrated, a united voice that can answer the challenges that have come with the expanding growth of this province and its unsurpassed potential.

Mr. Speaker, we as Albertans occupy an incredible place within the dominion of Canada, a place of destiny and potential. It requires from every citizen of this province a continued willingness to believe in ourselves, to exceed the boundaries of our dreams as we step into a new Alberta, a better Alberta defined by a continuing tradition of sound government, great deeds, and unbounded possibilities.

This House, as our Speaker has said, is a place of ideas. Ours is the opportunity to discuss, debate, and implement the brightest and the best of those ideas. Ours is the opportunity to implement legislation that will build on the past successes of this province and ensure success for this province for the next hundred years. This is about people and services to people who want to exploit opportunities for success, who want quality and efficient health care services and high-quality educational opportunities for their children and grandchildren that start in the communities where they live, communities that provide a balance of cultural, athletic, and other opportunities that are accessible and available.

My constituents – and I'm sure all of us will say that our constituents have very high expectations of this House – are expecting good government from the 27th Legislature of the province of Alberta. I'm extremely excited to be a part of this group and look forward to working with all of you towards future success for this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Again we have five minutes for questions and comments. Would any hon. member like to take this opportunity?

Seeing none, I would like to recognize the hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs.

**Mrs. Fritz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 1 Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement Implementation Statutes Amendment Act, 2008

[Adjourned debate April 16: Mr. Stevens]

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me to stand at this point and speak to Bill 1, the trade, investment, and labour mobility agreement, essentially describing the relationship between Alberta and British Columbia and eliminating barriers to trade and labour mobility, as it says quite transparently in the title. In thinking about this, there are some real advantages, obthink anybody would fail to see that – trying to improve trade and to reduce unnecessary red tape and allow for labour and goods and services to flow in a standard way between our two provinces where we have so much in common and so much important to share and, indeed, with the rest of the country. It is a bit ironic that we are trading with the United States in many areas much more freely than we are with our own neighbours. Truly, that is an inconsistency that all of us want to see redressed.

**9:00**

However, as we've raised in the House before, a couple of concerns arise, number one being that this bill was passed without any public discussion, without any debate in the House, without any recognition that there may be some downsides as well as upsides and that we might be able to as a Legislature improve on this bill. It was pushed through and in a fashion that violated the fundamentals of a democratic process. A significant bill, clearly – it's Bill 1 in this session – that will have implications both positive and negative and needs to be addressed in the House as it is now. It's so ironic that it's coming into effect this month and rather late coming to the Legislature.

Some of the key concerns that we've had with this bill substantively, however, quite apart from the failure to publicly debate it, are threefold, I suppose. One, part of what happens in free trade is that we are giving up at some level provincial laws and municipal legislation that in some way may interfere with business and labour between our two provinces. That means that if, for example, as I understand it, a school chose to ban junk food, that municipality that banned junk food would potentially be taken to a tribunal from operators or businesses in British Columbia that were doing business in those schools because it was blocking their free access to their business and their trade.

Some other issues, for example, tighter greenhouse gas emissions in Alberta than in B.C. For example, I think British Columbia has talked about although not implemented tailpipe emission standards that we don't necessarily support in Alberta. This opens the door to

appeals to this panel for up to \$5 million in lost business and raises the question of whose interests this decision serves fundamentally, and it's true: it serves business. There's no question that it is going to promote business and indeed the transfer of qualifications more readily for labour and allow them to move more freely across borders, whether it's health care or education or other trades. There's an attempt to try to facilitate that.

One key problem for us is that it indeed puts business at a higher level than local jurisdictions, local legislation, provincial legislation. Whether it be in the area of the environment or, in fact, higher labour standards, we could be forced to a lowest common denominator in the environment and labour standards and if not that then significant time and money taken up in tribunals and panel appeals where one company in a province, one trade in a province, one profession in a province would be going to the tribunal for financial compensation for lost opportunities. That's one key concern that we have with TILMA, and I think it needs to be discussed. It needs to be very clear that environmental standards and labour standards must not be lowered, nor must it be possible for conscientious legislation and policies at the municipal level or the provincial level to be undermined by business interests who find it a disadvantage to meet a higher standard.

Those are two of the key issues that we're having some concern with. I guess the important message for us on this side of the House is that business can never trump legislation. We need to and our electors expect us to establish policy and legislation that serves our province, that serves our municipalities well and to the best that we know how. To compromise those for in some cases a lower standard to promote business is not acceptable for many of us.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that summarizes most of my concerns about it, and I'll cede the floor to others who want to raise other questions about TILMA. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** According to our Standing Order 29(2)(a) you have five minutes for questions and comments.

Seeing none, I would like to recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise in support of Bill 1, the TILMA Implementation Statutes Amendment Act, 2008. Alberta is a great province with a powerful economy and a high quality of life. While we enjoy our prosperity, we cannot take it for granted. We need to continue to work hard and secure our success for the long run. One way we'll do this is by diversifying and growing our economy. One of the most significant initiatives we have under way to achieve this is the TILMA, which will strengthen, streamline, and simplify the way we do business with B.C.

The TILMA is a groundbreaking agreement that removes trade barriers between our provinces. Just as importantly, it takes down barriers that hold us back from getting the skilled workers we need to grow and to prosper. Mr. Speaker, the TILMA is going to have a significant impact on worker mobility between B.C. and Alberta. In fact, 1 in 5 occupations will benefit from the agreement. Right now the workers we need in many regulated occupations are ready and willing to respond to our recruitment drive, but they hit roadblocks here and get discouraged. That is because they face additional exams and training requirements when they come to Alberta.

For example, nurses, welders, and accountants in B.C. are subject to different requirements than they are in Alberta, but the TILMA will fix that. Under the agreement workers who are certified in one province will be recognized as qualified in both. Now workers will still be required to register with the regulatory authorities for their

occupations, which ensures that public safety can be maintained, but they won't be required to do unnecessary and redundant examinations or training.

To reconcile differences, B.C. and Alberta are working with over 60 occupational regulators and the government bodies responsible for trades and certifications. By the time the TILMA is fully implemented in April of 2009, over 100 regulated occupations will have agreements in place, allowing workers from B.C. to move more seamlessly to Alberta and vice versa.

The agreement will also cover internationally trained workers so that if a foreign worker's credentials have been recognized in one province, they will be recognized in the other. Mr. Speaker, all of this will also make it easier for industry and businesses to find the skilled workers they need. By addressing this today, I hope to have helped to clarify one of the major benefits of the TILMA, an agreement that's being applauded by organizations such as the Bank of Canada, Canadian Chamber of Commerce, and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, Bill 1 helps pave the way for the TILMA, which is truly a great piece of news for all Albertans. I urge all members of the Assembly to support Bill 1, the TILMA Implementation Statutes Amendment Act. Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We have five minutes for comments and questions. The hon. member and leader of the NDP opposition.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the hon. member opposite what she thinks will happen if there are different standards, for example, in certification of a particular profession. Which standard will be used, the higher or the lower?

9:10

**Ms DeLong:** Generally they will be the higher standards, but essentially if there is no discernable difference between the two, if they just happen to be different approaches to different things, then it will be essentially either one. But generally it is going to be an improvement in our regulations.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. member?

I'd like to recognize the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted today to be able to speak on Bill 1, which is commonly known as TILMA. I'm going to come at it from, I think, many different perspectives but primarily the one of governance.

The concept itself in many ways is good. Certainly it's good to see east-west trade flourish as opposed to perhaps going north-south, but the idea is certainly not new. AIT, which is the agreement on internal trade which I will speak about later, has actually been in effect since 1994. I can recall that when I was on the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, this discussion of breaking down trade barriers between the provinces certainly was on many people's minds and was on agendas, if I recall. But I also do remember that one of the things that they were worried about getting across the borders was Kootenay beer and Big Rock honey brown, so it was very important in those days that we get east-west trade going.

However, with this bill as usual it isn't always what this government does in terms of the what they do; it's the how they do it. This one was particularly secret, which I don't believe is good governance. It really sets in motion a deregulation of the corporate registry system, and I would like to know how these agreements – I'll read from the AIT. It follows from the agreement on internal trade, which was signed between the Canadian provinces in June of

'94. Article 1800 of the AIT states that the provinces can negotiate further agreements with one another as long as they further the cause of the liberalization of trade. So my questions on that would be: why were these agreements not working before, and why would all of our further agreements not be negotiated under AIT? Why was such a broad measure of legislation necessary as is being brought forward in Bill 1? It is similar to deregulation, and we certainly know how unsuccessful electrical deregulation was and what it's been costing the taxpayers of this province ever since.

There is talk of this concept going to other provinces, but why is that not possible under the agreement that already exists under AIT? In a way it appears to be sort of like your house being overrun with termites, so you burn it down to get rid of the termites, which is kind of overkill if you really look at it.

One of the other things that isn't really clear is whether health services or public school boards are actually exempt from TILMA. They are currently listed as being so, but the intention of TILMA is that by April '09 the following groups will have been brought under the agreement: Crown corporations, government-owned commercial enterprises, municipalities, municipal organizations, school boards, and publicly funded academic health and social service entities. These discrepancies exist in the government's own literature promoting the agreement. Thus on one brochure we see health and social services listed as both exempt and forthcoming on the same page. This is a part that I would ask for an explanation on. Right now it appears that contracts made in these areas cannot be challenged under TILMA, but at the same time these groups and organizations must use the TILMA framework.

Article 25. Private individuals can challenge governments under TILMA. Who on earth in their right mind, unless they just won a huge lottery, would think they could afford a lawyer to handle this challenge? Corporations are persons. Will they challenge laws made locally? As has already been pointed out by my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View – and I will use the old stand of the soft drink and junk food companies challenging the ruling made by local school boards that there be no junk foods or drinks in schools. In this province we continually speak of health and wellness. Where would this challenge stand in that argument? The school boards would have to use taxpayers' money to fight its own tax-paid government. How would that work?

The opposite argument is that these young kids can make choices, but if they make bad ones, as the obesity rate in this province clearly shows is the case, and then they end up costing the health care system dollars – diabetes, weight-reduction programs, heart programs – do we say, "Gosh, kids, you made bad choices influenced by peer pressure and the fact that these machines were right in your face all the time"? How much education time will be taken away from regular studies to learn how not to eat junk food?

There really has been no meaningful consultation with Albertans other than with some of the major organizations. Some of them that have been mentioned are AUMA, AAMD and C, and some other organizations, but they were really just informed and, certainly, when the process was well on its way. The rank-and-file members ask the question: what is TILMA? That is already signed in the back rooms. Many municipalities, reeves, et cetera, were really very unaware until it was well, well on its way.

One of the other comments that has been made is that it's a way for companies, as I've mentioned, to control elected decision-makers. It appears to be a continuation of the even more slippery slope of decreased power and influence of elected persons and, therefore, democracy itself. It is diminishing the importance of the people of Alberta to make decisions outside of commerce. The question would arise: will this be commerce versus elected public

interest? And who is the government elected to serve and protect? Is it the average Albertan? Where is the balance that is so necessary in these times? We are talking about a whole government structure changed in 2006 without public knowledge.

What areas of policy have to be changed? It doesn't appear to be clear. TILMA raises some questions that are certainly open to interpretation, and that would be according to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in the B.C. office. The true consequences or understanding may not be seen until tested by a dispute mechanism by a panel of unelected people. Democratic decisions could be overruled by this panel, which leads to further questions. How will these disputes be resolved? Will there be a time frame for a decision? Will these be held in public? Would the public at least be able to present their case? Will it be a written decision, and where would it be filed? Bill 1, really, is only to legitimize an already signed agreement which would allow further negotiations between British Columbia and Alberta trade and labour organizations. But there must have been some thought put into this before it was signed, and I'm hoping that those thoughts would answer the questions that I have just put forward in the House.

9:20

TILMA requires government to not restrict or impair trade investment or labour or mobility. However, some government programs and Crown corporations can find private investments within certain limits and provide some services that could be profitably provided by the public sector. There's absolutely nothing wrong with profit. It's good for everyone. It's competitive; it makes us think; it gives us innovation; it gets us up in the morning so that we can go to work and pay our bills. But I have a deeply held belief that a profit should not be made off the backs of the vulnerable and the helpless in our society or the environment. There are just some programs that should be delivered by the public sector.

To quote the finance minister from the budget yesterday, "The measure of a society is how well it takes care of its most disadvantaged citizens." This is an opinion that I have expressed in this House many, many times, and I would hate to see that under Bill 1 almost all of our public services that we provide to our vulnerable and those that need the most help in this province would be privatized.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) allows for five minutes of questions and comments. Any hon. member want to take this opportunity? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be interested in hearing the comments of this member on conditions in Saskatchewan and how it was that Saskatchewan made a decision to not join this particular trade agreement and, secondly, whether cities and municipalities have had the kind of input into these decisions, that, perhaps, they need to have separate from the provincial government.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you for that question. I can't really answer for Saskatchewan on why they actually said no. However, I believe it was last week that the Hon. Peter Lougheed was in Saskatchewan advising them to slow down on their oil exploration and, certainly, their oil industry. I think what he was saying was: step back and give it a thought. Perhaps some of his thinking and some of his influence went into that decision. I think they've looked at it. Certainly, Ontario is looking at it as well, and maybe they're looking

at it because there already is a mechanism in place, in law, since 1994 that would allow these very same activities to be taking place. It still hasn't been explained to me why we need another agreement when, in fact, one does exist that has been working.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. member?

**Ms DeLong:** Perhaps the hon. member is not aware that even though AIG is in place, there's no way of actually enforcing it, and because of that, there are silly things going on in Canada still; for instance, the whole thing of yellow margarine in Quebec. There is nothing that Alberta can do about that even though there are trade barriers set up. Because there are no teeth in that legislation, you know, it essentially becomes ineffective, whereas with TILMA we are putting some teeth into it.

**Ms Pastoor:** I think that that goes back to the analogy that I made. If your house is full of termites, you burn it down. Why would we not just look at the existing agreement and get together and ensure that there's enforcement to the agreement? If it hasn't been working, let's look and see why it's not working, not throw it out and create a whole new set of rules.

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

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps the hon. member is not aware that TILMA does not negate the other agreement at all. The other agreement stays in place. This is an additional agreement that we're putting in place with teeth. If we could have somehow, miraculously, gotten all 10 provinces to agree with TILMA, then we would have done so. If we could have expanded the pan-Canadian agreement that was in place, if we could have just expanded it to put some teeth into it, we would have done so. We were able to come to an agreement with B.C. so that we could move ahead with this trade agreement, so that we could open up our borders to start acting like a single country. We were able to do that with B.C., whereas we weren't able to do that all the way across Canada. So we decided that we should take that first step. I was hoping that the hon. member would be aware of that.

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

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am really interested in hearing more about the member's theories on consumption of chocolate bars and its relevance to TILMA. Could she please explain that further to me? I'm a little unclear on it.

**Ms Pastoor:** Actually, I think the point that I was trying to make was that - I'll make it perhaps a little more specific. A school board says that we will not have junk food in our schools. Pepsi comes along and says: yes, you will. Where is the autonomy of that school board? It would be easily challenged, and it's not right that we lose the autonomy of our local elected people.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The five minutes are gone, so I would like now to recognize the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Marz:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I see everybody's in a great mood for debating this tonight.

It's a pleasure for me to rise this evening in support of Bill 1, the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement Implementation Statutes Amendment Act, and I would like to start by asking this Legislature to support this important piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, some fear that Bill 1, TILMA, is geared to help only big business, and some fear that it's going too far. Well, I'm pleased to see that Bill 1 is actually going to help the little guy, the average Albertan, the typical small-business owner who is essential to our economy. Some of my own constituents have been looking for something like this for a very long time, and I haven't had any negative comments about it at all. As a matter of fact, some of my constituents in the ag sector feel that this particular round of negotiations of TILMA is not going far enough because it doesn't include the standardization of some of the transportation laws as far as the shipment of hay goes: the size of the load, the way the loads are stacked, and the way they're secured on the truck.

I'm going to continue to encourage our government and my counterparts in B.C. to continue to look at these issues in the next round of harmonization as we go through looking at ways of improving TILMA over the next year or two, and I think the Pacific Northwest Economic Region is a great avenue for us to do that. That's an all-party committee where my colleagues on the opposite side of the House can also play a role, and I'd seek their support as well in that.

What I want to talk about tonight on Bill 1 is what it will do. It will reconcile corporate registration, which will eliminate the need for small businesses to register in both provinces if they choose. That will reduce red tape and save businesses some money. Mr. Speaker, in what we believe is unprecedented in this country, TILMA requires Alberta and B.C. to look at regulations that affect businesses operating in both provinces and to reconcile differences resulting from the overlap and duplication. For example, companies that operate in both provinces will only have to file one annual report or pay a registration fee in only one province.

Bill 1 will also help all those small businesses that are near the Alberta-B.C. border that have wanted to expand their operations. Businesses in Grande Prairie will find it easier to expand into northeastern B.C., and companies from southwestern Alberta will be able to expand into southeastern B.C. and vice versa. Mr. Speaker, to me this just makes sense. Government should facilitate the expansion of small business, not get in the way of it. A strong small business community is essential for the overall growth of any economy, and Bill 1 and TILMA do so much for small business by eliminating residency requirements, reducing or removing duplicate requirements for vehicle registration and permits for transporting goods, making it easier for workers to have their qualifications recognized and lowering the thresholds for nondiscrimination in government procurement. This will truly help the average Albertan and indeed will make it easier for residents of British Columbia to establish their businesses and even themselves in our great province.

9:30

For example, for a small-business owner whose spouse is a teacher, thanks to TILMA the small-business owner can move and expand to Alberta without the burden of so much red tape, and their spouse will automatically have their teaching credentials recognized here. Now, Mr. Speaker, to me that's a great benefit, and it is only one of the countless benefits that are possible because of TILMA and Bill 1, Canada's most comprehensive interprovincial trade agreement.

Mr. Speaker, TILMA also gives small business the same access to the dispute resolution mechanism as big business. That means that the little guy has the same opportunity to raise concerns directly with government.

This legislation is also being watched closely by our neighbours to the east in Saskatchewan. I've had the opportunity to talk to a couple of legislators there, and it's been mentioned previously about

why they're not in it. But from my discussions with a couple of them on the government side I can tell you there was a lot of interest expressed, and they're watching what we're doing with British Columbia very closely. I think this is going to be a model not just for western Canada but for all of Canada to look at in harmonization of trade right across our great country. As was said earlier, it seems ironic that it's easier to trade north and south than it is east and west. Hopefully, this is the start and the model that will change all that.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly encourage all members to support Bill 1. As this is a very important piece of legislation that will truly help Albertans, I'll be supporting it, and I encourage everyone else here to do the same.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We now have five minutes for questions and comments.

Seeing no hon. member taking this opportunity, I would like to recognize the hon. leader of the NDP opposition.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise to speak to the government's Bill 1, the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement Implementation Statutes Amendment Act, 2008. I want to say at the outset that I understand that Bill 1 is an omnibus bill that amends the statutes in Alberta to harmonize them with the TILMA agreement and that it is not the agreement itself, but since I have very great concerns about the agreement itself, my questions and my comments have to do with TILMA and the process that was undertaken with TILMA.

Mr. Speaker, the TILMA agreement was something that was cooked up secretly and behind closed doors by this government and their soulmates the Liberal government of British Columbia. It was a very long time before any piece of legislation relating to this agreement was brought forward to this Assembly. To their credit the government of British Columbia brought forward legislation dealing with TILMA much earlier in the process in their Legislature. In the meantime, we spent a long time without any legislative authority for this particular approach.

Mr. Speaker, I and my party are opposed to the TILMA agreement. We are opposed as well, therefore, to this bill, and I'd like to speak just very briefly against it right now. It's my view that these trade agreements, based as they are on the pioneering free trade agreement between Canada and the United States, represent a real assault on democratically elected Legislatures and municipal governments, taking away their rights to make arrangements and to make agreements in the interests of their citizens. It is a trend that we've seen through NAFTA and now interprovincially here that erodes the democratically elected institutions in our country.

I think the best example of that was a case that came forward by a number of companies under the North American free trade agreement with respect to the Canadian post office. Now, in the end the case that was brought by the large private courier companies of the United States was turned down, and some might say: well, that means, you know, we're protected against these kinds of attacks. But it easily could have gone the other way, and I think we're going to see these kinds of cases as long as we have these types of agreements in place.

The big courier companies, Purolator and some others, I believe, brought forward a case saying that Canada had no right to have a public monopoly post office, that it interfered with their business. There was a threat at the time, and it could have happened. It did not, and I'll admit that. It could have resulted in a trade tribunal saying that Canada had no right to have its own post office. So we can imagine the kind of things that might happen here.



What if banks didn't like the fact that Alberta operated a Treasury Branch? What about public auto insurance, for example, something that we believe offers a lot of benefits? If we wanted to bring in public auto insurance, even though British Columbia has one, could a private insurance company bring a case to a tribunal?

This agreement allows corporations to sue the provincial government for up to \$5 million if they believe the provincial government has taken some steps that may interfere with their business or their ability to make trades. This whole concept, which was pioneered in the Canada-U.S. free trade agreement, of allowing corporations to sue governments and to challenge legitimate activities of government because those legitimate activities might compete with those corporations in some way is abhorrent to us, and it's a mechanism that we strongly disagree with. It is a mechanism that allows corporations to erode the sovereign rights of elected Legislatures, local councils, parliaments, and even the Congress of the United States. Mr. Speaker, I can't express strongly enough our concern with this direction.

Municipalities will be brought into this agreement over the next couple of years. Municipalities were not properly consulted. In fact, I don't think they even knew that these negotiations were taking place between the government of Alberta and the government of British Columbia. Their ability to have a procurement program, to get into utility areas that they might want to extend to, for example garbage collection – the city of Calgary has a parking authority. Some municipalities have their own garbage collection, waste disposal operations. All of these things potentially can be challenged under these agreements.

I think that there are some alternatives, and the example has been given in this House on a number of occasions about interprovincial transportation and how you have to stack your truck differently in B.C. than you do in Alberta. When you come across the border, there are different regulations. Mr. Speaker, it makes sense to me that we should have some harmonization in interprovincial transport. I think that makes a great deal of sense, and I think that there are ways that we can have selective harmonization in areas where some of these differences between provinces actually are onerous and create irrational differences. So I would support that.

9:40

I want to come back to the question of standards as well. Standards, for example, for tradesmen may be different between the two provinces, or there may be different standards for medical professionals. The question really becomes: if you're going to harmonize between the two provinces, which standard do you take? Contrary to what was stated earlier by the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, I don't believe that they're going to take the higher standards. I believe that, in essence, this is a trade approach that favours capital over labour, which favours business interests and big companies over local governments, and which will tend to favour large companies over small ones.

We've seen how this has affected people. It's a question now in the United States in the U.S. presidential election of the whole question of NAFTA and how it has affected jobs, how it's allowed companies to close plants and centralize production and has eliminated jobs. We've seen rebellions, for example, in parts of Mexico, where small farmers are being forced off the land because the restrictions on capital and the free flow of capital and the right of capital to do anything it wants are enhanced by these sorts of agreements.

So the little guy doesn't have a chance, Mr. Speaker, and small farmers are being forced off their land. Workers lose their jobs. Profits, of course, do increase, but the protection that we have built

up over the years for local business, for small farmers, and for workers is eroded. Let's make no mistake: they will in fact be eroded by these kinds of agreements.

Now, TILMA itself is small potatoes compared to the North American free trade agreement, but it is a similar beast and will have similar effects. I think, Mr. Speaker, that members of this House would do well to avoid an ideological knee-jerk reaction and say: you know, freer trade is obviously better. I think this deserves greater study and greater scrutiny.

Mr. Speaker, I would propose that this bill or TILMA itself be referred to the appropriate standing policy field committee and that we have some public hearings on this. This is a major initiative. It's an initiative that was undertaken without public discussion, and I don't think the public fully understands the implications. I don't believe I understand the implications, and I don't believe that other members of the House do either.

I would suggest that the best way to deal with this is to have the government – and I know that it's going to take a government initiative – refer this to the appropriate standing policy field committee and let us discuss this, get into it in considerable detail, and let's hear from the people of Alberta before we embark down this path.

Mr. Speaker, those are my comments. I appreciate all members' kind attention to my remarks. Thank you.

Following the five-minute question-and-answer period, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move adjournment of the debate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We've got five minutes for questions and comments. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to hear a little bit further exactly how many levels of government and how many elected organizations, really, could be deeply affected by this and how it actually could take away the power of the people of Alberta.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you very much. Hon. member, it comes down to the basic enforcement mechanism that's embedded in this agreement, which is similar to enforcement mechanisms which are embedded in NAFTA, and that is the creation of a dispute resolution panel. A company that feels that a decision interferes with their freedom to operate or represents an unfair regulation or an unfair competition by a government if it's involved in some public enterprise can sue the government or the municipality. It appears before a dispute resolution panel, which can award damages and prevent the municipal council or the provincial Legislature from exercising what had previously been its authority and jurisdiction in that area. That is the erosion. We're basically giving the rights to corporations to tell us we can't do the things that we can do.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member – let me check here. Sorry. The hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

**Mr. Lund:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. I was afraid you had me moved there for a while.

I would like to ask the hon. member a question about the ability of a mass of people in the world economy, that if, in fact, he wouldn't feel that they would be able to produce in a very competitive way and actually through that process enhance the lives of the people in Alberta and B.C. The hon. member, of course, has expounded to great length on business. He has the ability to imagine all kinds of bogeymen and lots of what-ifs, so I think that he would

have done a fairly good analysis of mass and how that would compete in the world trade.

**Mr. Mason:** I'm not quite sure I understand what the hon. member is asking, but I'm assuming that he means that the larger the economic entities, the greater the economies of scale, and therefore the greater the benefits for everyone. Is that what he meant, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Lund:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I would have thought that with his ability to analyze these various businesses, in fact, he would have recognized that. Yes, that is the question.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you very much. I recognize that with greater economies of scale and greater concentration of capital and a higher level of technology, goods and services can be produced on a larger scale and much more cheaply. The question is: who loses out in that process? If you can take an industry, for example, and you can replace all of the small businesses with one big, giant plant and then you can make that plant operate with a very high level of technology and robots and all of those things, then you've eliminated many small businesspeople, each of whom has a family and some employees, and you've eliminated a great deal of jobs as well. So you're able to produce lots more goods more cheaply, but people don't have the income anymore to buy them.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Now we have a motion on the floor by the hon. leader of the NDP opposition to adjourn the debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

9:50 **Government Bills and Orders  
Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Cao in the chair]

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

**Bill 5  
Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2008**

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to rise in committee debate of Bill 5, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2008. Just by way of comment beforehand, I guess we can tell that it's still cold out for April. Nobody has taken off their jacket and loosened their tie yet, and here we are in committee.

There's \$353,960,000 from the general revenue fund, a sum to be paid and applied "towards defraying the further charges and expenses of the Public Service classed as expense and equipment/inventory purchases for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008, not otherwise provided for," et cetera, et cetera. Here it is April 23, 2008. This is the second time – is it not? – that we've had a supplementary supply process at work here for the fiscal year 2007-2008. Gone back to the well twice.

I'm looking here at some of the percentage changes for some of the departments from what was originally budgeted in the April 2007 budget. Department of Environment: 62 per cent increase.

That's the one that really jumps out: 62 per cent. My goodness. Oh, here's one: tourism, parks, recreation and culture. Their capital investment budget went up 280 per cent. That was just in the first supplementary estimate debate, the first time around. Kind of missed the targets and missed the mark on those ones. Now, I'm not going to complain, necessarily, about spending more money on the environment. Well, I mean, I would have some questions about where the money is being spent on the environment. I'd be happier to see some of it spent elsewhere, I guess, but as a general statement I think we could afford to pay a little more attention to the environment in this part of the world.

I guess my bigger question – and I'm not even sure who I'm going to put this to. Anybody on the government side that wants to respond, I guess. Why are we going back to the well a second time? You know, you only have to go back two or three years, and the budget of this entire province was below \$30 billion. Now it's a heck of a lot closer to \$40 billion than \$30 billion: \$37 billion, the finance minister announced yesterday. Of course, we will debate the budget itself in the days to come, but the spending here is increasing at an incredible rate.

I also recognize, Mr. Chair, the need for spending to increase in some areas. We talk on this side of the House frequently about the multibillion dollar infrastructure deficit. There is a need to build schools, to build hospitals, to build roads, to build bridges, to build all kinds of infrastructure, infrastructure that was neglected for year after year after year while we set about becoming quote, debt free, unquote, which is the subject of a whole other debate. Are we debt free or not? It all depends on which way you're holding the paper. But, you know, I think I go back to the previous Leader of the Official Opposition, who made a comment some years ago that what we were doing was the equivalent of killing ourselves paying down the mortgage on the house as fast as we could, and we weren't doing any of the maintenance on the house, so the roof leaked.

That's literally true in the case of Western Canada high school in my constituency of Calgary-Currie, for instance. The roof of that school and many others in Calgary and many others in the province is very leaky. All kinds of structural problems with the building. All this extra money being flung around, and they still can't get enough money to do a proper renovation, reconstruction, and rebuild on that facility. I come back to my original point. Some extra spending and some high degree of spending is obviously justified to make up for what we didn't do when we should have done it. But, gosh, to miss the mark so much that you've got to go back to the well twice in one fiscal year?

I don't quite understand the process. I hope somebody on the government side will explain it to us. Why it is that you can bring in a budget – and last fiscal year's budget was considerably bigger than the budget the year before – for such astronomical sums and still not have enough to cover your expenses? I wish somebody on the government side of the House could explain to me – and, I mean, I'll be fair here: to my satisfaction, and sometimes I'm hard to satisfy – what the process is that you all go through over there for putting together these budgets? Because your projections kind of seem to be pulled out of thin air sometimes, whether it's \$78 a barrel oil in an environment where, and on a day where, we're paying nearly \$120 a barrel for it. And I know the Energy minister made the point in the House earlier today – no, it wasn't the Energy minister; I believe it was the President of the Treasury Board, if I remember correctly now – that not all oil sells for \$120 a barrel. I get that. But, still, it's a phenomenal amount of money, and \$78 a barrel . . .

**Mr. Knight:** Very little of it.

**Mr. Taylor:** We know, and I believe the Energy minister is telling me very little sells for \$120 a barrel now, but we know that we don't have to go back very far at all to a time when we would be over the moon at \$78 a barrel, at the thought of \$78 a barrel oil. Because we don't have to go back very many years to find a time when the entire industry was geared up to, you know, function on \$30 to \$35, \$40 a barrel, something like that. So, I mean, \$78 a barrel, I would contend, is still nothing to sneeze at, okay? But we've seen year after year after year after year revenue projections, surplus projections, estimates of what the price of oil is going to be – you know, so on and so forth – are wildly off.

And, clearly, projections as to how much money department A or department B is going to have to spend in a fiscal year are often wildly off and perhaps never more so than in fiscal 2007-2008, where you had to come back to this House twice now and ask for extra money. I mean, I feel like the bank of dad here, you know, when the kids come and go: "Dad, I saw this neat new skateboard," or whatever. "I really – I really – want it. Can you lend me some money? Can you give me some money?" What's going on? Can anybody over there tell me? Can anybody over there tell me why we're going through the supplementary supply process a second time in the fiscal year? Granted, it's a little after the fact. The fiscal year's over now. Anyway, can somebody explain that to me? Can somebody explain to me the logic in your process? I've been watching this now from this side of the House for four years, I guess. I still don't know how you guys can be so far off the mark all the time. That's my question. That's my overarching question.

10:00

I see that in supplementary supply estimates on Monday evening there was some discussion of very specific questions. I don't want to go over ground that's already on the public record. So it's just the big question. Anybody? Anybody? How do you do what you do, and how do you miss the mark so huge so often?

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will continue on, I think, but it will probably be much in the same vein as my colleague from Calgary-Currie. The Alberta government has the largest government per capita in Canada, actually in Canadian history, and it spends more per capita. Is that because their budgeting mechanisms are out of control? The last budget, obviously, was a huge catch-up. However, the knowledge that the catch-up had to be paid for at some point in time is certainly not new. Still – still – the budgeting process is beyond understanding. If I budgeted like that, I would certainly have to wish for a fairy godmother or, probably better, a sugar daddy that would bail me out of poor judgment in budgeting and uncontrolled spending and not using the very basic principles of paying yourself first. It's actually called savings.

Some of the questions that I would put to the minister would be: how was he assured that the supplementary supply amounts – now, don't forget that this is twice he has needed extra money – will help departments to meet their stated performance measurements? I don't want to hear about money – billions, millions, thousands – thrown at something. I want to see what that money really paid for. What were the outcomes? What were the mandates going in that that money was given to a special department for? Did they really need it, or did they say, "Whoops, I guess we went over"? Interesting. When the health care boards are saying that they're in a deficit and asking for extra money, hmm, no fairy godmother for them.

Why did the budget not allocate the proper funding so as to avoid these needs for supplemental supply? It really is beyond how they can keep coming back and back and back knowing full well that they've lowballed it in the first place.

What benchmarks have really been established to measure outputs, outcomes, and performance within the individual departments and the programs that I have already alluded to? Under supplemental supply it should be specifically to cover a deficit, or else they shouldn't be getting the money, and if they are in a deficit, why is that not being looked at before that money is given out to them?

The supplemental supply sometimes looks like a simple political manoeuvre instead of really good governance by the government to intentionally lowball budgets so that they can announce more spending on programs throughout the year, which always looks good. Sometimes if you really dig deep – and sometimes you don't even have to dig deep – you can see that some of these monies have been announced two and three times.

Nonrenewable resource revenues are declining. How will this government maintain its current spending levels without reducing its reliance on a really volatile revenue stream?

I think that despite the government of Canada's lowering the interest rate, I believe, by a half a percentage point, it indicates that they're thinking that things aren't quite as good as everyone is saying that they're going to be. So I think we have to be very aware of that. After this budget has been passed and we have discussed it ministry by ministry, surely it will be entrenched and has been thought out well enough that this sort of behaviour won't have to come back to us again.

There's only one other comment that I would make. In the department of agriculture they really didn't have any supplemental supply estimates, but there was a reallocation of previously approved estimates, and it's noted that the funding would not be fully transferred from the department for the \$165 million Alberta farm recovery plan but that those funds would be provided through internal reallocations at the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation.

The question here is: does the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation have a detailed breakdown of where the funds are coming from? More importantly, will the full \$165 million be transferred to provide support for the farm recovery plan? Our grain farmers aren't suffering terribly at this point in time, but our feedlot operators, our pork operators, and particularly those that are running mixed farms with those animals certainly are, and I would hate to see that the full \$165 million that has been allocated for that would not reach them.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was listening intently to the two comments from members of the opposition, and it never ceases to surprise me when we have debates in the House on spending. On the one hand, there's always the argument that we're not doing enough. On the other hand, we're spending too much. On the one hand, there are issues that need to be dealt with. On the other hand, you should wait until the next budget process to deal with them, or you should have thought of them the last budget process I guess would be a fair interpretation.

When you look at the supplementary estimates that were part of this appropriation bill and you see that a prudent ministry of infrastructure and transportation was able to move ahead some projects because of a successful building season and request

supplementary estimates – if I can find the number here, I think it was \$95 million or something of that nature – for the strategic economic corridor, should one say, although there was the opportunity to move it ahead and the opportunity to build that infrastructure earlier than was anticipated because of the season or because of the extra resources that were available: no. Wait. Don't do it. Leave it till later. Let the inflationary pressures push the prices up. That doesn't seem to make sense.

A number of years ago this government instituted a reporting process that reports to Albertans on a quarterly basis about what the state of the finances of the province is. It was transparent; it was open. It also, however, has the unintended consequence of creating some pressure because when you report to Albertans that you have resources available, it raises the anticipation from Albertans that you will use those resources to deal with some of the issues that are still out there. I've always told groups that I've met with that one of the toughest jobs in government is the allocation of scarce resources, and when you're in government, resources are always scarce. People laugh. They say: "No. This is Alberta, and we've got all these resources."

If the hon. member had any opportunity to sit in on a Treasury Board meeting, she would know, or if the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie was to sit in on Treasury Board, he would know that there are always pressures for resources. There are always good projects to be done, and when those projects come before Treasury Board, you better believe that they're not idiotic projects. The ones that are being presented for resources and for determination have been well considered. But they can't all be done. There's always more ask than answer. So when you present a quarterly report and when you have a good opportunity to move ahead with a project that is a good project that could be done, should be done, and if done now, would save Albertans more money, should you not proceed with it and come back to the Legislature and ask for more resources if that's appropriate?

If you have a homeless and eviction fund to help Albertans in need and you find that there's more need than there are funds available in the fund but you have more resources available because you've brought a quarterly report out and it shows those resources to be available, should you say to those Albertans in need: "I'm sorry. We've run out of the resources we allocated to this project this year. Can you wait till next year to deal with your homelessness or your eviction"? Is that what the members opposite would suggest that we do?

**10:10**

It's absolutely insane to suggest that one should not come back to the Legislature when resources are available in an environment where the allocation of scarce resources is always a problem. There are always more things to be done. Yes, we have to create priorities. Yes, we have to be prudent with the public resources. But is that what the hon. members are really saying?

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. No, I don't believe, Government House Leader, that that is what we're saying although I believe that what the hon. Government House Leader is saying is that every single project that comes before the Treasury Board is an excellent project that ought to be funded regardless of whether anybody thought of whether there was going to be money in place to do it or not.

Mr. Chairman, it's a little over a year, actually, that I've had my

eye on a Lexus IS 250 because I think it's a sweet little car, and it's quality, too. It's very well put together, you know. It's not just an idiotic car. It's well built. But I didn't have the money in the budget to buy it last year, so I'm saving up my money to do that.

I get the Government House Leader's point. I think I understand why he would pick an affordable housing or homelessness topic to dangle before my eyes as well. I get the hon. member's point about an issue such as that, and I don't for a moment mean to equate the provision of affordable housing, which, I certainly have argued many times in this House, has not been happening fast enough, with my desire to get a new little car. Whatever it is that you want to do – and, yes, you do have to set priorities. The Government House Leader knows that or should know that. You do have to set priorities, and you can't do everything you want to do because it seems like a great idea, if you don't have the money for it.

Now, this House grills the government and spends 60 hours of debate on the budget every fiscal year. Some might say that 60 hours for \$37 billion isn't a lot of time, but I won't go there, at least not for the sake of argument tonight. But the budget does get probably fuller and deeper debate and examination in this House than just about any other piece of legislation, and at the end of it the budget is approved.

My expectation would be that that's what you have to work with. My expectation would be that for the next 365 days you'll live within the means set by that budget, barring a true emergency, something unforeseen, something of potentially catastrophic consequences. Otherwise, you live within your means. If a new priority comes up during the course of that fiscal year that was not foreseen, you'd best find savings somewhere else within that \$37 billion budget. I realize I'm talking about the budget that's coming up that we have yet to debate. I suppose to be dead-on accurate about the debate that we're having tonight, I should be talking about the – what was it? – \$33 billion budget that we are now tonight being asked to add another \$354 million to.

If you can't live within the means of a \$33 billion budget, I would argue, you're simply not trying hard enough. You don't need to come back and ask for more money when we've approved that much spending to begin with. That's my point. I hope the Government House Leader gets it. I hope the Government House Leader understands it. I'm sure he doesn't agree with it because past performance, past behaviour indicates that nobody on the front benches on that side of the House does agree with this kind of philosophy, but I don't think I'm asking anything . . .

### **Vote on Supplementary Supply Estimates 2007-08, No. 2 General Revenue Fund**

**The Chair:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, but under Standing Order 64(4) I must put the question proposing the approval of the appropriation bill referred to the Committee of the Whole. Does the committee approve of the following: Bill 5, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2008?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed?

**Some Hon. Members:** No.

**The Chair:** Carried.

**Mr. Hancock:** I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman, but the second question is:

shall the bill be reported? But I would move that the committee now rise and report Bill 5.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

**Mr. Marz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 5.

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

**Hon. Members:** Concur.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the good progress this evening and the many wonderful speeches we've heard from new members and the inspiration that it has given us all, I would suggest that we go home and reflect on it and come back invigorated tomorrow. I move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 10:19 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]











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