



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

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Issue 14a

The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta

## The 27th Legislature

First Session

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[Errata, if any, appear inside back cover]

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 6, 2008

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon and welcome.

Let us pray. Guide us so that we may use the privilege given us as elected Members of the Legislative Assembly. Give us the strength to labour diligently, the courage to think and to speak with clarity and conviction and without prejudice or pride. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

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

**Mr. Jacobs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly an honour for me today to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly the hon. Bob Bogle, former member of this Assembly, and his daughter Julie Bogle. They are seated in your gallery. Bob was the member for Taber-Warner from 1975 to 1993. During this time he served as minister of native affairs, social services, community health, and utilities and telecommunications. Before his life as an MLA Bob was a teacher and council member in Milk River. Bob's daughter Julie seems to be following in her father's footsteps. Julie was the president of the University of Calgary Students' Union this past academic year. Prior to being president, Julie served as the students' union events co-ordinator and VP apartments, Residence Students Association. It is an honour to have both Bob and Julie with us today, and I would ask them to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of distinguished visitors from the Chinese government who are here in Edmonton to celebrate the grand opening of the Confucius Institute in Edmonton, a joint project between the government of China and Edmonton public school boards. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford will have more to say on this topic later in the afternoon, but this is an opportunity for Edmonton students, for Alberta students to learn Chinese and learn the Chinese culture. I know that would be close to your heart, having done your master of arts in East Asian history.

We have with us today Dr. Xu Jialu, vice chair of the 9th and 10th National People's Congress, who spoke last evening and gave an address, and Madame Xu Lin, director general of Hanban, China's national office for teaching Chinese as a foreign language. They are accompanied today by dedicated staff from the Chinese consulates in Calgary and Vancouver and as well by Stuart Wachowicz, the new president and CEO of the Confucius Institute in Edmonton and director of curriculum and resource development with the Edmonton public school board. I would ask our delegation to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege today to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly two very special and courageous women seated in the Speaker's gallery, Darcia Arndt

and Anna Thede. They are too young to be wearing Memorial Crosses, but unfortunately they are. Darcia lost her husband, Master Corporal Raymond Arndt, 31, on August 5, 2006. He died during a collision with a civilian vehicle as he was delivering medical supplies to an operating base. Anna lost her spouse, Private Joel Wiebe, 22, on June 20, 2007, the day before his 23rd birthday. He was killed when his all-terrain vehicle struck a roadside bomb southwest of Kandahar. I met these two great Albertans on Saturday night at the yellow ribbon gala, where they were honoured. They have paid a terrible price for Canada, Alberta, this Assembly, and each of us. I am humbled that they chose to join us today. I want to thank them for their sacrifice and courage and would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly. [Standing ovation]

### Introduction of Guests

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

**Ms Evans:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very privileged today to introduce 26 guests who are representative of Madonna Catholic school. These bright students are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Ray Rudanec, and a parent helper, Tracy McCloy. I wonder if they would please now rise and if we could give them the traditional House welcome.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Vandermeer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly many members – I had 17, but there are a few more, I see, that have arrived since I met with them earlier – of the Emmanuel Home along with their group leader, Aria, and their bus driver, Clarence. The Emmanuel Home is a great place to live in your retirement years. I have a long history with the Emmanuel Home residents. Some of these seniors have known me all my life. That could be good or bad, depending on your childhood. I'll never tell. A few met my parents on the ship the *Groote Beer* when they came to Canada from the Netherlands in 1952. Special people indeed. They are seated in the public gallery, and I ask that my guests rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mrs. Sarich:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to rise today and introduce to you and through you to this Assembly 59 students from Northmount elementary school, which is in my constituency of Edmonton-Decore. Accompanying them are three teachers: Mrs. Jana Nelson, Miss Krystal Mah, and Miss Jill Sharun. I'd ask them all to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

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

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure to introduce to you and through you today to the members of the Assembly a group of very distinguished ladies from the William Lutsky YMCA, located in my constituency. These ladies are here today to tour the Legislature and see the democratic process in action. I promised them they would not be disappointed. Seniors are a tremendously important part of the YMCA community, and these ladies are among the very finest our community has to offer.

I would like to name our guests – Deanna Lee, Delia McGrath, Shirley Barry, Ruby Moltzan, Shirley Lewis, Betty Peterson, Judy Mueller, and Morrie Parmenter – and ask all of them to please rise in the public gallery and receive our traditional warm welcome.

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

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my distinct pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly several representatives of the MS Society who are here today to recognize that May is MS Awareness Month. You will recall that last December, through the good graces of our Minister of Advanced Education and Technology, a significant contribution was made to the endMS research and training network. We're very proud to work with the MS Society on behalf of over 11,000 Albertans who live with multiple sclerosis.

Mr. Speaker, we have some guests in our gallery today, and they are responsible for the carnations that each one of the members had on their desk today. First, I'd like to introduce the president of the MS Society of Canada, Yves Savoie. We have from the Alberta division President Neil Pierce and Darrel Gregory, the director of communications. I'd also like to welcome three MS ambassadors: Chris Kieser, Kevin O'Neil, and Helen Chesterman. I'd like to ask all of our guests to rise or wave to be recognized to receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

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

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. Chris Sheard, who is the chair of the Capital Region Board. This is an important week for the capital region as the board will be holding its inaugural meeting tomorrow morning. As you know, having a strong, co-ordinated plan is vital not only for the capital region but for Albertans. Mr. Sheard and the board are committed to making this process work. Chris is seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask if he would rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure to introduce a gentleman well known to me and an activist in Edmonton-Castle Downs, Mr. Jean Deslauriers. Mr. Jean Deslauriers currently serves as the president of Cumberland/Oxford Community League, a very young neighbourhood, part of Castle Downs, that is in the process of growth, and he's providing many services to residents there. Aside from that, he also volunteers as a unit captain with the Shriners, and he also is an entertainment chairman on an entertainment committee for local 488. I'd ask Mr. Deslauriers to rise and accept the traditional welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. McFarland:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I had the opportunity to meet with Milo community school. They came up here and unfortunately weren't able to be in the Assembly when we made our introductions, but I appreciate your allowing me to put on record that Mr. Cam Aitken and Mrs. Kim Booth and parent helpers Greg Deitz, Mrs. Lynn Burgess, and Mrs. Mindy Lin were here. They represent a small community school in Milo, Alberta, and I

think it's really noteworthy that they were the first in the county of Vulcan and maybe the first in the province to adopt a compressed school week so that everyone could go four days a week. They've been doing it for well over eight years, and it just goes to show that small communities can do things in advance and have just as many great ideas as some of our bigger centres, and I commend them for it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to this Assembly three constituents who are visiting the Legislature today. Denise Bohaychuk and sons Dylan and Mark are here today to learn about how government works. The boys are home-schooled, and today they've already toured the building and are now looking forward to seeing government in action. They're seated in the public gallery, and I would ask that they all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour today to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Eric Musekamp and Darlene Dunlop, founding members of the Farmers' Union of Alberta. For many years they've worked tirelessly and in a dedicated fashion toward moving Alberta farms into the 21st century and protecting the basic health and safety needs of farm workers. Could they stand, and we'll give them the traditional warm welcome.

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

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a very good friend of mine, Pat Seeley, who's seated up in the public gallery. We lived together for many years through college, played hockey together. He went on to play pro hockey in Europe and spent some time with Canada's Olympic team. He was one of my groomsmen, and I was best man at both of his weddings. Today he's a pilot for WestJet. He lives in Olds. Despite having four kids, he still keeps his wife, who's a nurse, working, so we're very happy about that. If you have a friend like Pat, you're very fortunate. I'm pleased he came by to visit me today. If he would please rise and get the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian Mental Health Association's 57th Mental Health Week takes place May 5 through 11. This year's theme is Mental Health: Make It Your Business. Today I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly three members of the Canadian Mental Health Association, Edmonton region. With us today are board members Dick Southworth and Doug Thompson. They are joined by the executive director of the Edmonton region, Ione Challborn.

Mental illness is a major public health problem affecting people in every part of the world. Recent studies report that 20 per cent of Canadians will suffer from a mental disorder at some time in their lives. Decent, long-term, affordable housing for people with mental illness and in poverty continues to be a major concern for the Canadian Mental Health Association, Edmonton region.

I'd ask Dick, Doug, and Ione to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

### Members' Statements

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

#### Yellow Ribbon Gala

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Saturday, May 3, the Yellow Ribbon Gala Benefit Dinner and Silent Auction was held once again at the Edmonton Garrison. Members for Edmonton-Decore and Edmonton-Rutherford and myself were joined by five Members of Parliament and approximately 200 other Albertans at this event.

We realize that members of our military make great commitment and sacrifice, sometimes the ultimate sacrifice, but it's easy to overlook the commitment made by the family members of these servicemen and women and the toll and pressures this puts on other Albertans. The yellow ribbon gala supports the Military Family Resource Centre and some of the important services that they offer to Alberta's families.

Two special young women were given commendations at the gala this year by Colonel John Vance, Commander, 1 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group. Although they recently lost their spouses in war, these two showed great courage and initiative as they reached out to help other military families that have lost their loved ones. Darcia Arndt and Anna Thede helped establish the Silver Memorial Cross support group for western Canada. This group connects families of our fallen soldiers to help them cope with their losses. The Memorial Cross is a symbol of sacrifice and loss. It was created in the aftermath of the First World War and is worn by widows and family members of our fallen soldiers.

We are fortunate to live in a country and province of opportunity, freedom, and security. This is only because of the sacrifice of our forefathers and the likes of Private Joel Wiebe and Master Corporal Raymond Arndt. We owe them a debt we cannot repay, other than to honour them by the way we govern our province and to help support the families they have left behind.

I'd like to commend Roza Parlin and her staff at the Military Family Resource Centre and thank once again Anna and Darcia for their sacrifice and courage.

Thank you.

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

#### Confucius Institute

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted to bring to the attention of the Assembly the opening of the Confucius Institute in Edmonton. This is the fourth Confucius Institute in Canada and one of 180 in 50 countries around the world. Of special note is the fact that this is the first Confucius Institute to be established at a school district level.

This past Sunday saw the institute's grand opening in its new facility in south Edmonton. The formal ceremony, attended by Their Honours the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor and Mrs. Kwong, featured profound words of wisdom from many guest speakers and spectacular student dance performances. Last night I had the pleasure of attending a gala banquet celebrating the opening of the institute and was very moved by the thoughtful keynote presentation of Dr. Xu Jialu, vice-chair of the 9th and 10th National People's Congress.

The Confucius Institute's mission is to promote Chinese language

and culture abroad and to establish friendly relationships with other countries through education. This great work is done under the patronage of the Chinese national office for teaching Chinese as a foreign language. For Alberta and Edmonton to be chosen as home for the institute is a tremendous honour. It speaks very highly of Alberta's education system in general and Edmonton public schools in particular. It signifies China's acknowledgement of Edmonton public schools as a world leader in Chinese language education.

Edmonton public schools began offering China's standard language proficiency exams to children in its bilingual program approximately five years ago. When Edmonton's grade 12 students achieved the highest scores outside Asia, the institute became interested in opening a facility in our city. As the results of international testing show, Alberta has one of the best K to 12 education systems in the world. The establishment of a Confucius Institute in this province will only strengthen that system.

Thank you.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** First Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

#### Reclamation of Oil Sands Tailings Ponds

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is vital for Albertans now and in the future that we deal with the vast environmental liability that the oil sands developments create. The 2007 Oil Sands Multi-Stakeholder Committee report states that the oil sands mines are required to post "security equivalent to the cost of reclamation." It goes on to say that in 2005 Alberta Environment held \$356 million in this fund. To the Environment minister: how much money does the ministry currently hold in reclamation securities for the tailings ponds cleanup?

1:50

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of the specific number. I'll have to get back to the member. I want to make it clear that the security is held in the form of an irrevocable line of credit, and I can get that specific number for the member.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that 800,000 litres of oil was spilled into Lake Wabamun and CN rail was required to pay \$125 million in cleanup costs and damages and this is just a fraction of the volume of tailings ponds daily put in, does the minister consider the present arrangement protecting Alberta's interests?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. These are two distinct, separate issues that the member is referring to. One is a pollution event, where we have a very clear policy of polluter pays. The other is the reclamation of a regulated tailings pond, that will take place at an appropriate time over an appropriate period of time.

**Dr. Swann:** My next question is to the Minister of Energy on the same topic. Can the minister let development proceed when we are not clear that we have sufficient funds to reclaim these sites?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there certainly is sufficient security with respect to the issue of reclamation. Of course, the facilities, et cetera, that are associated with these particular programs and production are security in themselves, and certainly we do have as well a bonding in monetary security with respect to the issue.

**The Speaker:** Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under Alberta law the Minister of Environment determines what money companies have to provide as security for the oil sands cleanup costs. In official financial documents from Canadian Oil Sands Trust we can see that the total reclamation security held by this government for Syncrude is \$615 million. If Syncrude were to shut down tomorrow, Alberta would have just \$615 million to clean up dozens of square miles of toxic tailings ponds. To the Environment minister: why has the minister set the cleanup payments for massive developments at such a low level?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. The amount of security that's held is not contingent upon the ability of the owner of the resource to pay. We would expect that the cost of reclamation would be paid by the operator. We hold the security only to ensure that the taxpayers of Alberta are not left holding the bag, but clearly the first amount of dollars would come directly from, in this case, Syncrude.

**Dr. Swann:** Mr. Speaker, this minister is saying that if this company goes out of business tomorrow, that company is still going to pay the cost. What are you saying?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, last time I heard, Syncrude was worth a fairly significant amount of money. We would take as security against those assets the cost. That's why we hold this irrevocable line of credit. But we expect the cost of reclamation to be borne by the company. They will do that over time. Clearly, this is an issue of mitigating risk over a long period of time that is being mixed up with the cost that must be borne by this company.

**Dr. Swann:** Again, the minister is assuming solvency of these companies that have massive, massive liabilities that are going to be transferred to the public. To the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development: if Syncrude were to shut down tomorrow, Alberta would have just \$615 million for reclamation. Being responsible for fish, wildlife, and lands, does the minister feel this is an appropriate amount to protect these sustainable resources?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, again, I would expect the hon. member opposite to pay attention to what's happening in Alberta's economy. Does anybody in this room think that Syncrude or any of those other operators is going out of business tomorrow? These are completely hypothetical questions.

I'd like to point out that, in fact, Syncrude brought forward the first acceptable reclamation project, that we approved in January, and they did a heck of a job. They're responsible corporate citizens.

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

### Tobacco Reduction

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to the American Cancer Society smokeless tobacco products cause not only a list of cancers but also can play a role in heart disease and high blood pressure. In spite of the medical evidence companies such as the National Smokeless Tobacco Company continue their claims that their products are a better alternative to cigarettes and have even begun marketing what you could call kid-friendly tobacco products in peach and apple flavours. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: does the minister believe that smokeless tobacco products are lethal and should not be supported?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, like the hon. member, I assume – I've never tested the product and have no intentions of. This Legislature approved some very significant actions on antismoking in the past year, and we intend to uphold those.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister explain what the government's intentions are, since they received three donations last year from the National Smokeless Tobacco Company amounting to over \$5,000?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we as a provincial party receive donations from a wide variety of sources. I haven't checked because I really don't care who contributes to the Liberal Party, but I don't know whether they received donations or not.

**The Speaker:** Well, questions of this nature are not the purview of the question period. They're questions that the government received, so that's why I let it go.

Third question.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will table the appropriate documents at the appropriate time.

To the minister of finance: when will the minister stop the unethical practice of investing money from the heritage fund in tobacco companies?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, we have an investment policy, and we have AIMCO as a brand new corporation that's engaged in investment on a world-wide basis. I'd be pleased to at some future date table some of those policies so that the hon. member can become more familiar with them.

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

### Reclamation of Oil Sands Tailings Ponds

*(continued)*

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, 1.8 billion litres of toxic material are added each day to tar sands tailings ponds, enough to fill this legislative Chamber 47 times. These ever-expanding tailings ponds are a menace to wildlife and a threat to the Athabasca River, not to mention being a health hazard to First Nations people living downstream. What is not well known is that technology exists to reduce and eventually eliminate these environmental disgraces. My question is to the Minister of Environment. Will he commit to a plan to eliminate these tar sands tailings ponds altogether, and will he stand up and do it now?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, there is such a plan. These ponds will be reclaimed. Part of the operating authority that is granted for these ponds is to have a long-term reclamation plan in place.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the minister has dodged the question.

Given that there is technology to eliminate these ponds more quickly and convert them to dry storage of this material and this does not comprise part of the industry's plan, will he stand in this place and take action now to eliminate these ponds altogether?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm aware that there is a significant amount of research that is ongoing, some of it extremely promising, but to the best of my knowledge that very promising research would indicate that they're probably five to 10 years away from being able to implement on the kind of scale that the member would suggest. So to suggest that if this minister would simply change the rules tomorrow, the tailings ponds would go away is stretching the truth.

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

2:00

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's a question of political will. Given that tailings ponds have been growing for 30 years, with no end in sight, can the minister tell us at what point he's going to take action and bring forward a plan for the systematic reduction and elimination of these tailings ponds?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, the regulations that we have surrounding tailings ponds are very clear. There is to be absolutely total containment of the liquids within those ponds. We monitor those very closely. We have ongoing monitoring to ensure that there is no contamination of associated water or land, and at the end of the day we have requirements that there be reclamation.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

#### Temporary Foreign Workers

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Temporary foreign workers have been doing a commendable job addressing the labour shortage that we are experiencing in this province. However, these workers must leave the country when their two-year work permit expires. What is the Minister of Employment and Immigration doing with his federal counterpart to address the challenges faced by employers when their employees are forced to leave the country?

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

**Mr. Goudreau:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The temporary foreign worker program is designed to meet temporary labour needs. These employees are in Alberta to fill very short-term gaps in the labour force. As this is a federal program, my ministry formed a working group with the federal government to look at issues faced by Alberta employers. Over the last year employers can now get permission to hire workers in low-skill jobs for up to two years maximum. This is a change from the one year . . .

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

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: can the employer apply to keep the same workers using the provincial nominee program, and how does that work?

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, the Alberta provincial nominee program is an employee-driven program that speeds up the permanent residency process for workers. Without a provincial nomination an application for permanent residency can take between two and six years. We found that under the provincial nominee program it can take from six to 18 months. We will continue to expand the provincial nominee program by developing initiatives to double the number of workers entering the program.

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

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: for those employers whose industries are seasonal in nature, can they hire the same workers the following year and avoid having to retrain?

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

**Mr. Goudreau:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, it is possible to hire the same temporary foreign worker on a seasonal basis. It happens often, more so in the agricultural industry. An employer can keep in contact with their temporary foreign worker in the off-season, and if both parties are interested in working together again, they can do so as long as they meet the requirements of the program. As most employers know, they must submit a new application each season.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

#### Funding Formula for Regional Health Authorities

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The legitimacy of government is based on how it is viewed by its citizens. The citizens of Calgary are beginning to wonder why their health care needs are being neglected. It is time for this government to start putting patients first. My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Will the minister commit to reviewing the grant funding formula for the health regions?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, our health action plan was specifically that: putting patients first. The funding formula that government uses is incredibly complex and has been reviewed on a number of occasions over the past number of years, including most recently by the Auditor General. The Auditor General in his report in 1996 concluded that it was a fair calculation of how we did the funding formula.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's about time that we reviewed the funding formula.

To the minister again: what plans does the minister have to meet with officials of the Calgary health region to discuss a bailout for the deficit that was created by the flawed funding formula?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I'd like to correct that. It was 2006 that the Auditor General's report reviewed the funding formula. Prior to that we had independent reviews by Deloitte Touche and Ernst & Young. They all came to the same conclusion. As I say, it's very complex.

It should be noted that under the provincial funding formula the Calgary health region was eligible for a 7.1 per cent increase in their budget this year. Due to some circumstances around population growth we've actually increased that to 8.7 per cent in this budget year.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How much longer do the people of Calgary have to wait in the hallways of hospitals for the mysterious health plan that the minister keeps referring to?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important that when we bring forth a health action plan that will deal with these issues, we get the support from our colleagues across the way in the Liberal Opposition. We will actually have a plan. It won't be simply just throwing more money at the system.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

### Crime Reduction and Safe Communities

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This weekend I had the opportunity to meet with a member of the Calgary Police Service who works in their arrest processing unit. He expressed some concerns to me about the growing amount of crime in the city of Calgary, which is fuelled largely by the population boom we've had the last couple of years. To the Minister of Justice and Attorney General: what is your department doing to deal with the growing caseloads and demands on the justice system caused by growth pressures and keep our streets safe in the city of Calgary?

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

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As part of the work that we're doing through the safe communities task force, we're very aware of the pressures across this province. One of the things that we have done in Calgary is open a 24-hour, seven days a week hearing office by adding an extra shift per day so that we can deal immediately with bail applications. We can also deal with protection orders and apprehension orders in family violence situations.

**Mr. Denis:** My first and final supplemental to the same minister: with all the pressures that our city is undergoing, how is the Justice department ensuring that criminals at bail hearings who should be behind bars stay behind bars instead of revolving-door justice?

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

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that we have already begun to do and will continue to do under the safe communities task force is hire more prosecutors who will be able to undertake these bail applications so that we can make sure that we're getting the right evidence and the right information before hearing officers to ensure that we're getting the right decisions.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

### Automobile Insurance

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On the front page of *Thompson's World Insurance News* the Insurance Bureau of Canada is celebrating its victory over the Alberta government: "IBC secured government support for the elimination of the industry-wide adjustment, persuaded the rate board to increase the profit provision to 7% in 2008 and 9% thereafter and made progress" with other issues. My question is to the minister of finance. Can the minister explain how the Automobile Insurance Rate Board is an effective regulatory agency when it is so easily persuaded by the IBC to increase profit provisions?

**Ms Evans:** Mr. Speaker, on June 17 and 18 the Automobile Insurance Rate Board will review the rates. They will determine

whether or not they are fair and reasonable, and we will be able to provide a report later. I'm not familiar with the article which the hon. member is referencing. If there's something there that I should review, I'd be very happy to receive a copy of it and look at it.

**Ms Blakeman:** I'm sure your staff has it.

To the same minister: does this mean that the Alberta government has approved that the insurance industry raise rates to guarantee them a 7 per cent and then a 9 per cent profit increase when the cost of living is around 5 per cent and most Albertans aren't seeing any increase in their wages?

**Ms Evans:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is putting questions before we've even had a determination from the Auto Insurance Rate Board whether or not there are needs attached to this. In terms of profits, that's not anything that we deal with. The profits of insurance companies are not something that I am personally looking into. What we look at is what the cost of insurance is, what is fair and reasonable for an automobile insurance rate. I'm sure we'll hear about those forthwith. The hearings are very transparent. Board members indulge in those hearings, and we can make those available to members of the public who wish to know.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Well, thank you. Again to the same minister: in all of this talk – the minister, the insurance industry, the rate board – who is standing up for plain old Albertans in all of these discussions?

**Ms Evans:** Well, I'm sure plain old Albertans aren't shy about standing up for themselves, and I know that they will be speaking out relative to those reports.

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

2:10

### Arts and Culture in Education

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In my constituency Bowness high school's career and technology studies are used extensively by its creative and innovative arts students. This allows them to move into the new world's lucrative information age and idea age. Now, the Minister of Education recently announced a \$79 million investment in career and technology studies, but does the minister have further plans for bringing creativity and innovation to Alberta's now 20-year-old fine arts program?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely. Imagination and creativity have to be central to our education system. The unique learning experiences of our fine arts program, developing students with flexibility, originality, and the ability to imagine multiple solutions, are 21st century attributes. Skills in communication, teamwork, and problem solving are assuming greater importance. In response to those realities we've initiated a plan to review and revise the kindergarten to grade 12 fine arts programs in Alberta. The revision will be based on current research, promising practice, technological innovation, and will honour cultural diversity. We'll have input from teachers and stakeholders.

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



**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the priorities of this government is to increase high school completion rates. Will the minister admit that a cultural education is critical to helping keep these kids in school, and will he commit to supporting the fine arts as a key component of a high school completion strategy?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This has to be a key component of a completion strategy. Students are more likely to engage with and succeed in school when their passions are being ignited and their interests nurtured. Research indicates that students involved with the arts typically perform 16 to 18 percentage points above other students in academic achievement, and we know that when students learn about the arts, they celebrate diversity. Our summary report on high school completion, 2006, suggests that completion rates could be improved by providing students with opportunities for peer support, meaningful teacher mentorship, and a greater variety of course options. When students feel connected to their schools, they show a greater interest in attendance and the completion goes up.

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

**Ms DeLong:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We've certainly found that in Bowness high.

Finally, to the Minister of Education: given that the government has spent considerable time and effort on developing a new culture policy, the Spirit of Alberta, what will the minister do to ensure that the findings of this report make it into a new arts and culture curriculum on a timely basis as opposed to letting the recommendations simply sit on a shelf, where they can't benefit students?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, we are dedicated to supporting creativity and innovation for our schools through a world-class curriculum, as I was saying. That curriculum will be developed using arts organizations, artists, students, postsecondary institutions, parents, and the public at large to help develop the curriculum. We have a project plan for the review and revision, and the timing of the Spirit of Alberta complements curriculum development. The framework provided by Alberta's cultural policy aligns very well with Alberta Education's curriculum development and will support the development of the K to 12 curriculum. So the Spirit of Alberta program will be very useful in defining that.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

### Firearms Regulation

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Solicitor General and the Minister of Transportation have declined taking strong steps in reducing gun crime because they feel the Charter prohibits them from taking such action. To the Minister of Justice: given her legal background, since Motion 503 proposes amendments to the Traffic Safety Act and these amendments are similar to those I proposed regarding the forfeiture of vehicles with weapons that are not properly registered, can the minister assure the Solicitor General and the Minister of Transportation that Alberta can proceed with these amendments?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, Motion 503 is a private member's motion. That's something that any private member can bring before the House for discussion. I know that there will be a lot of discussion in this House about that.

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

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. The question I'm basically asking is: since these amendments that are for impounding vehicles for drag racing and the like are very similar to those for impounding vehicles that are carrying around guns that are not registered, can you tell these individuals that they can act without waiting for a private member's bill to do what's right to protect everyday Albertans from gun violence?

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the seeking of legal opinions is not really part of the purview either, but if the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General wishes to proceed, proceed.

**Ms Redford:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I've answered the question that was asked. It's not something that's within my capacity as the minister to take on.

**Mr. Hehr:** To the same minister: would you support a bill, private member's or otherwise, taking away vehicles of gang members driving around with guns in them that are not registered to them? If Alberta had the power to do this, would you support such a bill?

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

**Ms Redford:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not prepared to answer that question directly because I think it is hypothetical. I would say that there are provisions in the current highway traffic act that deal with some of this.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

### Child Care Funding

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the child care crisis gets worse, a daycare centre in Canmore is accepting private donations to get off the ground. Canmore town councillor Shane Jonker has personally donated \$25,000 to open a new child care centre because he says that the need is too urgent to wait for the government to act. It appears to me that our child care system has achieved charity status. To the minister of children's services: how is it that there is such a shortage of child care even in her own riding that it requires a donation from a wealthy citizen to create new spaces?

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

**Ms Tarchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As everyone in the House knows, my mandate is a very aggressive one, to go after the creation of 14,000 spaces over the next three years. I will say that I will be coming out very soon with an all-encompassing variety of initiatives that will tackle quality, accessibility, and affordability in child care.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that the minister's own press release admits that government funding for new spaces will actually only cover 30 per cent of the cost of creating the spaces, is it the minister's plan that communities must rely upon the unpredictable generosity of wealthy citizens to provide child care to Alberta families?

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

**Ms Tarchuk:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm actually not sure which press release you're talking about there, but I can tell you that I have stated that we will take a leadership role. We will work with our communities on finding solutions to their child care issues. Like I say, just stay tuned in the next couple of weeks. We have a really good plan coming forward.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister tell the House how parents in areas without wealthy patrons are supposed to get equal access to affordable, quality child care?

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

**Ms Tarchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, like I said, the initiatives will include initiatives that deal with affordability, quality, and accessibility, so I think that takes care of the issue that you have raised.

#### Forest Management Practices

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta Forest Week is being celebrated this week, from May 4 to 10. A number of public and information events are being held to mark this event. My question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Since managing our forests is a responsibility that extends well beyond this single week, what is the government's long-term role in maintaining Alberta's forests?

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for that question. Alberta manages our forest resources for the long term for sustainability and for health. We ensure the direction and the accountability of forest management. Our goal is age-balanced, resilient forests that are capable of resisting disease and forest fire. The benefits that come from this are multiple: healthy watersheds and airsheds, fish and wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities for Albertans, and commercial timber supplies. We manage our forests for the long term, for the future.

Thank you.

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

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental to the same minister: how does the government protect the health of our forests?

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll just give two examples of how we try to manage our forests in a healthy fashion. The first is with respect to forest fires. We have one of the best-equipped and

capable forest firefighting units in western Canada. We help the other provinces and the western states. These are for forest fires, helping to protect human lives and property as well as, of course, fish and wildlife.

Secondly, we have very effective policies against infestations of insects. I'm speaking here specifically of the pine beetle infestation. Mr. Speaker, in British Columbia, as a result of the pine beetle loss there, some children won't see a mature forest until they're 60 years old. We're not going to let that happen in Alberta.

2:20

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

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplement is to the same minister. How does Alberta forestry contribute to the health of our forest resources?

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our forests cover nearly 60 per cent of the province, but only about 5 per cent of Albertans live in the forested areas, so a lot of Albertans aren't aware of the importance and the role that forests play in our economy and in our country. We're using Alberta Forest Week to promote greater awareness and education of the role of forestry in Alberta and Canada. We're letting people know that Canada is actually the world's leading exporter of wood products. Canada has more third-party certified forests than any other country in the world, and in the last hundred years there's been no net loss of forests in Canada. That's a record we're proud of, and we want all Albertans to know it.

#### Land-use Framework

**Ms Pastoor:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development has avoided the question of why a land-use framework has taken so long to implement. In June of 1992 this very Legislature unanimously endorsed SREM, sustainable resource and environmental management, an initiative which was to develop a strategy for land management. To the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development a question: why is it taking so long? What's the holdup?

**Dr. Morton:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the hon. member missed yesterday's question period, but we pointed out that in the 1990s the problems and challenges facing this province were a little bit different, like getting rid of deficits and debts and restarting the economy. We're proud of those achievements.

In terms of what we're doing. I was in a meeting today, and a question was asked: what other provinces have proposed a land-use framework, the draft of which we're proposing that's now before caucus? Not one other jurisdiction in the world has as impressive a plan as we have for land use.

**Ms Pastoor:** Hmm. Hmm. The minister tried to explain how the challenges we face today came from the success of 14 years of the Klein government. So for clarification is he saying that success can excuse a decade and a half of inaction and neglect in developing a land-use framework?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the hon. member paid such close attention to my remarks yesterday. If she paid close attention, she would have seen that I pointed out that every generation of

Alberta leaders has responded to the challenges of their day. The Klein government responded to the challenge of their day. They slayed the deficit; they killed the debt; they restarted the economy. The Premier is responding to the challenges of today and tackling the sustainability issue.

**Ms Pastoor:** The challenge of today, of course, is the land-use framework, so when is it going to come? But from today until the framework is fully implemented, there are now and there will be serious land questions faced. Will the minister commit at the very least to using the guidelines in the land-use framework now for development projects to prevent further destruction and mismanagement?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, we pointed out yesterday that there's a difference between fact and fiction, stopping the world and the real world moving on. We have procedures in place, whether it's air, land, or water, to deal with development proposals. Anything that's happening right now goes through those processes for approval. We are meeting with existing land managers, air managers, talking about what's coming down the road. Those types of concerns are being implemented into existing decisions.

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

#### Alberta-Montana Electricity Transmission Line

**Mr. Jacobs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, Alberta landowners have some very strong opinions about electricity transmission lines. My constituents are certainly no exception. They have some serious concerns about the proposed tie-line between Alberta and Montana and the impact it will have on landowners in the area. My questions today are for the Minister of Energy. Can the minister explain to my constituents and the members of this Assembly what type of line is being planned here and what the cost is to Alberta electricity consumers?

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

**Mr. Knight:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This particular project is a merchant transmission line, meaning that it's completely privately funded. Neither the ratepayers in Alberta nor Montana will pay for it because it falls outside of our integrated transmission system, which is managed by our independent Electric System Operator. The line will support development of more wind power projects on both sides of the border by providing access to additional power on those calm days when we get limited output from our own wind generation facilities.

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

**Mr. Jacobs:** Thank you. First supplemental to the same minister: can the minister explain why the line is going to the United States instead of just improving transmission lines within Alberta?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, in fact, Mr. Speaker, we need both. Transmission is job one in the province of Alberta with respect to the utility industry here. No transmission system is an island. In fact, every jurisdiction in North America has strong interties with their neighbouring systems. Currently Alberta is the least interconnected province in Canada, and it's important to remember that interties work for both export and import. Electricity cannot be stored. Tie-

lines help ensure that supply and demand on the grid are balanced at all times, and the lines allow us to get electricity when we need it.

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

**Mr. Jacobs:** Thank you. Final question to the same minister: can the minister explain how Albertans were engaged in this process to assess the merits and siting of this power line and where the process is at at the present time?

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

**Mr. Knight:** Well, thank you. Again, Mr. Speaker, last year there were full public hearings around this power line where issues of need, routing, agricultural land use, health, and safety were all discussed. Last April the federal energy board, the NEB, granted a permit to construct the line. Earlier this year our provincial energy regulator issued a decision with a strong caveat that a number of conditions be met, including conducting further discussions with landowners along the proposed route to resolve their concerns.

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

#### School Nutrition Programs

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. School nutrition, as the Minister of Education acknowledged during the estimates debate, is extremely important in ensuring that students are ready to learn. This is especially true for at-risk students. This government defeated a motion in 2006 to provide dedicated funding for school nutrition programs for at-risk children in Alberta; however, it gives me hope that our current Education minister voted for the motion. To the minister: does the minister still believe, as he did in 2006, that the government should provide dedicated funding for nutrition programs for at-risk students?

**Mr. Hancock:** What I believe, Mr. Speaker, and what I hope to encourage across the province is that every child when they arrive at school is ready to learn, that any problems they have, any barriers they have to success, including being able to arrive with a full stomach and in good health, that we can overcome those barriers. We need to work with our communities to be able to achieve those sorts of solutions. It's not a fact just of government pouring more money into the situation. It's about how we work as a community to make sure that our children are ready to go to school and learn.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. Currently 64,000 children are living below the poverty line in Alberta. Since a healthy start to learning at an early age is key to lifelong education success, setting up a child's educational career, does the minister agree that proper nutrition plays a significant role in successful completion of school, from junior kindergarten through to grade 12?

**Mr. Hancock:** Absolutely.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. Again to the Minister of Education. We're making such progress today, Mr. Speaker. Since Alberta's teachers and principals across the province have voiced their support for

nutrition programs such as the breakfast for learning initiative and the minister previously lent his support to a Liberal motion which would have seen the government fund such programs for at-risk students, will he commit now as Minister of Education to providing dedicated funding for school nutrition programs throughout the province?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member well knows, funding is a matter of purview of the Legislature in budgets that are approved by the Legislature. My estimates went before the Legislature at the very start of this process this year, and we've had the discussion about what the Legislature is able to afford to the Department of Education for funding. We will work with our schools, jurisdictions, and with parent councils and others to make sure that barriers to success for at-risk children are overcome, that we have in place the best opportunity not just done and driven by government but done and driven by community and community interests and families to make sure that children are ready to learn.

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

#### Efficiency and Economy for Long-haul Trucking

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Whitecourt-Ste. Anne transportation advisory committee last week raised issues with rising fuel costs and the need to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. All levels of government and industry must work together on this problem. My questions are all to the Minister of Transportation. Given that super-single tires offer the greatest fuel economy and a reduction of 10 per cent in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, will your department come up with incentives to offer to Alberta haulers to make the switch?

2:30

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, rolling resistance contributes about one-third of the fuel consumed by a commercial vehicle. If all the dual tires on a semi were replaced by super singles, it would mean a reduction in rolling resistance of up to 10 per cent and a reduction of fuel consumed of 3 to 4 per cent. The choice of tires is a complex issue depending on things like the use of the vehicle and the terrain that it travels on. Providing incentives to make the switch is probably not the best way to achieve our goals. Rather, we should establish the rules and guidelines and let the industry make that choice.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Well, given that answer and the encouragement from your department to switch to super-single tires and the acknowledgement of the reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and fuel costs, won't more weight restrictions ultimately increase the number of trucks on the road? Would this be counterproductive, then?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we could achieve a 4 per cent reduction in fuel consumption by using single tires, but it's important to note that single tires are harder on the pavement than standard dual tires. So if we allowed the same weight on single tires and duals, we could save 4 per cent today, but we could consume almost as much tomorrow to fix those roads. A month ago . . .

**The Speaker:** It's okay. We'll come back to it.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Well, the minister was just getting started, and I'd like to hear the rest of that, Mr. Speaker.

Are there plans to revisit those load restrictions, or are there other

initiatives within your department to encourage our haulers to start switching over to these fuel-saving ideas and devices?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, I've got to finish from before, Mr. Speaker. A month ago at the council of ministers responsible for transportation we approved new weight limits for super singles and will allow carriers to haul heavier weights than what we did in the past. The weight limit for tandem axles will increase from 13,600 kilograms to 15,400 kilograms. Weight limits for super-single tires were established to strike the right balance between transportation and efficiency of highway maintenance costs.

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

#### Temporary Foreign Workers

*(continued)*

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In contrast to this Conservative government's invented statistic of 325,000 jobs lost here in Alberta through implementing climate change strategies, which they have been unable to prove, the Alberta Federation of Labour has real numbers about long-term labour prospects in Alberta. They have shown that in proceeding with the bitumen export pipeline, the Keystone 1, the smallest of the proposed export pipelines, upwards of 17,000 real, long-term jobs will be taken out of Alberta. My first question is to the minister responsible for Alberta labour. Why is the government allowing 17,000 permanent jobs to be exported from this province?

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, part of the whole process is to see various companies set up in the province of Alberta. There are encouragements to see value addition in the province of Alberta and to make sure that there are more jobs being created within our own sectors here. We are seeing an increase in jobs being created in the province. We've seen more jobs being created in this province alone than in any other province in Canada.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you. Again to the same minister: how can this minister claim that this short-term boom of largely temporary jobs performed increasingly by temporary foreign workers here for short times is ensuring long-term value and job security for Albertans?

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated in this House before, our priority is certainly to Albertans first and then Canadians. As you will note in the statistics, a lot of the temporary foreign workers are the first ones that will qualify under the PNP program. So we do see a transition, going from maybe less permanent types of jobs to a lot more permanent type of employment in the province of Alberta.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: is the hon. minister going to finally take a more aggressive role in ensuring that valuable long-term employment stays right here in Alberta, or is he going to sit by as this government refuses to touch the brake and stop this export of permanent full-time jobs from this province down the export pipeline of bitumen?

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, our goal is certainly to increase jobs for Albertans and to see our numbers go up. There's no doubt that

we are working with the various ministries that are involved, and as we do the various strategies to add value to all of our products, we will see an increase in jobs that are available in Alberta.

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

#### Violence in Licensed Premises

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Violence in and around bars is a serious concern for all Albertans. Bar patrons, staff, and community members deserve to feel safe while engaging in a night out or earning a living. My question is to the Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security. What is the minister doing to reduce incidents caused by a small minority of individuals and troublemakers in establishments across the province?

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

**Mr. Lindsay:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We believe that everybody has a role to play in reducing violence in and around our drinking establishments. We believe that staff training is a very effective tool to prevent trouble inside these venues, and the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission has developed a full-day training course called ProTect for security staff of licensed premises. The course is focused on staff responsibilities, legal issues, emergency planning, and effective communications. We believe that this is going to be a very effective tool to reduce violence.

**Mr. Fawcett:** Mr. Speaker, my first supplemental is to the same minister. What is the government doing to assist bar owners in providing these education programs to their staff to ensure that the premises are safer for both staff and patrons?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission has undertaken a number of initiatives to combat violence in and around our licensed premises and to promote responsible behaviour when drinking. For example, we offer training programs such as our Alberta server intervention program for staff at licensed premises and, as I mentioned before, security training for security guards. Also, last summer we introduced a public education initiative, Cage Your Rage.

**Mr. Fawcett:** Mr. Speaker, my final question to the same minister: as younger Albertans are new to the freedom and responsibilities of alcohol consumption, can the minister assure this Assembly that there are appropriate education programs in place to reduce the risk of bad behaviour from overindulgence?

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

**Mr. Lindsay:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the Alberta server intervention program trains those who serve drinks to ensure that people don't overindulge and to also ensure that when people become intoxicated, they no longer receive any more drinks and are refused service in a manner that is not going to encourage violence. So we have the training in place.

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

#### Policing Framework

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems that every day Albertans are hearing more disturbing stories about violence and

crime, causing them to question whether they can continue to feel safe in their neighbourhoods. While there's a role for communities in the fight against crime, clearly something needs to be done at the policing level to ensure Albertans can feel safe as they go about their daily lives. My question is to the Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security. The recent throne speech talked about a new policing framework to address the challenge police face in combating crime. Can the minister tell us how this new framework will support safer communities in a real and tangible way?

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

**Mr. Lindsay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I want to emphasize that every day our police in this province do an outstanding job protecting Albertans, but the reality is that policing is becoming more complex, criminals are more calculating and sophisticated, and their crimes cross all borders. So together with our policing partners we are developing a new policing framework that improves accountability, modernizes service delivery, and creates equitable funding models.

2:40

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplement to the same minister: given the complexity of law enforcement and the many stakeholders involved, how will this framework be developed?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, significant changes are necessary to the current policing structure if we are to continue meeting the challenges facing police today. We are conducting extensive research into what the new framework would look like. Police services, police commissions, and municipalities will all be asked for their ideas and their input. We expect to have this framework developed by the end of the year.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last supplemental, again to the same minister: is this new framework the first step towards creating a new provincial police service?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. The RCMP have a long and proud history in our province. They have served Albertans very well, and that will continue.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that was 112 questions and answers, and in 30 seconds from now we'll go back to the Routine and take up where we were with Members' Statements.

#### Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

#### Legal Age of Sexual Consent

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Years of work by many Canadians, including our own government, to raise the age of sexual consent from 14 to 16 ended in victory with the passing of the federal government's crime bill last Thursday. This is good news for children in this country and bad news for pedophiles and sexual predators. No longer can they target naive 14- or 15-year-old girls or boys for exploitation. No longer must parents and police watch

as their children are lured off to some other city with a man who promises them love and excitement.

It was reported that Canada was becoming a destination for child sex tourism because of its relatively low age of sexual consent. It was embarrassing to know that Canada was becoming a haven for child sex tourism.

No one wants to see children and young people sexually exploited. Law enforcement agencies, lawmakers, and Canadians agree that all forms of sexual abuse, pornography, and commercial sexual exploitation are unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, bravo to all of those who worked so hard to take a stand against the exploitation of our children. Let it be a warning to the sexual predators out there: we will find you, and we will get you.

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

### Capital Region Municipal Planning

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a resident of Alberta's capital region and a former mayor of the city of Leduc I know that having a strong co-ordinated long-range plan for growth is in the best interests of all 25 municipalities in the metro area. This region is growing immensely, and with this unprecedented growth comes tremendous opportunity and tremendous responsibility to get it right.

We need a united group of municipalities working co-operatively to adequately plan for this growth. To manage this growth, Mr. Speaker, leadership by the province and joint action by our regional municipalities is key to the efficient cost-effective delivery of services to meet the needs and aspirations of the region's residents. Capital region residents expect government to preserve, protect, and enhance the quality of life they have worked so hard to attain.

This government, led by our current Premier, is to be commended for acknowledging the need to improve long-range planning for infrastructure and services that capital region residents need. Mr. Speaker, the time for talking is over. It is now time for action. On behalf of my caucus colleagues I want to express my confidence in Mr. Chris Sheard and the Capital Region Board as they embark on creating an effective plan that will serve this region for decades to come.

Thank you.

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

### World Seniors' Curling Champions

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 16, 2008, Vierumäki, Finland, played host to the World Senior Curling Championships. The Canadian women's and men's rinks took gold medals at that tournament. The women's Team Canada beat Scotland 10 to 2 in their final. Team Canada had three Lethbridge women on that team: Shirley McPherson, Shirley Kohuch, and Chris Wilson. Their skip was Diane Foster of Calgary. On Saturday, May 3, Shirley McPherson, Shirley Kohuch, and Chris Wilson were awarded Lethbridge's female athletes of the year designation for 2008 at the Lethbridge Sports Hall of Fame dinner, which I attended along with the Member for Lethbridge-West.

Also, Larry Taylor and Ed Granger of Lethbridge were members of the team that won the bronze medal at the recent Canadian masters curling championships.

These teams' 153 years of combined experience paid off last month for them, the Lethbridge Curling Club, and southern Alberta. The residents of Lethbridge are very proud of our citizens and their accomplishments, and I extend a sincere congratulations to all of them.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

### Myranda Stewart

**Mr. Doerksen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to acknowledge one of the significant accomplishments of one of my constituents. Last weekend the 51st annual 4-H selections program was held in Olds. Seventeen-year-old Myranda Stewart of Strathmore was selected from 90 of the province's top 4-H members to receive our province's highest honour, the 2008 Premier's award. Ms Stewart has stood out in Alberta's 4-H program, demonstrating the highest standards of leadership, communication, and personal development skills. Throughout her nine years in 4-H she has held numerous executive positions in her club while excelling as a district key member. In addition to the Premier's award announcement, 45 4-H members were chosen to represent 4-H at major educational programs throughout Canada and the United States in the coming year.

Mr. Speaker, 4-H is the longest running youth organization in our province, celebrating 90 years of shaping the lives of youth and adults in Alberta. By following the 4-H motto, Learn to Do by Doing, members take part in activities that meet their interests, increase their knowledge, and develop their life skills, which help members to go on and become successful and accomplished members of society.

Agriculture is vital to our province, and the 4-H program helps develop tomorrow's agricultural leaders. Our government is proud to support this important program for our province's youth. I wish to acknowledge the youth and adult leaders who support the work of 4-H across Alberta, congratulate each member who has been chosen to represent 4-H across Canada and especially Myranda Stewart for being chosen as the 2008 Premier's award recipient.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Presenting Petitions

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two different petitions today. The first is signed by a number of individuals, mostly from Edmonton and Spruce Grove, who are petitioning the Legislative Assembly to introduce legislation to "have midwife-attended homebirths funded by Alberta Health Care," a subject near and dear to my heart.

The second is a petition signed by individuals from St. Albert. They are asking, as many before them, for an independent and public inquiry into the government's involvement with the LAPP, the public service pension plan, and the Alberta teachers' retirement fund.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a petition signed by 20 people from Edmonton, Sherwood Park, and St. Albert also asking for a "public inquiry into the Alberta Government's administration of or involvement with the Local Authorities Pension Plan, the Public Service Pension Plan, and the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund."

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two

petitions. The first one is signed by 36 individuals calling upon the Legislative Assembly to “pass legislation that will prohibit emotional bullying and psychological harassment in the workplace.”

My other petition, like the members before me, calls upon the Alberta government to look into the local authorities pension plan, the public service pension plan, the Alberta teachers’ retirement fund.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a petition signed by 20 individuals from across the province. They are asking for “an independent and public inquiry into the Alberta Government’s administration of or involvement with the Local Authorities Pension Plan, the Public Service Pension Plan, and the Alberta Teachers’ Retirement Fund.”

Thank you.

2:50

### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 9

#### Land Agents Licensing Amendment Act, 2008

**Mr. Mitzel:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 9, the Land Agents Licensing Amendment Act, 2008.

Currently people who charge fees for representing landowners that are in negotiations for access to their land are required to be lawyers or licensed land agents. The amendment will remove this requirement, which means that landowners will not need to have a licensed land agent help them in land negotiations or acquisitions. They may hire whomever they wish to negotiate on their behalf.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a first time]

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

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill 9, Land Agents Licensing Amendment Act, 2008, be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter that I sent today to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood following up on my commitment out of question period yesterday wherein he asked for specific numbers of employees in the Fort McMurray area. The letter indicates that in addition to 13 individuals with the ASERT team there are 36 individuals with the oil sands environmental management team and eight full-time employees in the Fort McMurray region: one manager, one investigator, four inspectors, one ambient air specialist, and one administrative support position.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of

my colleague from Calgary-Currie, the deputy Leader of the Official Opposition, I’d like to table the appropriate number of copies of a report under the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, that being donations made to the Progressive Conservative Association for the 2007 year.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today. I’d like to start by tabling the appropriate number of copies of an article from the *Canmore Leader* dated April 30, 2008, which describes the private fundraising that community is undertaking to address its severe shortage of child care.

I would also like to table the appropriate number of copies of a press release and backgrounder issued by the minister of children’s services on May 1, 2007. Page 2 of that backgrounder notes that government startup grants will be \$1,500 and that it is estimated that it costs between \$5,000 and \$10,000 to create a new child care space.

The final thing I’d like to table are several letters from five Albertans, all calling for changes to Alberta’s labour laws to create a fair labour relations climate in the province. The letters hail from my own stomping grounds in Dunvegan, from George Maxwell of Spirit River, Marilyn Leary of Fairview, Edith Schmidt of Berwyn, Kathy deBruyn and Tanya Schunicht of Grimshaw.

Thank you.

### Orders of the Day

#### Committee of Supply

[Mr. Cao in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I would like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

### Main Estimates 2008-09

#### Culture and Community Spirit

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Culture and Community Spirit will have the first comments.

**Mr. Blackett:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is indeed my pleasure to stand in front of this House to present to this Legislature the estimates for the Ministry of Culture and Community Spirit. It has indeed been an honour to be called to cabinet by the Premier and given responsibility for this great portfolio. It really is, in essence, the portfolio that is Alberta. It encompasses a wide range of areas, and it tells about the great things that we do to maintain the quality of life for Albertans, retain our great citizens, and to attract others to come to us.

Joining me here today are four members of my executive team. To my right is Lois Hawkins, my deputy minister. To my left is Sue Bohaichuk, assistant deputy minister of the culture division. Somewhere behind me is David Link, acting assistant deputy minister of the heritage division, and to my immediate left is Pam Arnston, executive director of financial services. Seated in the gallery are Mathew Steppan, executive assistant to the minister; Susan Cribbs, our executive director of policy, planning, and legislative services; Shawna Cass, acting director of communications; Dianne Johnson, acting co-ordinator of community services; and Carl Royan, director of lottery funding programs.

The newly formed Ministry of Culture and Community Spirit

builds on our province's already strong sense of community. This ministry provides a wide range of programs that improve Albertans' quality of life. We're responsible for culture, community services, the volunteer sector, museum and heritage sites throughout the province. We also strengthen Alberta's communities by managing community investment programs funded by lotteries that support community facilities and programs, and we will continue to strive to protect Albertans from discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, creed, et cetera. Government investment in these programs helps Albertans strengthen their communities. We give people a hand up by supporting the invaluable work that they do every day to improve the world around them.

These investments also generate significant economic returns for the province. Our provincial museums and historic sites contribute \$61.2 million to our economy, and Alberta volunteers dedicated 214 million hours, which is equivalent to 111,000 full-time jobs. We also see impressive returns from investing in culture and the arts. For example, every dollar invested in the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and arts organizations generates \$12 for the community.

Although these numbers are impressive, they are secondary to our primary goal. We are dedicated to ensuring that every Albertan is able to benefit from a quality of life that is second to none either in Canada or throughout the world. We are committed to building and strengthening communities in every corner of our province, from Lac La Biche to Grande Prairie to Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and to ensuring that everyone is able to access what we have to offer. This means our ministry's work touches all 3.5 million Albertans. With our province continuing to see continued growth and expansion, it is vital for our government to continue investing in our communities. This will help us make sure that our children and our grandchildren are able to enjoy the same quality of life that we do today, hopefully an even better one.

Budget 2008 is a great start. With your approval and support our department will help address some of the challenges created as a result of our province's exponential growth and to further enrich our quality of life. Our 2008 consolidated program expense is \$552.7 million, an increase of \$97.6 million. Of this, \$12 million will be used to begin implementing Alberta's new cultural policy, the Spirit of Alberta. This includes an additional \$9 million to help the Alberta Foundation for the Arts ensure that more Albertans can access arts and culture activities regardless of where they live in the province. It also includes a \$1.6 million increase to Alberta's film development grant program, bringing the total annual budget to nearly \$20 million, four times what it was just a few years ago. I hope to continue working with the stakeholders in the film industry in Alberta to make Alberta a major hub for movie and television production.

**3:00**

These investments are a direct response to what Albertans have told us they value. About 89 per cent of Albertans feel that the arts are important in contributing to the quality of life in their community. These dollars complement our other important works in the cultural policy such as establishing the new Premier's Council on Arts and Culture. This is my top priority over the next year as mandated by the Premier.

Another important priority for me is to strengthen our commitment to the nonprofit sector. A \$20 million investment in Alberta's new community spirit donation grant program will encourage Albertans to increase their cash donations to eligible nonprofit organizations and registered charities. Anybody who lives in Alberta knows that there are rising rents, mortgages, insurance costs, and a wage gap that have to be dealt with. It's a belief in our

government that we will try to give money through donations or have Albertans give through donations to these much-needed programs, and we want to give them a hand up to be able to do that.

This donor-driven program, which will receive a total of \$60 million in new funding over the next three years, provides grants based on the amount of eligible donations made by Albertans. It also complements the \$80 million per year enhanced charitable tax credit announced in 2007, bringing the total new support to \$100 million a year for this vital industry. Our province has more volunteer spirit than anywhere else in Canada, with Albertans donating an incredible amount of time and energy to our nonprofit and charitable sectors, and these investments will support this important work. We're also continuing to support an industry that employs more than 8,000 Albertans.

This year \$48 million is estimated to be returned to the horse-racing industry, which has a long and proud history in Alberta. These dollars are used for racetrack operation and capital, breeding improvement, and purse enhancement. Horse Racing Alberta uses these funds according to their business plan, which is approved and reviewed by our government. It is important for me to note that the racing industry generates these dollars through slot machines located at racetracks. Horse Racing Alberta receives a portion of the net proceeds, a third of which goes to the Alberta lottery fund, which benefits us all. This fund supports groups like the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and a number of other community investment programs.

The Alberta lottery fund allows us to invest in a wide range of issues that improve the quality of life for all Albertans. For example, a portion of these dollars supports investment in facilities to strengthen our communities and create a legacy for Albertans through an investment of \$264.5 million in capital grants. This includes projects like the expansion of the Telus World of Science in Calgary, which will receive \$40 million. The expansion is expected to create one of the largest science centres in Canada and a significant regional tourism and education destination. Another \$40 million will support a successful Alberta bid for the national Portrait Gallery, a project that if located in Alberta would have a significant economic and cultural impact on our province. And \$38.5 million will be directed to the ongoing community facility enhancement program, which has benefited thousands of Alberta communities.

We'll also see \$140 million directed towards the major community facilities lottery-funded grant program. This program, in its second and possibly final year, helps nonprofit organizations, municipalities, aboriginal communities build, renovate, upgrade, and maintain major community public-use facilities. The program has proven to be very successful, with a wide range of applicants from every corner of the province, and we expect the demand to continue well past this mandated two years. These commitments will help us address some of the growth needs we're experiencing.

Other budget allocations will be directed towards our provincially owned historical sites and museums. About \$13 million will support capital maintenance and renewal at provincially owned historic sites and museums across the province. This includes \$5.9 million from our ministry's budget and \$7 million in the budget from Alberta Infrastructure. We are working together with a strong collaborative focus on completing these projects. This investment is important as our museums and historic sites provide a window into ourselves: into our past, where we are now, and where we're going. In fact, 94 per cent of Albertans feel that historical resources are important contributors to our overall quality of life. They are also major attractions, with more than 907,000 visitors in 2006.

Albertans cherish our historic places because they form an



important part of our identity. We also identify with the need to protect our human rights and freedoms, which play a vital role in making our province a safe and welcoming place for families to call home.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, your 10 minutes are up.

Now I'd like to recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, and thank you to the chair. I did not actually discuss this with the minister, but I assumed that we could manage to do a joint 20-minute exchange. That's okay with him – I'm getting the nod – so thank you very much to the table.

A couple of things to start out with. I would have liked to have introduced to you one of our researchers in the Liberal caucus who works with me on this particular department. Her name is Kristen McFaden. However, I share Kristen with three or four other ministry portfolios. She is also responsible for developing and working with the issues that we raise in the Public Accounts Committee and, of course, for any of the bills that come forward under any of those departments, which have been quite a few so far. So I was not able to have her come and join me in the House today, which is unfortunate for both of us, but on we go.

I would also appreciate that for any questions the minister is unable to answer or any level of detail he can't provide off the top of his head, if he could provide those back to me within two weeks, please, so I'd have time to review it before the final vote.

I will also say that the community is encouraged by this minister, and it is with great hope that we go forward, recognizing that the government has heard some of the issues that have been raised consistently and over a very long period of time by this community, of which I am proud to be a member. We hope this will all work well.

What I would like to talk about today are the arts as in the fine arts, this community spirit program, funding under heritage, human rights, the voluntary sector, lottery-funded initiatives, bingos. I'd also like to talk about the city of Edmonton arts policy, the Art of Living, and I'll also use an opportunity around cultural industries to talk about what Quebec and Ontario are doing.

I'll just remind the minister of what I've been campaigning for for a number of years, which culminated in a policy that we went into the last election with and which, I think, was heavily influenced by the arts community in Alberta. They helped me develop it. Let me put that on the record at the beginning of this discussion. We were looking to double the funding to the AFA immediately and to triple it within three years. We wanted to see the government pursue status of the artist legislation. We wanted an Alberta arts festival launched that would be equivalent to the Alberta Games so that it moved from small centre to small centre every two years. Very important, we felt it was, to create an Alberta film and television tax credit, to pilot an Alberta publishers' fund, to develop a capital investment strategy for heritage and cultural buildings, and for many years – and I think this first came from my colleague for Edmonton-Glenarry – to eliminate entrance fees for youth to cultural facilities.

We wanted to see a ministry established, and in fact that has happened, and we're very pleased to see it happen. It does cover arts, culture, and heritage. We're also hoping to see an annual provincial arts festival to showcase artistic talents. Indeed, I think it's very important that this community has managed to get an arts agenda up. They were successful in getting it up, and it became a part of the discussion for the leaders' debate in the Progressive Conservative Party, and then it carried through into the election, which is good.

3:10

The most critical issue facing Alberta artists both for work and for living space in Alberta today is availability of affordable living and work space, and I know my colleague from Calgary-Currie is going to concentrate on that a bit more.

I'm sorry. I forgot. The last thing out of our cultural policy was to conduct an inventory of cultural spaces in Alberta. I know that without even having conducted that, we are very short on performing spaces here in Edmonton, including a specialized dance space, and very short on visual art space in Calgary. The community does not have the resources to either conduct an inventory or to come at this with an overall plan, and we really need the ministry to look at this.

Second to that is creative housing for artists. We have examples in Edmonton of ArtsHab, which was mostly live-work spaces, but there were two independent studios included in it that I think the Edmonton Arts Council is continuing to pursue. My question to the minister is: what is he doing? What is part of his plan for this ministry? Is there any targeted funding that would ensure that the artists in our cities are not driven away because of a lack of available space for them to be able to afford the rents and to be able to rent space in which to produce or to create their art? That's the first question I'll put out to the minister.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Blackett:** Thank you. The question: what are we doing? We're doing several things. The first thing upon taking on this position, I realized that we have to know where we're starting from. We have to take an inventory of all the different space that we have in Alberta, as you suggested, and we're in the process of doing that.

In dealing with the issues in Calgary and in Edmonton, I met with the mayor of Edmonton yesterday, and we talked about this very issue along with the city's new cultural policy. We have to come up with some creative solutions in working with the city of Edmonton, how we come up with space. The mayor identified the exact same thing that you identified. How do we find space for artists, and how do we find affordable space for them if they're struggling to survive? Our third tenet of the cultural policy of Alberta, the Spirit of Alberta, is excellence. You can't get excellence if you can't apply your craft because you're worried about the rent or you can't afford your instruments; you can't afford all the necessities to ply that craft.

So we are certainly going to go with that. We are a big contributor to the Cultural Olympiad, which, in leading up to 2010, will help focus on that.

To answer your specific question about some sort of festival, we are planning an arts day for Alberta. I believe one will be in Edmonton and one in Calgary, if I'm not mistaken, in the month of September. We'd love to have one everywhere, but one thing we're going to do beyond that – I believe that the only way you can know what's going on in the community is to be out there, involved, and I'm trying to get to as many places as I can. This summer, once the Legislature stops sitting, I plan to go to all the different places in Alberta, whether that's Lac La Biche or Rosebud or the badlands. I've had many invitations, and I want to go take a look. The meeting that we had with the mayor – and I hope to have one with the mayor of Calgary – is a start.

We acknowledge that there is an issue, and we're going to move forward. I look forward to having further discussions with you on doing that.

**Ms Blakeman:** Okay. I appreciate the commitment to be aware of that issue. We're also looking for targeted funding, so if you're

developing next year's budget, we need it now. We are losing some of our younger artists, unfortunately. Those are the ones that really revitalize and keep your community thriving, but they can't do the rents here, so they're going to Saskatchewan and even further afield to Manitoba, where it's just possible for them to be able to afford their rents.

I'd like to move on to book publishing, which was another area that we were particularly targeting with our Alberta Liberal policy. I am very concerned. I think the last book that we had published here in Alberta was more than a year ago, and it was one single novel. We have lost 11 publishers out of this province. I actually don't know if there is a publisher left here. I don't think there is. I understand that the Book Publishers Association of Alberta has sent a plan to the minister.

There are two issues here. One is around the whole concept of cultural industries, which this government has struggled with for a long period of time. AFA is clearly uncomfortable with the concept. But, if I may, I will refer the minister to some of the work that's been done in Quebec and Ontario on cultural industries. These guys have got a handle on it. Quebec culture is a force, and they have a special agency that is set up to deal specifically with cultural industries and the promotion and distribution of Quebec culture through cultural industries. They speak that dual language of entrepreneurial practices and culture development, and they're very clear about what they're to do. It covers book publishing, recording and variety shows, film and television production, and arts and fine crafts.

I will refer the minister and his able staff to this. I just got this off their website. It includes a number of assistance programs, tax incentives, a business bank. I'll just delve into that for a second. They actually offer financial services to these organizations, including loans and loan guarantees, and in exceptional cases they may in fact invest in a project or put up share capital. They also offer export assistance, which is sorely needed, seeing as the feds have stepped back from that. So this is about our ability to take our cultural industries and promote them outside of the province, but it's also about bringing others into the province.

Ontario has done the same thing. They run the Ontario Media Development Corporation. Again, you can find that on their website at [omdc.on.ca](http://omdc.on.ca). They're basically set up to do exactly the same thing. They have resolved their struggle over what to do with cultural industries, and we haven't in Alberta.

So I'm back to the issue that's happened around publishing. It's that we're really not willing to support publishers because the AFA views them as a for-profit business. Therefore, why would they be giving them cultural money? But, you know, those individual publishers are not going to survive in the kind of competition that we have in Canada and in Alberta here. We can't get our own stories published. We can't compete in that marketplace. So do we say, "Well, fine; if you can't compete, then blow off, honey"? No, I don't think we should be doing that. I think we recognize that this is part of our cultural identity, and we step up to the plate and figure out a way to assist them.

Now, I'm wondering what has been the response to the Book Publishers Association of Alberta's proposal around establishing a fund. I know that in some other provinces they've actually looked at tax incentives. This is suggesting a fund. I would be interested in seeing how open the minister is to this particular idea. Will he commit to separate funding for book publishers and work with something like this fund? Otherwise, we've got the decimation of that industry in this province.

As well, I'm concerned about timing on this one. Will he commit to a fund or some sort of direct funding for book publishers, and will

it come in some sort of time? We really are at the edge of the chasm here. When I look at where we were five years ago in book publishing and what they were telling us then and where we are today, I don't think we're going to last much longer. So if we don't see some pretty significant uptake on this right now, I think we could be here a year from now and it's no longer on the table because it's not possible. So could the minister give me his vision or his plans on that, please?

3:20

**Mr. Blakett:** Obviously, all our cultural industries are important to us. It's one of the four planks of our cultural policy, one being access for all Albertans regardless of their socioeconomic income or where they live. The second is building capacities in our communities to be able to house those performing arts. The third is the excellence. The fourth is enhancement and sustainability of our cultural industries: "increased growth, sustainability and investment in Alberta's cultural industries, including film and television, sound recording and book and magazine publishing." That's what we want to do.

We've had a new ministry here since March 12. You know, our culture and arts were buried in a larger department. I've been trying to get around to all the different stakeholders, and I do have a meeting set up with the Alberta publishers association. I think that's sometime in the next couple of weeks. I haven't got to the funding proposal yet, but we'll certainly address that. We understand that they tell our stories. Just like all our cultural industries, whether it's film or television, they're all vital. We need to make sure that Albertans tell our stories, that we have here for future generations an industry to be able to do that.

As to what we're going to be able to contribute in terms of funding, we'll see what funding avenues are available to us. We'll take a look at it. We want to sit down with them sooner rather than later and have a discussion, and we'll see where we go from there.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. I want to move on and talk about the community spirit program. The question that I've been asked by the community is: what is the community spirit program? It appears to be two grant programs. We just want this on the record: what is the community spirit program? There's \$100 million allocated to it in the budget, \$80 million of which is this enhanced charitable tax credit, which is basically forgone revenue, and \$20 million is the exact donation program.

So a couple of questions off the top. What happens to the remainder of the \$80 million if the tax credits are undersubscribed? In other words, if you don't have enough people donating money that would qualify, if you don't hit the \$80 million mark, then does the rest of the money get given in a cash way, or is it simply rescinded, disappear into thin air? [interjection] I have someone contributing to this from over on the other side. I'm sure he'll be joining the debate at some point. Is that the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul, by any chance, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, that's contributing to this? I'm looking forward to his on-the-record comments.

What happens if the \$80 million in tax credits isn't used? Will the money be allocated somewhere else, or is it simply gone? Correspondingly, if the money is oversubscribed, will additional money be put into the fund to take us to the end of the year? That certainly happens in a number of other cases. For example, the housing fund, the rental eviction fund: there was additional money put in. If this is oversubscribed, would the same thing happen?

I'm interested to know how community spirit – and I've put little quotations around that – would be measured. If we're standing here five years from now, how do we measure that community spirit? Is it by the simple number of donations that have taken place?

Specific to the donation problem what I'm seeing here – and I'm interested in exactly how the minister interprets this – is a set-up that essentially sends the not-for-profits, not only the arts but all of the voluntary based organizations, into a profit motivator, that they need to raise this money in order to continue giving their services. It's trying to put them into a profit mode instead of a service giving mode because they only qualify for these donations if they raise it from individual donors. It's not counting anything they've raised from corporations. It's not counting anything they've raised from casinos and bingos or through special events. All of that is an enormous amount of effort from the staff and volunteers already involved in that voluntary sector, including the arts, and now we're being told, "Well, you're only going to qualify for this if you raise money from individual donors," which is dang hard to do. It's a lot of effort.

The minister has heard me speak already a number of times in this House. His colleagues that were elected previously have heard me speak a lot more about the diminished capacity we have in this voluntary charitable sector right now, and here we have a program saying: let us dangle \$20 million in front of you, but you can only have it if you set aside doing the work that you need to be doing and go out and raise individual donations from people in order to qualify for a bit more money. Why didn't you just give the money to them? Why didn't you just put it into the core funding? That has been shortchanged for a number of years.

I know this is an incentive to have the groups show that they're connected to their community. You know what? The government has been saying that for a long time, and what ends up happening is that we have these organizations, including the arts, who are – I mean, I ran a number of these organizations. I couldn't afford a fundraising person. So you know who did it? I did it as the executive director. The secretary did it. The production manager did it. We all joined together to try and raise money. So I am not seeing how this is a tremendous step forward in helping the not-for-profit sector. [Ms Blakeman's speaking time expired]

**The Chair:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, do you want to continue on the second 20 minutes?

**Ms Blakeman:** Yes. Thank you.

As part of these whole donation programs I take the \$80 million that was set up to be around donations from individuals – it's recognizing almost 50 per cent, although to be fair, 29 per cent of that is the federal credit. You're upping the provincial tax recognition from 12 to 21 per cent, and that brings you to the 50 per cent you keep talking about. In fact, for the province you're really talking 21 per cent. That's the \$80 million.

I want to focus back on this \$20 million donation program because I really see this as a step backward. I think it is once again directing attention away from these groups that have diminished capacity, are trying to deliver their programs, and now, "You can only get more money if you go out and spend even more time trying to raise individual donations," which is very time consuming and difficult and expensive to do. To get a thousand people to each donate a hundred bucks to you is a lot more time consuming and expensive than to hit up one corporation for one donation of a similar size. It puts the onus of supporting the not-for-profits on the communities and on the very individuals, and I think it is forcing these same organizations to make fundraising their priority rather than delivering their service.

I'm going to take my seat, and I want to hear back from the minister on what his plans were around this. I'm getting some cheering from the other side. I'm just betting that that's coming from Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Thank you, Mr. Minister.

**Mr. Blakett:** Well, to answer that first question that you had about the \$80 million tax credit, if it's undersubscribed, that's revenue forgone from the government, so the revenue disappears. If it's oversubscribed, however, we will honour those tax credits. Like you had mentioned, there are two components. Let's not hang our hat on just the \$20 million. It's a hundred million combined, and that's not insignificant, coupled with the other programs, such as CIP and CFEP and the MCFP, if it's applicable, that those organizations can utilize. Plus we're working with the Alberta nonvoluntary sector initiative, or ANVSI, and I'm working with this sector to come up with some other solutions.

As for the \$20 million, what Albertans have said in their history is: we want programs that are donor driven; we want to give a hand up, not a handout. We have 19,000 voluntary and charitable organizations. You take \$20 million and divide it among 19,000 organizations, what do you get? Now, there's always going to be a problem. One of the big problems I see is that we have some large organizations, who I don't have to mention, that have full-time people to fill out all the processes and all the applications. We wanted to try to get money down to the second- and third-tier organizations. Aside from just picking those and giving it to them, which is way too subjective – and I'm sure the Auditor General would have something to say about that – we wanted to come up with what we thought was the best process: to have a pool with a limit, so it's \$20 million; no individual organization gets more than \$25,000, so somebody can't come in and hog a big chunk of that; and we wanted to make sure that there was a cap also for a three-year period, which was \$50,000. Understanding that it's hard to get donations, if we start leaving exceptions to the rule for everything, we'll have an accounting nightmare. We have to have a program if we want these to continue. If I have to go back to my colleagues to get future funding, we want to make sure that we do this in a prudent and efficient fashion so that we can continue these valuable programs.

3:30

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. If the minister could share with me the documentation that he has that supports his statement that this is what the public wanted. I'm assuming there that you did some polls or studies or something, and if I could get a copy of that I'd appreciate it. Thank you very much.

It doesn't sound like I can get the minister to commit to a publicly funded mechanism by which these organizations could just access funds without having the additional onus of fundraising. You seem quite committed to marrying the fundraising with them being able to receive any additional dollars. And he's shaking his head; that's most unfortunate. Okay. Because it's not recognizing the work that they're already doing.

**Mr. Blakett:** Do you want me to answer the question? I said that that was what the program was designed for. At the end of the day we always want to make sure the money gets into the hands of the people who are delivering the services for Albertans. If we have to look at that going forward and somehow tweak that to be able to make that more accessible, then we'll look at that. I've just stated what our principal idea is going forward.

**Ms Blakeman:** Okay. Now, I notice that government funding for the voluntary sector services has decreased. Can the minister talk a bit here about how he expects that organizations have the capacity to raise these additional funds when you're reducing your funding to the voluntary sector and they're already struggling with a number of capacity issues? How did the ministry see that this was actually going to happen?

**Mr. Blackett:** The reason that there's a funding decrease is because last year we gave \$350,000 in one-time funding to the Alberta nonprofit/voluntary sector initiative. It was one-time funding. There was no promise for that in 2008-2009. There's where the deficiency lies.

**Ms Blakeman:** Okay. Could the minister talk a little bit about why the choice was made to restrict this particular program to individual donors only, please? As I said before, it's not recognizing money raised through bingo efforts, through casino efforts – and those are voluntary driven, as you know – or through their corporate fundraising or their special events. This is very specific with the individual donations. Can you tell me why that choice was made?

**Mr. Blackett:** Other than the fact that it is very convoluted and very complicated, funds that are derived from casinos are funds that aren't accessible to every organization, so we don't want to prejudice against an organization. We want to create a level playing field for everyone. Those organizations that have professional fundraisers and those organizations that have access to that may have somewhat of an unfair advantage.

Corporate donations. We already recognize the corporate donations through our lottery-funded programs, such as CIP and CFEP. I guess the reasoning behind it is that we're giving that. They're able to use that in terms of those matching fund programs. If they're not able to get the \$25,000 from this, they can certainly apply through CIP or CFEP and be able to access that using the exact same funds that you mentioned, whether it's casinos, whether it's from corporate fundraising, or whether it's through special events.

**Ms Blakeman:** Well, I take the minister's point that the casinos and bingos are not available to everyone. That's based on government restrictions – his own government's restrictions – as to who can access that.

**Mr. Blackett:** It's based on the available pool of money. It's not available to everybody because there's only so much money to go around. There are only so many dates that those organizations can actually conduct those events.

**Ms Blakeman:** True. But adult recreation groups still can't access those funds, and that is a government policy. As well, both the CIP and the CFEP grants are not available to many. CFEP, for example, is about facilities. If you don't have a facility, you're not accessing that. So there's a little bit of inconsistency here, to my eye.

I'd like to move on and talk about heritage. I'm wondering what specific areas of infrastructure the heritage infrastructure maintenance money will be given to, and if I could get a project list. This is on page 109 of the government estimates, and it's 4.0.6, heritage infrastructure maintenance, \$5.9 million, new allocation. Could I get a list of who that's going to, please?

Now, I notice that the Edmonton Arts Council arts policy is recommending 11 actions to be taken for heritage in the city. It's

generally recognized that heritage needs to build more infrastructure. It also needs to take care of the infrastructure that it's got. What is being anticipated in the monies that are available under vote 4 to help, or is that what's expected to be paid for out of that \$5.9 million?

**Mr. Blackett:** In response to the first part of your question, of that \$5.899 million, \$2.459 million goes to defer heritage infrastructure at various sites for reroofing, painting, flooring, window and door repairs, plastering, Slemko barn restoration, et cetera; \$2 million is going to the Turner Valley gas plant for preservation, stabilization, maintenance, and development plan for the historic buildings, structures, and landscapes; \$862,000 is going to the historic Bitumont for preservation, stabilization, maintenance, and development plan for the historic buildings, structures, and landscapes; and \$578,000 is going to capital maintenance, various sites, for ongoing restoration, preservation, conservation, and maintenance, and it includes the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village, Brooks Aqueduct, Leitch Collieries, and site upgrades in Okotoks Erratic.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. If that wasn't the complete list, then could I get the complete list, please? I was listening, and there were a couple places where it said: among other things. So if that's not the complete list, then could I get the complete list?

**Mr. Blackett:** If there are some that are missing here that we haven't specifically mentioned, I will give you a written response on those.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. On page 123 is the breakdown for the human rights, citizenship, and multiculturalism education fund. This has decreased. There's a sort of switch here. We've decreased \$320,000 from the support to community groups and increased the education programs by \$545,000. It sounds to me like we're taking away from money for actual projects like, for example, daycare support. I know that a number of the groups that used to apply to this fund were usually smaller organizations. The ones I worked with were usually women's settlement services, and they were looking for things like payment for daycare while they held an event, for example. So if money has shifted from support to community groups to the education programs, what was the thinking behind this? Why did the department make these decisions to shift that money? Is there some sort of redefinition that's happening here?

**Mr. Blackett:** As far as I can tell, we have increased our funding by 10.8 per cent. The increase is primarily due to \$160,000 additional funding to support the implementation of the new cultural policy and education initiatives and then \$70,000 for other minor increases. We haven't reduced the money; we've actually increased the money.

3:40

**Ms Blakeman:** You've shifted it between two votes. If you look on page 123, under Expense, Program, support to community groups is currently \$1.34 million. The budget for last year was \$1.66 million, so \$1.34 million would definitely be less. The actual for the previous year was \$1.2 million. The forecast for this year is \$1.6 million. That's a decrease. The next line down is education programs. It turns up as \$900,000. The forecast for the end of this year is \$355,000. That would be a decrease.

**Mr. Blackett:** Okay. The reallocation, as you've mentioned. Those

priorities are set by our advisory committee based on their current discussions with stakeholders and clients. The increase indicates ongoing commitment; 90 per cent went to the government of Alberta to fund these activities.

**Ms Blakeman:** If I'm hearing the minister correctly, then, the advisory group that runs this fund has in consultation with the stakeholders decided to reallocate this money from one group to another. Well, I'm concerned, given the increase in demand. If we're smart, the increase that we should be focusing on is for settlement services and integration of immigrants. I'm a little concerned when I see money being shifted around there unless I know that we're still going to get the money on the front line for those groups that are trying to deliver services. That's my concern there.

I also want to address what is happening with human rights overall, which appears as vote 5 in your department estimates, page 109 specifically, and it does actually turn up in other places. These are detailed questions which you will likely not have at the top of your head. I'm looking for the number of files that were carried over from the previous fiscal year, the number of files that were opened under the Human Rights Commission in the past year, the number of files that were resolved or closed in the year, and the number that went to the commission.

I understand that there is some interest or openness in reviewing how the Human Rights Commission actually operates and what possibilities there are in updating what's happening here. There has always been a mandate and a real push and focus on settling. I think that for the number of people that actually brought a complaint, they've not felt that that was really what they wanted, being forced to settle with somebody, and that anyone that was actually found in violation really didn't have to pay very much of a penalty for being in violation because it was always a sort of mediated compromise, which wasn't acting as much of a disincentive. I'm interested in what the minister foresees for the Human Rights Commission.

**Mr. Blakett:** Well, thank you for that question. As you know, human rights are important to all Albertans. I think 88 per cent of adult Albertans say that they believe human rights are well protected in Alberta, but I know that there are some issues. I've had them at the constituency level. I've had them at the ministerial level. I understood them before I came to this Legislature.

Now, I don't have all the details that you're looking for, but in 2007-2008 we closed 733 complaints. I don't know how many of those complaints had carried over, but we will get you those details.

As I said several weeks ago in this Legislature, it is incumbent upon me as a new minister to take a look at not just the legislation but the whole Human Rights Commission. The more that I delved into it in discussions with department officials and some outside advice, we realized at the beginning of the process that we were looking for a new chief commissioner to replace Charlach Mackintosh, who had served us for 14 years.

Now, as everybody knows from reading the paper, unless you're hiding under a rock, human rights commissions are being assailed across Canada because there's a belief that they're not fulfilling the mandate that they were given. Alberta is a unique place because we have an arm's-length quasi-judicial body that isn't under the Minister of Justice. It's actually under the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit, and it sits with citizenship and multiculturalism as it has the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act. I think it's really important that we preserve that, but important to preserving that is making sure that Albertans have confidence in doing that.

Starting off with the chief commissioner, the chief commissioner is the person responsible for overseeing the complaints as it stands now, helping decide whether those complaints are resolved through reconciliation, whether they're going to go to a tribunal, the composition of that tribunal, picking those commissioners on that tribunal, also whether or not there's an appeal mechanism to the Court of Queen's Bench. [Mr. Blakett's speaking time expired]

**The Chair:** Thank you. We are now in the third 20 minutes of the first hour of the Official Opposition.

Do you want to continue, hon. member?

**Ms Blakeman:** Yes. Thank you. I'll let the minister continue just so we can close that piece of it off.

Thank you.

**Mr. Blakett:** To get to the point, the position was advertised back in December 2007. In looking at the terms of reference that were given at the time, one thing that jumped out at me was that a law degree was preferred. Well, anybody knows that nowadays with the complexity of the legality that is involved in all these different cases, you need more than a law degree. I advocate that we need somebody who is of the stature of a judge, who has the capability or the skill set to be able to determine where all those cases go, somebody who has the ability to put the blindfold on, balance the scales whether we're looking at racism or whether we're looking at freedom of expression or freedom of speech. So we're going to continue on with that.

As we go through that process and as we get the chief commissioner in place, then we will start to go through the other parts and address some of those other issues that you mentioned. But we're going to take our time and go through and make sure that we correct it properly for all Albertans.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. One of the outstanding issues around – I don't remember the new name of this act now – the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act is that this government has steadfastly refused to write in protection of sexual orientation as one of the prohibited grounds of discrimination, which, frankly, I think is a real black eye against this province. We don't deserve that black eye. We're better than that. But it does stand as a reminder to many people that although the federal courts have insisted that the law be interpreted that way, we have not followed through and actually opened up the act, amended it, and included those words under prohibited grounds of discrimination. My question to the minister: does he plan to do this, to write in sexual orientation to the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act?

**Mr. Blakett:** Mr. Chairman, as I mentioned before, we're going through a review. The last part of our review will be legislation, which will arguably be the most contentious part of that. We are cognizant that we're in 2008, and we would love to bring our Alberta legislation in line with that. One thing we have to do when we open legislation, if we open up legislation, is that we have to consider every particular group. Right now all legislation is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that it meets its intended purpose in the most efficient and effective way possible. We welcome all comments on that. When we get to the legislation, we will do what we think is prudent. I will make a presentation to my caucus, and then we will go forward from there, but I am not yet able to make that commitment to you.

**Ms Blakeman:** I'm sorry to hear that. I'll be very interested to hear how it would be inefficient or ineffective to include sexual orientation under prohibited grounds of discrimination. It would be ineffective or inefficient. That one I'm looking forward to, Mr. Minister.

3:50

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, I don't remember saying ineffective or inefficient. All I was saying is that once we look at legislation, there are many different groups, many different interests that have to be considered, and obviously protection against sexual orientation would be one of those that we will consider.

**Ms Blakeman:** Boy, that's a nice slow pitch over centre plate. Are there groups that are being considered here that would somehow preclude you being able to include sexual orientation?

**Mr. Blackett:** Absolutely not.

**Ms Blakeman:** I'm going to move on temporarily to lottery funded initiatives on page 125 of the government estimates. There is an indicator that 3.0.2, major community facilities program, is the second and possibly final year. The minister noted that in his remarks, and it is written into the budget documents. Why would that be? We have a large number of facilities. Does the government somehow think that we've now dealt with all of these with the \$140 million last year and \$140 million this year? I mean, I'm looking at the Citadel. That was built in 1976. The windows have got to be replaced there. I think they've already undertaken some major work around their furnace. There's more work to be done on the Jubilee auditoria, both north and south. We've got institutions like the Winspear coming up that are in need of ongoing maintenance. I mean, how the government ever thought we could just, you know, have these buildings, have people pay to build them and donate money to them and then kind of – what? – leave them to sit. It's a problem with infrastructure across this government. What else is supposed to happen? We've got a two-year program here. What happens next?

Go ahead.

**Mr. Blackett:** We just stated in the budget that when this program was first proposed, it was a two-year program. I certainly would advocate strongly to my colleagues that we continue this program. As we all know, Alberta is in a period of tremendous growth, and we have a lot of things that we have to get caught up on. This program has been extremely popular; one could almost say oversubscribed. But we have to go through the budget process, and I for one will be advocating that we continue this program.

**Ms Blakeman:** Okay. That's encouraging.

Vote 3.0.4, the community initiatives program, has actually seen a reduction in the amount that is available to it. Could I get an explanation of where that money went? Was it reallocated, and if it was, where did it go? If not, why was the money taken away?

Vote 3.0.7, other initiatives. Now, this was the slush fund. I'm wondering exactly what projects are anticipated being funded or are budgeted to be funded under 3.0.7. Is there unallocated money in there that is available throughout the year if additional projects come up? This is the slush fund that had no criteria, no deadline for application. There was no jury process. It was decided by the minister. It's a pretty interesting fund. I'm wondering if there are definitive projects that have been allocated out of the \$7.9 million that is in this fund this year. Is any of it allocated?

This also has had a decrease in funding. Yeah, it has. It has come down from \$11 million to \$7.9 million, and I'm interested in why that's happened. That money used to just sit in there and, basically – well, actually, exclusively – members of the government were able to access it. Now there's been a decrease in it. Can the minister explain the decrease and tell me what money is going to come out of there?

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, first of all, with respect to the community initiatives program, there was a decrease. I think it was a small one, but it was a decrease nonetheless because at budget time we had to reallocate some monies to some other programs.

With respect to the other initiatives on the one hand it's a slush fund, and then on the other hand you're questioning why we slashed it. We can't have it both ways. I'm a strong advocate for both of those.

In the other initiatives programs some of the things that we funded are the Alberta portion of the Trans Canada Trail project, helping to build a food bank in Airdrie, a new Ronald McDonald house in Calgary, supporting the 2007 World Cup of Cross-country Skiing, assisting with the development of Good Neighbours and Goodwill centres across Alberta. As I had mentioned before, there are some organizations that don't have access to the funds because they can't qualify for some of those programs. We are able to help some of those organizations through the other initiatives programs.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. They're both perfectly legitimate questions. There has been a decrease in the amount of money. Why? The groups that you just mentioned: is that the allocation for this budget, or is that money that has gone out previously? If it's not the allocation for this budget, then what are the plans for that money in this budget?

**Mr. Blackett:** For this year we have allocated \$3.624 million, so it's not all allocated because we want to allow ourselves the ability to react if there's a crisis or if there's some worthy group that comes forward. Right now we have Alpine Canada, \$300,000; Hockey Canada, which we've had an ongoing relationship with, \$500,000; the McMahon Stadium Society, \$175,000; the Culinary Arts Foundation, \$75,000; Alberta Junior Hockey League, \$190,000; the Rick Hansen initiative, \$1 million; the Calgary Stampede, supporting bid for the Grey Cup for 2009, \$1.1 million; and we have special sporting events for \$1 million, for a total of \$3.624 out of our \$7.9 million, I believe.

**Ms Blakeman:** So half of it's allocated, and half of it's not allocated. Okay. Thank you.

A couple of other questions. I'd like to know specifically what 3.0.9, bingo associations, is? That's gone from \$5.7 million to \$10 million to \$13 million. I don't think that's a flow-through account, so I'm interested in what's happening with that.

I'm also wondering about the bid for the Portrait Gallery. Now, if neither Edmonton nor Calgary succeeds in getting the Portrait Gallery, what happens to that \$40 million? Is it reallocated, or does it just disappear out of the budget? It's dependent on one of the two of them securing that particular project. Interestingly enough, the Calgary bid didn't want government money in, so they developed that as part of an initiative on a private development and were willing to go ahead without any government money. Well, that's actually part of the requirement, I think, from the Portrait Gallery, or at least it was a requirement from the city of Calgary.

My second question is how the bid for that gallery impacts the plans for the Royal Alberta Museum, and specifically what is

happening with the Royal Alberta Museum. Lots of rumours. I'm now hearing that there is a plan afoot to have the old site, the existing site, be sort of a natural history museum and that our very own Terrace Building here would be torn down and that a human history museum would be built there that would be sort of the Royal Alberta Museum part 2. My concern about this is a piecemeal redevelopment of the Legislature Grounds.

Is this minister going to spearhead another committee that is going to look at how the Legislature Grounds are developed? What's happening with the Royal Alberta Museum? Are they going to be able to complete their downgraded plan B? How much truth is there to the rumours that it's now going to be split up and that there will be one built on these grounds, or how far ahead is that? That rumour keeps persisting; it keeps coming up. So it's some kind of a zombie because it keeps rising from the dead. Is there another plan, maybe yet a third plan, that's out there about shifting it somewhere entirely?

4:00

Just before I forget. Many years ago, in the early 2000s – I think it might have been 2001 or 2002 – there was an extensive cultural workers report that was done for the department. I'm wondering what has happened to that report. Did any of it ever get implemented? Is it sitting collecting dust on a shelf? There was a lot of work done to look at what was happening to cultural workers, programs that could support it. I talked about it in the budget debates of the day, when the Member for Lethbridge-West was the minister that was responsible for it. That's when he would have been Employment and Immigration, I think. I'm wondering what has happened to that report and if any of it got implemented or is being considered or if it's just gone.

I still need to go on and talk about the Spirit of Alberta cultural policy, the AFA blueprints, and the voluntary sector, and I'm running out of time here.

**Mr. Blackett:** Can we answer those first four questions for you first?

**Ms Blakeman:** Yep.

**Mr. Blackett:** First of all, for the bingos that is flow-through money. That \$3 million increase was just the increase in flow-through from last year.

With respect to the Portrait Gallery, that \$40 million, it's news to me that Calgary isn't interested in the money, but right now that's set aside for the winning bid. It's open to them. If they choose not to, they choose not to. That money, for all intents and purposes, would go back to the Treasury Board. We would certainly strongly advocate that we utilize that money somewhere within our department.

With respect to the Royal Alberta Museum I have met with the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Infrastructure. We realize that Albertans and Edmontonians, in particular, have been after us to do something about the Royal Alberta Museum for a very long time. We are looking at moving forward with a plan. Right now I'd say that we're advocating a two-site plan, so that would be an enhancement of the existing Royal Alberta Museum on the Glenora site. You have the option of making a large museum on the Glenora site or on the Legislature Grounds, but you have to take into account that a large site could overpower either Government House on the Glenora grounds or the Legislature Building, which will be a hundred years old in 2012. So we are looking at: how do we come up with supporting the two?

We have \$170 million already committed from our government

plus \$30 million from the federal government, but we're not doing it piecemeal. What we're doing is looking comprehensively at redevelopment of the Legislature Grounds: two museums, two tourist attractions. We also have a problem right now, as you well know, with the Royal Alberta Museum: where do we store our artifacts? We have to look at a place to be able to do that even while we're renovating that site. The Terrace Building is a phenomenal site overlooking the river valley, and we think that it would be well served there. Part of the whole redevelopment means that we have to renovate the federal building and be able to move some of those people into that.

We will rediscover, redevelop, invigorate the whole Legislature Grounds, and I think Albertans will be happy when they see what we're planning to do.

**Ms Blakeman:** Well, when is the minister going to roll this whole plan out? This is the first public pronouncement that I'm hearing about this, that there actually will be two sites being developed. I'm not hearing that there's a comprehensive plan that will be presented to whom for the whole grounds. I sat on a committee that looked at this, and the committee died a swift death, although members continued to be paid for a long period of time. Do we get to see the whole plan? Who's developing this plan? Is this just intergovernment? Is anybody else going to be in on this one? How long is that going to take? What money is being committed to it? What happens to the Glenora site? It's supposed to be going ahead. Is it now going to wait until the second one is developed and funded before it moves ahead?

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, the discussions are early. We've just had the discussions on this in the last two weeks. I met with the mayor yesterday, just apprising him of what we're thinking of doing. We have to obviously contact our stakeholders. The mayor and the city are very much behind the idea that we're proposing. Obviously, it entails a great deal of money. There is a great deal of intergovernmental collaboration involved, and we will do that. I assure you that when we have the necessary information, in due time – and it won't be a long time – I will be more than happy to present that to Albertans.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. I'd like to go on and talk about the Spirit of Alberta cultural policy. Now, I notice that when I look at the city of Edmonton policy, which is gorgeous, called the Art of Living: A Plan for Securing the Future of Arts and Heritage in the City of Edmonton, 2008-2018, they can actually manage to come up with not only a number of essays that describe the vision but recommendations. Included in the recommendations are implementation resources, organizations that will be affiliated to do it, what they're going to be providing, the amount of money, and the timeline. They do that for every single recommendation in here, and we've never been able to get that from the AFA. So when do we get something from the AFA that gives us an action plan that we can actually follow with timelines . . .

**The Chair:** Hon. member, the first hour for the Official Opposition has been used up.

Now I would now like to recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. Can I clarify with you? You want to use the 20 minutes?

**Ms Notley:** Yes.

**The Chair:** All right. Twenty minutes.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Once again, I've just deleted my watch, so I'm going to try to keep this in time. I only have this 20 minutes, so I'm going to try and break this into three groups, and hopefully I'll get through all my questions.

The first thing that I want to talk a little bit about is the Human Rights Commission, just to follow up on some of the discussion that's already been had. Secondly, we'll talk a bit about culture and then, thirdly, talk a little bit about the community lottery fund. That's where I want to go with it.

I want to start by saying that I really want to join the other members in saying that we're very appreciative to see that there is a separate ministry that has recently been created. We see it as a very good sign, and certainly a lot of the information with respect to culture, in particular, that we've been hearing from the minister is cause for some optimism. I'm really pleased that the government moved forward on that. In the next piece I'll tell you a little bit of an anecdote about, you know, the 1970s minister of culture.

Anyway, I think that because there was just a new ministry created, it's also a time to think a bit about what it is that falls within this ministry and, in particular, why it is that the Human Rights Commission remains within this ministry. I mean, there's talk about the fact that the act is called the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act and that that kind of matches the name of the ministry, and isn't that kind of neat? But the reality is that the grounds upon which people in this province can be discriminated against expand well beyond simply those grounds which relate to culture and multiculturalism and, in fact, include a number of other grounds. Indeed, the statistics of the Human Rights Commission show that the vast majority of complaints and problems that they're dealing with relate to matters relating to disability.

If that were the driving criteria, you'd think: well, maybe the Human Rights Commission ought to be under the ministry of health or perhaps the ministry of community services or whatever. Yet I don't think that's really the right home for it either. The other thing, of course, is that we know that most of the complaints that are filed are against employers, not against landlords, not against newspapers, not against teachers or anything like that. It's against employers. Again, with the same kind of rationale applied, maybe it should be under the Ministry of Employment and Immigration.

I personally think that the right home for it is under the Attorney General's ministry, and that's, of course, with no disrespect to the current minister. I believe that it is an incredibly, as the minister has already stated, complex area which has very extensive application to the laws of our province across the board. I actually think that it limits and does not give the level of respect that should be given to the work of the commission by keeping it within this area.

So that's my first question. I'm just wondering if there was any discussion about moving it to the Attorney General's ministry.

**4:10**

As well, on that issue, of course, we've already talked about and we've heard discussion about the issue of amending the human rights code to include protection on the grounds of discrimination based on sexual orientation. Obviously, our position is that, you know, if we can spend at least three hours now debating the merits of a heritage hunting, fishing, and trapping act, which has almost no legal effect, it seems very surprising to me that we can't do a similarly symbolic and reaching-out kind of statement on the part of the government to tell gay and lesbian Albertans that they really are part of this province.

Now, if the argument is that what we're really going to do here is engage in a comprehensive re-evaluation of the human rights code, then my concern is simply that having, myself, worked in an

Attorney General's office in a different province, when we went through a very broad-based review of our human rights legislation, I know that kind of thing doesn't come for free, and I see no provision in your budget for any kind of comprehensive, complex consultation with multitudes of stakeholders about reviewing our human rights code. I guess that's my second question. Are we actually going to see some substantive, serious work done on that, or are we just simply talking about it to avoid dealing with the issue of sexual orientation?

Then the third question. This relates, I guess, to the assumption that there is going to be a broad-based review of the role of the commission and how it functions. I just want to throw out there the idea of looking at the whole question of the commission's remedial authority. I'm sure members from the other side would be shocked and appalled at the idea that I would advocate such an idea. Nonetheless, I was very pleased to see that in B.C., once the commission there discovered that a school board had discriminated against the rights of a number of gay and lesbian teachers as well as their students, that commission had the remedial authority. Instead of just fining or making an order, they had the remedial authority to direct that school board and ultimately across the province to come up with an education program. So it's a standard grade 12 social studies course now on tolerance that has to be offered throughout the education system. I think the fact that they had that remedial authority really made their decision that much more relevant. It's just something to consider.

The fourth point. Again, with the resources that are dedicated to the Human Rights Commission, anyone who practises in this area of law and knows about this area of law knows that it's growing in leaps and bounds. Probably the biggest area where you're seeing it, as I've mentioned before, is in the area of disability law as it relates to employers and as it relates to the duty to accommodate. I can tell you as someone that practises in this area that the state of law and the state of knowledge and the state of application of these laws in this province are well behind that of almost every other province in the country.

So there need to be greater resources put to educating both employers and employees about their rights vis-à-vis bringing them into line with the duty and the obligation of all parties around accommodation in the workplace. We know we have a shortage of workers in Alberta, and we need to start getting people who are disabled back into the workplace and helping them stay there. None of that work is able to happen right now with the current resources that we have.

I'll leave you with those questions, and then we can go on to the next one afterwards.

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, to address the first one – and it makes for a lively debate. One of the very first things that I did as soon as I got the portfolio was that I looked through and said, “Where are the areas that are going to be the hot-button issues?” and human rights is definitely one of them. The first person I talked to was the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, and I said: there are going to be people that will come to you and say that it should be under the Minister of Justice, and I'm not one of those advocates. What you have is a quasi-judicial body reporting into the same entity, which is the method of appeal, which would be the Court of Queen's Bench. Is that not the case? As far as I understand it, there's a potential conflict there. It was called the Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act for a reason. This ministry was created for a reason. I came into this portfolio and realized we had to make some changes. A lot of things you've already mentioned. It's dealing with the respondents and dealing with the claimants and being able



to satisfy their needs and making sure that our Human Rights Commission is more up to date in being able to deal with the kind of clientele that we need to. So we need to make changes.

On March 16 we didn't have a budget because we didn't have a need addressed at that time for one, so I would advocate that as we go forward, we will consider doing that. How extensive and how wide open am I going to make this? I'm not going to make this a long, laborious process. I don't have to consult with the whole world on it. I certainly would like to consult with some experts. I would like to consult with some people that have been in the human rights process, and I'd love to hear from you. We will work through that.

The third question was with respect to review and research. One of the things we want to do is review and research the policy and legislative framework that protects human rights and promotes fairness and access to the opportunities to participate fully in the social, cultural, and economic life of the province. We intend to try to be as inclusive as possible.

We will work, also, to educate employers, which is a big part of the problem, through the human rights, citizenship and multiculturalism education fund. The education fund supports the educational work of the Human Rights Commission and the ministry, provides resources and financial assistance to community organizations, public institutions, and municipalities to implement all kinds of educational initiatives that foster equality, encourage welcoming and inclusive communities, workplaces, and organizations, and support the reduction of discrimination and barriers to full participation in society for all Albertans.

There was a fourth question. With respect to sexual orientation, sexual orientation is not the only part of the legislation we'll be looking at. I know that some people will say: oh, just open it up for that and not for others. We're going to look at everything in balance. We will give Albertans a chance to have some input on that, and we will let you know when we are prepared to go forward with that.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you. Just a couple more comments following up on that. There really is, I can assure you, no conflict of interest inherent in having the Human Rights Commission under the Attorney General's office in terms of the legal relationship between the Attorney General and Court of Queen's Bench and the Supreme Court of Canada and the judiciary. I can assure you that there is no conflict of interest, but it is, perhaps, a complex area, and that's maybe why it should be housed in a ministry where all of those complications are fully understood.

I just wanted to quickly ask one final question. I know that the commission has a habit – and I've heard this from a few ministries – of saying that X number of Albertans think that we're doing a good job of protecting the human rights of so-and-so, depending on what the area is. Can I just request and suggest that the commission might want to simply survey those whose rights are supposed to be protected rather than all Albertans? The more valuable statistic next time we have estimates would be that X percentage of those in minority groups believe that the commission is protecting their rights, et cetera, et cetera.

Going back to the whole issue of the review of sexual orientation and reviewing other issues, I'm wondering if the minister could in writing, not today because he doesn't appear to be able to today, provide my office with a timeline and a plan of action with respect to the review process that you're suggesting will be undertaken so that we can look at when we can have an outcome and also whether or not our current budgeting plans are appropriate for the task that,

it appears, may be at hand. So if I could get that before the end of the budget process.

**4:20**

I want to move just quickly, then, to the issue of culture. I'm not sure how much time I have left. I just want to go back as I did promise a small anecdote. I believe that the last time there was a minister of culture with this government was in the '70s under Premier Lougheed. Mary LeMessurier I think was the minister of culture, and I remember her coming up to Fairview when my father was the MLA. I would say that she did wonderful work at the time in terms of putting money into Dunvegan, which, of course, has a huge cultural and community centre. Also, my mother was with the Fairview concert society, and I believe they got start-up funding for that as well. So culture is a critical part of a community, and in the small community that I grew up in, I mean, I saw that every day. So just again to reassert how important it is that there be a separate culture ministry.

I'm just going to go through a couple of the line items in the estimates because I have a few questions under that area. I see that the area of film development appears to have received about a \$1.5 million increase, which I believe is about a 7 or 8 per cent increase in the budget. Since that essentially reflects inflation, maybe a little bit more, I'm wondering whether in the long term, in terms of truly developing and supporting this industry, we shouldn't be looking at quite a significantly larger investment. We know we have good opportunities in the film industry, but it doesn't appear as though that amount of increase necessarily reflects the government's understanding of that or acceptance of that. So I'm wondering whether that's exactly the right amount and how you see that it is.

The other thing that I want to talk about very quickly as well is the issue of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. Again, as my colleague in the Official Opposition has noted, both our party and their party went into the election advocating a much more significant increase in funding to the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. While 30 per cent is an increase, since it's an area that's been quite ignored for decades, I'm not entirely convinced that it's really going to get you to where you need to be. So I'm wondering whether this ministry is considering establishing some regular core inflationary increases plus additional increases that would bring it up to where it would be had we been increasing it over the last 10 years. I think I'll leave culture.

Actually, I'm not sure. I think I'm getting close to the end, so I'm going to ask some really quick questions on community lotteries. With respect to the major community facilities program and also CFEP I'm wondering if I can get from the minister, probably in terms of a written answer, the names of the applicants to both of these programs, the ones that were approved and for how much and a breakdown by constituency of the approved ones. I'm wondering if I can get that information within the next two weeks or as soon as possible.

As well, with respect to the community spirit initiative I want to mirror a few of the comments made by my colleague in the Liberal Party in that ultimately we're very concerned at the idea of donors defining priorities. Really, at the end of the day there are a lot of nonprofit organizations out there, and there are a number of criteria that should be put in place to ensure who gets funding. Simply, the preference of the people who have disposable income should not define the priority of which voluntary nonprofit organizations get funding. We, of course, have concerns about how much time they then have to engage in fundraising. You know, I don't see Bissell Centre people having the ability to stroll across the golf course in Riverbend to be able to get people to write cheques for them, and it seems to me that there are certain groups that are going to be lost

and are not going to be able to participate fully in this particular program because of the way it's structured.

Since it's new, I assume that there's been no funding approved already. [interjection] There has been funding approved already? Then could I also get a list of the organizations which have received funding and how much and, again, a constituency breakdown.

I do differ in one sense from my colleague in the other opposition party in that I don't actually want to see the corporate donations getting matching grants through this. In the same way that I don't think rich donors should be the ones setting priorities, nor should corporations be setting the priorities. Otherwise, I think there is agreement that there are some concerns around the way this is structured.

I have a final question for you. We, of course, are happy to see that there is support for the Portrait Gallery. As well, I love Telus World of Science. I take my kids there all the time. It's a great educational place. Telus, I believe, put about \$8 million in it to get the name. If we're putting \$40 million in, do you think we could get the name back? I'm just wondering if we could put some consideration into that and maybe name it after a great educator in Alberta.

**Ms Blakeman:** Or a great scientist.

**Ms Notley:** A great scientist. Someone like that. Anyway, those are my questions for this round.

**Mr. Blackett:** All right. Let me see if I remember them all. The first one was on the film industry, \$1.6 million. We realize that that's not enough. Our government recognizes that the film industry is a knowledge-based industry, and it gives us a tremendous opportunity to diversify our economy. I think that for every dollar that we spend in the film and television sector, we get \$3 back. So there's definitely a benefit to all Albertans. What we need to do is come up with some long-term sustainable funding, and we're looking at trying to create a level playing field . . .

**The Chair:** The 20 minutes are used up, but you can always come back.

**Mr. Rodney:** Well, I have two questions. One, I wonder if the member from across the floor may get an answer to the question that she last asked. It seems that our minister is not only able but very willing to answer that.

The question that I've been aching to ask for about an hour and a half, Mr. Chairman, is about the community spirit program. A number of us served on that committee for many months. There was some great work done there. It was interesting that in the first hour of questions it just seemed that there was nothing but badgering about a program that I think is just amazing. The truth is that our Premier was quoted some time ago as saying words to the effect of: I can't believe that it's so difficult to give away so many millions of dollars.

Now, this is a well-intentioned program. It was well designed by a lot of good people in government and out of government. So after the questions from our colleague across the floor I wonder if our minister could update us now, since the last election event, on how the voluntary sector has reacted to the program. We had a lot to do with it before. We just need an update, please.

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, I'll tell you. The responses from the voluntary sector have been quite good so far. A preliminary survey of 183 charitable organizations indicates that the enhanced tax credit has a very positive impact: 72 per cent report an increase in the value of total donations; 48 per cent indicate an increase in the number of

donors. Now, that program has been in place for a year, the donation program of \$20 million. It's new, so we don't have a lot of detail on that.

I just would go on to say that Albertans believe in giving a hand up, not a handout. We believe that we will support those weaker in our society. I've worked for an organization in Calgary as president, and we funded the Mustard Seed, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Sheriff King Home for battered women, Hull family services, and For the Love of Children Society. They didn't have to come to us. There are other people out there, other organizations that will help them.

So, you know, be thankful that we've got something. It's a basis from which to start. Don't criticize us for everything we haven't done. The glass is half full. We've just committed an extra hundred million dollars to the voluntary sector, and I think we should be happy with that.

**The Chair:** The hon. member?

**Mr. Rodney:** That completely satisfies me. Thank you, Mr. Chair.  
4:30

**Ms Blakeman:** Well, I can't let that one go by. Let me be clear. I don't think that the not-for-profit sector is ungrateful in any way, shape, or form for any of the money that's coming, but Alberta is a land of huge opportunity, with billion – billion – dollar surpluses. You know, should we crawl on the ground across broken glass in our gratefulness for a hundred million dollars? I think the province could pony up, particularly because the cultural sector and the voluntary sector have been ignored for a very long time.

We really appreciate the fact that there now is a Ministry of Culture and Community Spirit. We really appreciate the fact that there is a minister that appears to be interested in moving forward. But let's put this in perspective of the last 25 years.

The hundred million dollars is very nice, but it does depend on the donations coming in. It does depend on those very same organizations being able to put initiatives in place to raise that money. So it's not, strictly speaking, a handout. They're going to have to work very hard for this money, and some of them won't be able to get it. You know, don't dump on me because I'm bringing forward a critical voice to you. That's what you get when you're in government, and that's part of holding you accountable here. I'm sure the minister can manage to take the criticisms that are being aimed at him and doesn't need to be defended from the backbench. I'm sure he's doing just fine.

I'm going back to the cultural, fine arts sector – let's call it fine arts so that we know what we're talking about here – and to I think it's called the Spirit of Alberta money that's being given there. There's \$12 million to go to the AFA and implement the government's cultural policy; \$9 million is going to the AFA. A million more is going into film. That's leaving a couple of million that is left to sort of implement whatever is the rest of this policy. To me it's not clear what the rest of this policy is. We've got some vague references to culture. We've got nothing that's specific by way of action plans.

Earlier I was referencing the city of Edmonton's Art of Living, in which we are able to not only get a number of very thoughtful essays from people but some very specific and forward-reaching action plans. They've assumed the policy to support the arts. They've moved into the action plan complete with who's supposed to do it, how long, what the timelines are, who's going to pay for it, and how much money it's going to cost. I wonder why the city of Edmonton can manage to do that, yet we've had a number of different blueprints brought forward by the AFA, and we still don't have that level

of detail. Is that what this extra \$2 million or so is supposed to pay for? Is that what we're looking for, that we could expect a document like this with the kind of work that's been done?

It sounds to me like the community spirit program has already been done by a government backbench committee, so what else is coming forward under this amount of money? What else is going to be implemented out of the money that's left over here? When I look at it, yeah, we've got the \$12 million, \$9 million you take off, and out of that, you're taking off an additional \$1.6 million for film. So you're left with about \$1.5 million according to my reading of what the press releases and all tell us. Everything else is supposed to come under this increased funding. In comparison we've got horse racing getting \$48 million. Exactly how is this Spirit of Alberta policy supposed to roll out, or is that it? Is the \$12 million being allocated to AFA and the film fund?

While we're talking about the film fund, I want to see if the minister is considering changing the way we are allocating money to the film sector. The film sector has been very clear for some period of time that the grant program that is in place now is not as productive and useful for them as using a tax credit system, and they really want to move to that. I gave a couple of names to the minister of people to talk to that were very well versed in the community. I'm hoping that the government will be able to move into that. If it is able to move into a tax credit system, will it be able to increase beyond that \$20 million that's currently in the budget? Basically, that should be almost an unending fund because the more money that is generated by the film activity benefits all Albertans. Is the minister considering changing the way the film fund works and moving it from a grant program to a tax or employment credit base, either one? What exactly is the Spirit of Alberta cultural policy, and how does that money flow out to it? In the longer term are we looking to get any kind of significant increase to the AFA?

The \$9 million, as grateful as everybody is for it, does not even address how far behind we have fallen in our grant monies given cost of living since we last had a substantial increase in 1988. So \$12 million to 2008 is 20 years of time. You know, that \$12 million is not catching up to what we've lost through inflationary processes over that period of time. There have been a couple of small increases in the kind of \$3 million range, but when are we actually going to get ahead of this mark instead of small things that start to catch us up?

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, to start with, as far as the \$12 million, \$9 million went to AFA, \$1.6 million to the film development fund, \$840,000 to Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, and \$500,000 was to the cultural policy co-ordination office.

We have the policy right now, but we're in the process of implementing that. Jeffrey Anderson is taking the lead within our department to come out with the implementation of the policy, looking at access, capacity, excellence in support of our cultural industries. I've got a breakdown of where all the money of that \$9 million went, and I'd be more than happy to send that to you in writing if you're interested.

With respect to horse racing it's not like we take out \$48 million and give it to horse racing. Horse racing gets to keep a percentage of the money that's generated from the slot machines that they have. Some of that money goes back towards breeding programs and infrastructure within that industry.

Lastly, in the film industry we absolutely want to look at a long-term funding model with respect to tax credits because that's probably what makes sense to create a level playing field. We want to be able to keep those actors, directors, writers, grips, whoever, in Alberta. We have to compete against British Columbia. We have to compete against Saskatchewan, Quebec, Ontario, and northern

American states. We're working on that. The business case is about to be presented to me. I've been meeting with some of the different stakeholders, and we will work to make sure that we have some sort of plan for the 2009-2010 budget season.

**Ms Blakeman:** As part of all the rethinking that the minister is doing, is there a commitment to look at a much longer and farther-reaching capital redevelopment plan for cultural institutions? That's pretty wide ranging, Mr. Minister, because that's including some of the stuff that's currently being captured under the major community facilities program but also some of the specific arts venues that I talked about when we started this debate. That's a lot more of an investment over a longer period of time. I know that the government came out with a 20-year capital plan, which was pretty vague and very hard to pin the government down on, but even something like a five-year capital plan for cultural facilities would be very helpful.

On the horse racing, yes, we very well know that this is not government-allocated money, that they get to keep money that they are raising, but they got a sweet deal. Frankly, if they weren't around taking that money out of the slots, that money would be going to a number of the other charitable and voluntary organizations. Do I view that money as being allocated to horse racing when it could be going to other voluntary and charitable-based organizations? You betcha. Absolutely. I think it's inappropriate, but I've made no secret of that over many years.

In response to my question about how much money was actually going into the Spirit of Alberta cultural policy, what I heard from you in the end was that it's in about the \$300,000 range that is being set aside for that out of the \$12 million. Thank you for that answer.

4:40

I'd like to talk about the voluntary sector now. Under the goal in the business plan on page 66 we've got a key goal that is to support the nonprofit, voluntary sector, yet there are very few details as to what this means and, specifically, how that sort of general proclamation would be implemented. The majority of the strategy seemed to centre around the donation program and implementing province-wide training opportunities, and I'd like the minister to expand on that. What is the plan to recruit and retain these volunteers? I mean, providing training opportunities is fine, but we don't have the capacity right now in many cases to keep the volunteers that we have. What is the minister anticipating here? I'm not seeing a lot of money attached to this goal except for what looks to be the donation programs, and we've already talked about how difficult it is for that sector to reallocate their human resources to raising that money as compared to providing a service. What is this plan to recruit and retain that we're getting out of the business plan?

I notice that the funding for the voluntary sector services decreased by about \$200,000, and if I could get an explanation for that, please, that would be helpful. As well, if there is a real emphasis on volunteers, which I seem to be seeing an indication of from the minister, I'm wondering why there was no increase, then, to the Wild Rose Foundation, which is the foundation that has traditionally been there to support and enhance the voluntary experience? If I could get answers from him on those.

One more thing on the voluntary sector, and that's around space. We've just had a couple of group presentations to the Edmonton city council around the need for space for groups that are operating in the charitable or voluntary sector, and they can't afford the rents. They don't know what they're going to do. They're trying to come together and realize some economies of scale. They are looking for space from the city of Edmonton. You are very blessed in Calgary to have the support of the Kahanoff Foundation with the office

building they provided, and they're now building a second one, a tower, for the organizations.

The provincial government has funded the Percy Page Centre for provincial arts and recreation groups for some time, but we need more. We are very concerned that we are going to simply have some organizations shut down because they can't find space they can afford to operate in. I'm talking about groups like Canadian Paraplegic, about Big Brothers and Big Sisters, John Howard. I mean, there are just organizations right across the spectrum that are all struggling to find space.

I know the city is trying to work on this. They understand and are stepping up to the plate. In Calgary you've got the Kahanoff centre. What additional movements – money, planning, support – is this ministry willing to give that sector by way of space? When the Edmonton Sexual Assault Centre is looking at having an increase, that their \$89,000 a year rent is going to double or triple, that's a pretty scary thought. Do we really want to lose an organization like that because they can't afford to pay rent?

**Mr. Blackett:** If I can keep all these questions straight, the first one was with respect to assisting the nonprofit, voluntary sector. We've done a lot of things that we're moving forward on, and we haven't got it all done yet. In meeting with our mayor yesterday, we talked about space and those organizations that are housed or not housed in space that they can either afford or can continue to reside in. We're going to have to work together not only with the city of Edmonton but also with some of my colleagues in cabinet to come up with some solutions. It's not one where I can just come up with an ad hoc solution overnight, but it's something that we'll certainly look at because we do value them.

With respect to that sector, also, a framework has been developed to re-examine, clarify, and strengthen the relationship between the province and the sector, signed by the minister of municipal affairs and housing on behalf of the government back in 2007. The purpose of the initiative was to help develop a sustainable nonprofit voluntary sector that has the ability to deliver programs and services that contribute to strong and vibrant communities. You know, I've tasked and challenged people within my department to find out how we're going to do some of these things long term. I think the donor program was recognized because the majority of funds for most of these nonprofit organizations come from donations, but I understand that that's not all of it. We have to take a look at that, and we will continue to do so.

With respect to cultural facilities and referring to the cultural policy our goal is to enhance community capacity to support and promote cultural activity. It's not culture specific, but there are those funding programs through CFEP and MCFP that we can utilize for some of that building. We've also spent money for the upgrading of both Jubilee auditoria. Lastly, community spirit is designed to help the nonprofit organizations with operating cash for things like rent, utilities, and, most importantly, salaries.

I'm not sure if I've answered all your questions or not. I think you asked for some examples of MCFP for culture facilities: the Art Gallery of Alberta, Citadel Theatre, Edmonton concert hall, and Camrose Performing Arts Centre. I'm pretty sure there's funding that has gone through there for the clay district in Medicine Hat and some others that aren't on that list.

I'll say in closing that we've committed ourselves in dollars with a new ministry. We're not going to attack everything at once. We've come up with monies to target a lot of different areas. Going forward we'll continue to take a look at where we need to allocate those dollars, but overall I'm still getting an inventory of all our cultural properties throughout the province, looking at where the deficiencies are, consulting with the stakeholders to tell me where

those deficiencies are. So when we get new monies, if we have new monies, where should we channel those? You'll advocate for Edmonton, somebody will advocate for Calgary, and somebody will advocate for many other areas in the province, and we have to decide where it's best utilized.

**Ms Blakeman:** Yeah, the last bit is what I was really looking for. I was looking for a longer term plan once you have an inventory because it's a lot more money than what is available out of a CFEP grant, which has got a \$125,000 ceiling on it, and again it's got to be matched funds. So if we're really going to create things like a new performance space to replace the Kaasa Theatre, that the government took away, that's a lot more than \$125,000 that's available through a CFEP grant, and ditto for, you know, artist live-work spaces.

That whole section that I was doing was on the sort of voluntary sector and talking about their need for space and assistance for them. You've met with the mayor of Edmonton – I appreciate that – but there are voluntary groups that are across the province, and the unmanaged growth that the government has been pleased to accelerate has really had a discriminatory effect on that voluntary sector. They don't have the money to pay those kinds of increases in rent and utilities and electrical bills, never mind wages. So that sector is looking for fairly concrete help in that particular direction, and I'm trying to steer you there. I was looking for the details of exactly what you were trying to do to fulfill that goal where you were talking about implementing province-wide training opportunities. I didn't quite understand what you were trying to do there.

4:50

**The Chair:** You can always come back after.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon and join the estimates debate around Culture and Community Spirit. I want to commend the minister on his performance so far in his efforts to answer our many questions. I have but a few more, and hopefully I can get some answers or at least discussion going around these things.

There are three areas that I want to focus on. Again, we'll share the 20 minutes, as the minister has been doing with people thus far, if that's okay with the minister, and he's indicated that it is, Mr. Chairman. Three areas I'd like to focus on in my time with the minister, two of which are of vital concern to a lot of my constituents, I think, and one of which is sort of just of a personal interest. I'll deal with the personal interest one first if I may because it's a pretty short ask and answer I think.

Telus World of Science, the \$40 million that you've committed to that. My understanding is that that is, I believe, 25 per cent of the total budget for the new science centre in Calgary and that the other three components would come from the federal government ideally, the municipal government in Calgary, and is it the private sector, or is it fundraising by the Telus World of Science itself? I'm not sure, and maybe the minister can clarify that. But the real question is quite a simple one. Do you have a firm dollar commitment from either Ottawa or city hall in Calgary or the fourth sector yet? If not, what are your plans for going ahead with your \$40 million portion of that? I'll sit down and let the minister answer this question.

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, as far as the Telus World of Science we've committed \$40 million. We are expecting and anticipating contributions from the federal government and the city of Calgary, but they have not come forward with an amount yet. There is some money coming from corporate donations, apparently, in the Calgary area. But we thought that as a province we would take the lead and say

that this is a worthwhile venture, and we put our \$40 million, one-quarter of the money, forward in good faith to help spearhead that project.

**Mr. Taylor:** I couldn't agree with the minister more that it's a worthwhile venture, and the minister sounds as though he's fairly optimistic that the other pieces of the puzzle will come together. We'll watch that with interest.

The next area I'd like to talk about a little bit if I could is kind of a spinoff from what my colleague from Edmonton-Centre was talking about in terms of artists' spaces and performing spaces and that sort of thing. Artists, of course, struggling artists, need a place to live, and that is increasingly difficult in both Calgary and Edmonton, well, really in any city in the province of Alberta. I've had a number of visits over the last, I would say, year or two from stakeholders in the arts and culture sector in Calgary where they've expressed real concern going forward about their ability to remain viable organizations.

One example that I think of off the top of my head is Alberta Ballet because Alberta Ballet pulls in so many performing artists from other cities not just in Canada but around the world, quite frankly. As we all know, ballet, as wonderful a cultural activity and institution as it is, doesn't exactly pay like, you know, drilling for oil, for instance. This has become a real struggle for them, being able to recruit and attract people for their seasons, because of not being able to offer them any kind of accommodation that they can afford on the kind of money that Alberta Ballet can pay. I think that's but one example really.

I wonder if the minister could address on behalf of my constituents, because Calgary-Currie is such an expensive place to buy real estate these days, what his plans are in this area and how they tie in with the budget that we're debating today.

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, in terms of a specific answer I'd probably have to get back to you on that. As you mentioned, performing space and space for artists is a problem everywhere. One of the things from discussion with the mayor of Edmonton – and I'll have it with other jurisdictions – is that there are government buildings that we have. There's some government land we have. Can we work some sort of arrangement to be able to utilize some of that space and make that available or accessible to arts groups? In Calgary the downtown space, to be able to find it – I mean it's prohibitive. It's one of the most expensive commercial real estate markets in North America. In short, I don't have a quick answer for you, but I will work on one, and I'll make sure I get back to you in the next couple weeks.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Would the minister commit to sitting down and discussing this with his counterpart the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs, specifically? Oh, I think I'll throw President of Treasury Board in there since he's the keeper of the purse strings. It strikes me that although this would not solve the problem, one effective way to begin to address the problem, both for artists and for others who are struggling with affordability, would be temporary rent caps. I'd be interested in knowing if the minister could make any progress with some of his cabinet colleagues on that area. Can I get that kind of commitment, Mr. Minister?

**Mr. Blackett:** Yeah. Not only can you get that commitment, I've already had a conversation with each of those ministers around what we need to do for arts. I've already said that we will get together at a later date to be able to see what we can do specifically. But I know we've talked to the Minister of Infrastructure about some

different spaces with respect to Edmonton, and your point is well taken. We need to look at a province-wide basis, and we will certainly do that. You have my commitment.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the minister, and I look forward to some information around that area being included in the answers that he's committed to give me in the next couple of weeks. I thank you for that commitment as well.

The third and final area I wanted to talk about is near and dear to the heart of a lot of my constituents, and it's moviemaking, film production, and obviously television production goes with that. I mean, we're talking here about the estimates for the Ministry of Culture and Community Spirit, and we've been having some debate this afternoon about what community spirit means, but the culture side – certainly, the word "culture" conjures up some fairly clear images, I think, in the minds of most people, but culture tends to imply the fine arts and the performing arts and the arts that don't immediately turn a profit or make a whole lot of money, although they have, as the minister knows, tremendous, tremendous economic spinoffs for any community. But when we say culture, we tend to talk about, you know, the symphony, the ballet, the opera, et cetera, et cetera: live performances, that sort of thing.

Movies are mass entertainment. Television is mass entertainment, but it is entertainment, and entertainment is as much a part of the culture of any society as the Mona Lisa. It's also, interestingly, if done well and done right, a segment of culture that can not only have great economic spinoffs in and of itself but also be fairly profitable in and of itself.

The constituents I talk to who work in the film and television production business – and it is a business – are struggling. By the way, they're struggling in Vancouver, too, as I'm sure the minister knows, and Vancouver is, I think, more of a show business, mass entertainment, movie and television production hot spot than anywhere else in the country. They're struggling simply because a dollar is worth a dollar now, and one of the things that used to give us great advantage in this country was when the dollar was worth 65, 70, 75 cents American. That dollar differential in and of itself, to say nothing of the quality crews that we can assemble in Calgary, in Edmonton, in Vancouver, and many other centres around Canada, made it worth while to come north and shoot many movies and television series up here. That advantage has disappeared for everybody, but I think that in Calgary and in Edmonton we are doubly disadvantaged, maybe triply disadvantaged, in the sense that we do not have an Alberta film and television tax credit. I believe very strongly, as I know my colleague from Edmonton-Centre does, that that's precisely what we need in this province. We need an Alberta film and television tax credit that is at least competitive with if not better than the best film and TV tax credit available in Canada. We need that; the industry needs that. It needs it, going forward, to be viable.

5:00

You've increased by a factor of four, you said, over the last five years, I believe it was, the amount of money in the film development fund to \$20 million, but we really need that tax credit that is based on Alberta labour expenses. I wonder if I can get the minister to commit to a timeline for developing such a tax credit. I'd like a firm commitment on that if I could, please.

I said that we were maybe triply disadvantaged in this province, and the other thing that we do not have, really – I know we kinda, sorta, quasi have one in Edmonton, but it's still a glorified television studio – is a full-blown sound stage.

**Ms Blakeman:** Do you want it in Calgary-Currie?

**Mr. Taylor:** Well, I don't know that there's much real estate left in Calgary-Currie. You know, you'd probably have to subsidize the heck out of the purchase price for that. I'm not sure. But, yes, Calgary needs one. Obviously, Calgary-Currie, as fabulous a constituency as it is and as beautifully situated as it is with the mountains in the background, is probably not the best location in Calgary for it. There's probably a brownfield development somewhere in Calgary that would work better. The point is that we need that sound stage. I'm going to speak now for my constituents and the people in Calgary in the film and television business. We think, they think, I believe we need that down in Calgary.

Perhaps Edmonton needs one, too. Edmonton does have the old Allard studio, which is part of Global now, I believe, isn't it?

**Ms Blakeman:** Yeah. But somebody else bought the sound stage.

**Mr. Taylor:** Somebody else bought the sound stage. So you've got something here.

But one of the problems I hear about repeatedly in terms of trying to attract film business and television business to Calgary and southern Alberta is that everybody wants to come and film in southern Alberta if they're shooting a western or if they're shooting something that needs mountains for the backdrop, but they've got nowhere to shoot the interiors. That really is holding back what could be a very viable, very vital industry and could attract a heckuva lot of attention to good old Calgary. I'm always for the new centre of the universe being the centre of attention as well. I wonder if I can get a commitment from the minister around that sound stage.

Now I will sit down and let him answer the questions. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Blakett:** Well, thank you. I just want to give you an answer to your second question. Building Canada is a plan from the federal government that will be rolled out soon and has a specific component for cultural infrastructure. We will be looking forward to working with them on that, to answer that question about spaces for the arts and cultural sector.

I understand why we need to have a strong film and television sector and not just for the people that are there; that's our content. One of the things in looking at the cultural policy when I first took over this portfolio, I said, "How do we get that to as many Albertans as quickly as possible? How do we get access to those people who can't go to the Jubilee or the Winspear or to Theatre Calgary? How do they get access to Rosebud?" And I said, "We've got an Internet, our SuperNet, that we spent a lot of money on for Albertans." We utilize that with the medical community, and we utilize that with the postsecondary institutions, but our K to 12 schooling system doesn't utilize it to its maximum potential. We have so much content that's there through film and television, whether they're performances, whether they're movies, whether they're plays, and we need to be able to use that content to educate everyone.

As far as a tax credit, I'm on for that. I'll make this commitment to you, that I will forward a proposal to my cabinet and to my caucus before the next budget because I want it done, and I want it done soon. There is no way I could advocate to be able to push something towards my colleagues from March 12 until the budget was announced, but from here on in we're certainly going to work with that. My officials assure me that we can work towards that, and I will do my level best to convince my colleagues that we need to support that because the industry is vital to us. Like I said, it's a

knowledge-based industry. It gives us a 3 to 1 benefit from dollars put in to what we get as Albertans from it, and I think it's really a no-brainer.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you for that. So I do have a commitment that by this time next year or hopefully sooner – hopefully we'll get to the budget sooner next year – you will bring forward a proposal for a tax credit, that I'm keeping my fingers crossed will actually be part of the debate on estimates for the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit this time next year.

I'm not sure that I heard an answer around the sound stage specifically. I did hear about Building Canada, and I did hear about arts and culture infrastructure. Certainly a sound stage I would interpret to be part of arts and culture infrastructure, although I know some people tend to say, "Well, no. That really should have stayed over in economic development" or something like that. No, I don't think so. As I said before, mass entertainment that attracts audiences of millions is a perfectly legitimate part of culture. But can the minister give me a specific commitment around a sound stage for Calgary?

**Mr. Blakett:** Well, right now through the industry advisory committee we're involved in discussions on a creative hub in Calgary regarding a film studio. That involves Employment and Immigration, Advanced Education and Technology. Those two ministries are already engaged in this discussion, and it may involve others. I know I've been talking to some stakeholders in Calgary. That is something that would be vital. So we're having ongoing discussions. I'd be happy at a future date, when we have some more to say on that, to share that with this Legislature.

**Mr. Taylor:** Is that, then, an "I don't know when I'll have a firm commitment" answer?

**Mr. Blakett:** Well, at the end of the day you need the money, and I have no firm commitment with respect to funding. So yes.

**Mr. Taylor:** Just wanted to confirm that that was what you'd said. Thank you.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm just going through The Spirit of Alberta: Alberta's Cultural Policy. Just to expand on some of the points that I was raising before, when you look at the goals that are set out on page 11 of this, you know, it would be very helpful. We've got goal B.

Enhance community capacity to support and promote cultural activity.

In support of Goal B, the government commits to:

- Encourage greater private charitable giving to non-profit organizations.

Well, we know how that's going to happen.

- Provide funding for communities to plan, build and upgrade cultural and recreational facilities.

Well, I keep asking that question. I'm not quite sure how that's supposed to happen. It goes on.

- Explore opportunities to enhance partnerships amongst all three levels of government, the private sector, non-profit organizations, cultural and educational institutions and individuals for the promotion and support of culture in Alberta.

I'm not quite sure what that means either. It's kind of vague.

I'm going back again to what the city of Edmonton has done. It

would be really helpful if we had something that attached to each of these goals that actually gave us who was responsible for doing this in very concrete terms. Is it the government? Is it this department? Is it individuals? Is it the Ministry of Municipal Affairs? Exactly who's responsible for doing this, when is it supposed to be done, and how much money is being allocated to it by whom? In some cases you may well have built a partnership that says the city of Edmonton is going to put in X amount, the city of Calgary is going to put in X amount, you're going to have a private donor that's going to work on a sound stage, you know, et cetera, et cetera, but there's just a lack of detail in these goals and strategies, that makes it very hard to measure.

As I looked for the measurement, indeed, I did find something. At the very end of this, on page 13, it says, "Measuring Performance." Well, I think that if you had a little conversation with the Auditor General, he'd take you a bit to task. You know, "the goals and strategies of the Cultural Policy are successfully implemented." Well, as I've just said, we can't really tell exactly what you mean to do from those goals and strategies, so it's hard to tell exactly when they're successfully implemented.

5:10

Another bullet point: "An effective communications strategy for the Cultural Policy is developed, implemented and updated as needed." How do we measure that? Is there to be a certain amount of money spent on this? Is there supposed to be a certain number of activities that will implement this? What would those be? Is there going to be a brochure aside from what you've already done? What exactly does that mean? How do I measure that a year from now? You're not giving me a lot to work with here. I think you could be much more detailed in what you're doing. You may well have a plan that people are going to follow through on this, and that would be great, but it needs fleshing out. I recognize that the minister is committed to doing that, but it'd sure be nice to see it.

There's obviously nothing for the minister to answer there because I'm just going back on a point I've raised a number of times.

I have some very specific questions that I would like to ask. On page 107 of the estimates book I'm wondering what the equipment is for the ministry. It's under the expenses vote, equipment/inventory purchases, ministry support services, which is vote 1, \$395,000 in equipment for the ministry. I'm just wondering what that is exactly.

Maybe I'll do these sort of three questions at a time, and then I'll let you answer them.

On page 108, the very first line, 1.0.1, minister's office. I'm wondering how we arrived at this amount of money. It's saying that in the '06-07 year the actual amount for the minister's office was \$223,000. Now, we're up to \$549,000. But this ministry didn't exist, so it was in with a number of other ones. So how exactly did this get calculated? Did you take – you know, there were four things in that other ministry: recreation, parks, culture, and tourism. So what did they do, just divide by four, and that's 25 per cent of the budget?

It's pretty impressive. I mean, going from \$223,000 in '06-07 – a budgeted amount last year of \$265,000 – in fact, it got to \$428,000. Now, we're looking at \$549,000 for the minister's office. Actually, that whole first vote, vote 1, on page 108, in essence we've gone from \$4.5 million in '06-07. The actual for the year we're in is \$5.4 million, and now we're going up to \$7.3 million. Yahoo. Wow. That's a lot of money. How is that all rolling out? Maybe I could get some explanations about that.

So in total we've seen the ministry support go from \$4.5 million to \$7.3 million. I'll let the minister answer those very specific questions.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Blakett:** All right. On your first question the \$395,000 is for information systems.

Number two, with respect to the \$223,000, that's 50 per cent of the budget from Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture that existed last year. So you've got \$223,000, which was \$446,000. There's an increase this year because, obviously, with a separate office there's going to be an increase because we've got two separate ministries.

On the third one, the increase, breaking that down, \$879,000 was increased primarily due to migrating computer systems to the government of Alberta network and other corporate initiative projects; \$488,000 was a portion of the 2007-08 budgets for the minister's office and the deputy minister's office from the before ministry of tourism, parks, recreation, and culture, which was transferred to the Ministry of Culture and Community Spirit. The estimate for 2008-09 represents the requirements for a separate office for a full year, \$415,000 is funding to support the information technology strategic plan, \$89,000 is an increase primarily related to the need for additional human resource consultants, and \$28,000 for other increases. And I think that other human resource consultants would be other people. We needed more bodies to do the work.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. When this was part of another ministry, we were spending approximately \$4.5 million on ministry support services, which includes the minister's office, the deputy minister's office, communications, and human resources. In the last budget, in which, again, this ministry didn't exist separately, the forecast was actually \$5.4 million, and the increase is still fairly significant. I'll just take it that this is in creating your new office, but it's an impressive amount of money for the minister's office.

In vote 2.0.5, film development, in fact it shows that in '06-07 that was at \$27 million, and then for the year just ended the forecast was \$18 million, and now we're up to \$19.6 million. If we could get an explanation of what happened, going from \$27 million to \$18 million and then back up to \$19.6 million, that would be good.

On page 117 it's giving me that the full-time equivalent employment for the department is 554, which is up from 538 in the last budget, so we get an additional approximately 20 people there. This is detail, so you'll have to give this to me in writing later, but if I could get a breakdown of how these FTEs are assigned through the various votes that you have; for example, how many FTEs are under vote 2.0.1, program support, how many are under vote 2.0.5, film development, et cetera.

I'll stop there and let you answer those questions.

**Mr. Blakett:** With respect to your first question we restate everything through a comparable budget, so on that first issue of going from \$27,000 to \$19,000 – that's actually not the first question. Sorry. That's the second question. We restate everything through a comparable budget. On the film development the reason for the reduction is that we gave a \$12,500 one-time catch-up fund to the film industry. That's why there's a difference from \$19.69 million to \$27 million: because that was not repeated.

Lastly, we will provide the updated information that you request. I have FTE positions by area but not in the specific detail that you require, so we will get that for you.

**Ms Blakeman:** Okay. On page 118 – these are statutory votes – the Queen's golden jubilee scholarships appear as a flat \$10,000, yet

when I look at page 123, that appears under the program expense Queen's golden jubilee awards and medals as \$70,000, and it's in fact increased. It was \$48,000 in '06-07. It was budgeted to go to \$70,000. In fact, it was only \$50,000, but now it's back budgeted again at \$70,000. Can you tell me what else is in there? I'm assuming that some of this is awards. The medals are over; that happened in 2001, I think. What's the difference between the \$10,000 located in one part of your budget and the \$70,000 located in the other part of the budget? If you could explain that, please.

5:20

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, the \$10,000 is for the Queen's golden jubilee scholarships, and the \$70,000 is for the Queen's golden jubilee awards and medals. One graduating high school student from each high school in Alberta is eligible for the Premier's citizenship award, a plaque which recognizes the student's excellence in citizenship, leadership, community service, and volunteering. The Queen's golden jubilee citizenship medals and \$5,000 in awards are presented annually to the most outstanding graduating high school students in Alberta who receive the Premier's citizenship awards. That's where that \$70,000 comes from.

**Ms Blakeman:** Oh, they're two completely different programs. So the \$10,000 is one thing, and the \$70,000 is another thing. They're not together.

**Mr. Blackett:** Yes.

**Ms Blakeman:** Okay. Good.

I'd like to go back to that IT. What exactly is being added here through the new IT money, which was the \$395,000 that I identified in my first question? That was on page 107. If the minister is able to tell me exactly what's being added here. Is this software programs? Is it web design? Is it support for groups that are trying to have interactive online map searches to find heritage festivals across Alberta? Tell me what exactly this IT money is being spent on.

The second piece of that is the \$12 million, the one-time injection for catch-up in the film fund. Did that include the \$5 million for *Passchendaele*? Where's the *Passchendaele* money? Was it the year before? I thought it wasn't going to be spent until the movie was shot, and the movie was shot. The \$12 million catch-up sounds like *Passchendaele* wasn't inside of it, but I'll let him answer.

**Mr. Blackett:** With respect to the \$395,000 we'll give you a detailed breakdown in writing for that.

As well, the *Passchendaele* money that you talked about was paid out in 2006-2007. That was \$35,000.

**Ms Blakeman:** I think the minister is just consulting, and he will be standing with an answer imminently.

In the meantime, I'm just trying to find out what's in that \$12 million – that was the one-time catch-up fund – and where the money is for *Passchendaele*. My understanding was that although the deal was swung, it was not to be allocated until the movie was shot. It was shot this summer, so I'm wondering why it would be in any other budget except for last year's.

**Mr. Blackett:** From what I understand in conferring with my department officials, under 3.0.12 there's a \$35 million item there for the Alberta 2005 centennial initiative, and \$5.5 million is going

towards that program. That is, I understand, held in trust. So that will be going to that group.

**Ms Blakeman:** I'm sorry. The *Passchendaele* movie is coming out of \$35 million that's under the Alberta 2005 centennial initiative?

**Mr. Blackett:** It was held in trust, so the money is there. They will get their money.

**Ms Blakeman:** Isn't that an interesting way to do things.

**Mr. Blackett:** It was a centennial project.

**Ms Blakeman:** Okay. Then the rest of the \$12 million was catch-up money.

I think I'm almost out of time here, but there are minor increases that are happening in heritage. I'm wondering: is that also including some major restoration amounts? I heard the minister talk about the Turner Valley gas plant. There were a number of issues there around environmental concerns and disturbing the site. [Ms Blakeman's speaking time expired] I'm not going to get that question out.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, but the time allotted for consideration of this department's estimates has expired. I would now like to invite the officials to leave the Assembly.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the committee now rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

**Mr. Rogers:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions for the Department of Culture and Community Spirit relating to the 2008-09 government estimates for the general revenue fund and the lottery fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009. The committee reports progress and requests leave to sit again.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Having heard the report, is the Assembly agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed, say no. So ordered.

Now I would like to recognize the Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that given the hour we call it 5:30 and adjourn until 7:30 this evening, at which time we will reconvene in Committee of Supply.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:29 p.m.]





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Bhardwaj	Drysdale	Johnson	Vandermeer
Chase	Fawcett	Kang	Woo-Paw
Dallas	Griffiths	Mason	

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Chair: Mr. VanderBurg

Deputy Chair: Mr. Kang

Anderson	Cao	MacDonald	Sandhu
Brown	Jacobs	Notley	Woo-Paw
Calahasen			

### Standing Committee on Resources and Environment

Chair: Mr. Prins

Deputy Chair: Dr. Swann

Berger	Griffiths	Mason	Oberle
Boutilier	Hehr	McQueen	Webber
Drysdale			

### Standing Committee on the Economy

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