



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

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The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta

## The 27th Legislature

First Session

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[Errata, if any, appear inside back cover]

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 15, 2008

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Welcome.

Let us pray. Author of all wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, we ask for guidance in order that truth and justice may prevail in all of our judgments. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 14 very dedicated staff of the Public Affairs Bureau. They have dropped by today to visit us in the Legislature. They are Mrs. Sonia Sinha, Ms Terri Howard, Ms Tatjana Laskovic, Ms Sonia Piano, Ms Hailey Pinto, Mr. Todd Osler, Ms Shelley Gangl, Ms Lauren King, Mrs. Denise Stevens, Mrs. Binda Virk, Mr. Ed Chu, Ms Danijela Fajic, Miss Kim Misik, and Mr. Ryan Warehime. I would ask that they all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Mr. Speaker, I too would like to introduce some of my staff, some hard-working civil servants that are involved in various segments of my ministry. They're also part of the public service tours that are happening at the Legislature. Some are very new employees, and some have been with us for quite some time. The individuals that I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly are Mark Nicoll, Holly Paull, Kim Zettel, Dan Hodgson, Danielle Figura, Chris Wu, Jennifer Nguy, Karina Thompson, André Rivest, Myles Morris. I would like to ask them all to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Liepert:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. First, there's a group of 55 grade 5 students from Webber Academy in my constituency. They're accompanied today by teachers Daniel Mondaca, Jason Ash, and Tanya Ferguson. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The second group, Mr. Speaker, is 16 grades 7 and 9 students from Calgary Academy in my constituency. They are seated in the public gallery and are accompanied by teachers Charles Brodeur, Kristin Merrett, and Chris Paz. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports.

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly nine employees of Alberta Seniors and Community Supports, planning and research department. They are Mr. Kurt Schreiner, Ms Gisela Kwok, Ms Renee Pellerin, Ms Tessa Ford, Mrs. Shauna-Leigh Wright, and Ms Jennifer Watts. Although I haven't had the pleasure of working side by side with them, I've been told by my deputy minister that they are all very intelligent, they are very industrious, and they all have a great sense of humour. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a constituent of mine who has joined us in the members' gallery this afternoon. Mrs. Gwen Schieman is a long-time, avid observer of all things of the Legislature and politics in general. I'd like to say that she's up here to watch her MLA in action, but I must admit she's probably more likely to be here to visit with her daughter, Carol Anderson, who is the executive assistant for the Minister of Service Alberta. I'd ask Gwen to rise and receive the recognition of the House.

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, tomorrow in Calgary I will cohost the 17th annual crime prevention awards. We have three people with us today who have been nominated for one of these awards. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Danisha Bhaloo, Cor De Wit, and Dania Kochan. Ms Bhaloo is a co-ordinator with the youth restorative action project. This group works with youths who have caused harm as a result of racism, intolerance, or other social issues. Mr. Cor De Wit is the president of the Leduc Rural Crime Watch Association, which this year is celebrating its 25th anniversary. Ms Kochan represents Youcan, an organization that works to prevent violence by young people. With your permission I would ask Ms Bhaloo, Mr. De Wit, and Ms Kochan to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Jacobs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to introduce five members of the Alberta Federation of Rural Water Co-ops. These people are here today to present to rural caucus. I want to thank them for the good work they do on behalf of many farmers and ranchers and people in rural Alberta. They are Keith Johnston, Gary Nuckles, Harvey Schnee, Harold Halvorson, Lois Westacott. I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Knight:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It certainly is a pleasure for me today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. David Peattie. David is a group vice-president for BP Global, one of the world's largest energy companies. I had the pleasure of meeting with Mr. Peattie earlier this year when I was in London, where we discussed BP's interest in oil sands and in development of energy, generally speaking, in the province of Alberta. I once again enjoyed the opportunity to meet with him today to discuss opportunities in Alberta. Joining Mr. Peattie today are his executive assistant, Al Cook, and Zoë Kolbuc, director of government affairs for BP Canada. Zoë, of course, is well known to the members of this Assembly. I would ask them all to rise, please, and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly two constituents of mine, Bob and Shirley Anderson. Bob and Shirley have lived in Lethbridge for 39 years, contributing to and participating in many facets of our great community. They raised their family in

Lethbridge. Bob worked at the University of Lethbridge in several capacities, including dean of education, prior to his retirement. Shirley worked for Alberta social services. Today they both volunteer regularly throughout the community, including weekly at the food bank. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm congratulations of this body.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise and introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a group of brilliant young students who were involved in the Odd Fellows and Rebekahs youth speaking competition, which took place July 2007. These five amazing students were required to speak for eight to 10 minutes on any topic pertaining to the United Nations or world affairs, and the winner gets a trip to the United Nations in July. These students showed poise, confidence, and a very colourful vocabulary and gave speeches that would rival many of the speeches in this House. I'd ask them to stand as I say their names: Kiarra Ball from Sedgewick, who's this year's winner; Chelsea Nielsen from Killam, last year's winner; and fellow competitors Cheyanne Vetter from Hughenden, Michelle Leslie from Sedgewick, Aaron Wasserman from Hardisty. They are also accompanied by their very proud parents, and rightfully so: Ruth Ball, Meredith Nielsen, Gina Vetter, and Theresa Bitzer. They're also accompanied by Dorothy Felgate, who represents the Rebekahs, and Terri Rombough, who assisted many of the speakers over the years. They are seated in the public gallery, and I'd ask this Assembly to give them the traditional warm welcome.

1:40

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

**Mr. Sandhu:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly two of my special friends. My first guest is Amrik Singh Minhas, a deputy superintendent of police in Punjab, India. He has served for 25 years. He's president of the Ludhiana sports association, which organizes grass hockey tournaments in India. On my last visit to India I invited him to visit Edmonton, Canada, so he came. Thank you to him.

The second is my special friend Avtar Singh Thind. He is a resident of my riding of Edmonton-Manning. He's a well-respected and successful businessman. Avtar worked very hard to help me during my nomination and election campaign. I'm really thankful to him for this help.

Both of my friends are here for the first time to see question period and are sitting in the public gallery. I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Saturday is International Day against Homophobia, and I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly two staff members from the Pride Centre of Edmonton. They are Emily Johnson and Brendan Van Alstine.

Homophobia continues to be a significant problem in our society. The Pride Centre of Edmonton strives to provide services to Edmonton's sexual minority community, which includes gay men, lesbians, and bisexual and transgendered people, among others. In addition to providing a safe drop-in space for sexual minorities, the Pride Centre provides programming to help address the issues faced by this community. Some of these issues include increased risk of

homelessness, alienation, and suicide. The Pride Centre will be hosting an open house on Saturday, May 17, in recognition of the International Day against Homophobia. All here are welcome to attend.

Mr. Speaker, I would now ask that Emily and Brendan rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Prins:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly and to all Albertans three people that are very important in my life: my wife, Pauline Prins, my daughter Julia Vanderveen from Vancouver, and my grandson Gideon Paul Vanderveen. This is his first trip to the Legislature. He's seven months old. He's now awake, so we can all give them a great welcome to this Assembly. Would they please rise and receive this welcome.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

**Ms Redford:** Thank you. I'm pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you to this Assembly a good friend of mine, Mr. Ryan Warehime. Ryan Warehime is a student at Mount Royal College in my constituency and has worked very hard on a number of community activities. He's quite interesting in that he has both a rural background and is now living in the city. He originally, Mr. Speaker, is from your constituency and has recently moved to Calgary. I'd like to ask Ryan to stand and receive the traditional welcome of this House.

### Ministerial Statements

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

### Health System Governance

**Mr. Liepert:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I announced a new health care system governance model that affects all members of Alberta's nine regional health authority boards, the Alberta Cancer Board, the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, and the Alberta Mental Health Board. These board members have been replaced by a single provincial Health Services Board. I know I speak for all members of this Legislature when I say thank you to all the former board members for their dedicated service and leadership in their communities.

The new Alberta Health Services Board will be responsible for health services delivery for the entire province and will report directly to me as minister. The ministry will continue to be responsible for setting, monitoring, and enforcing provincial health policy, standards, and programs as well as managing health capital planning, procurement, and outcome measures.

The decision to move to a new governance model is not about laying blame or pointing fingers; it's about providing the people of Alberta with the best high-quality, safe, accessible health care. Mr. Speaker, this new governance model is designed to strengthen a provincial approach to better managing health services, services that are patient focused and provide equitable access to all Albertans.

This is, I state, an administrative change only. Albertans will continue to receive health programs and services in their communities tomorrow just as they do today and did yesterday. Front-line health staff will be unaffected. The health system will continue to rely on the skills and dedication of our health care professionals,

who deliver the high-quality health care services that we depend on.

Mr. Speaker, patient care in our province must be seamless. It must be patient focused, and it must provide day-to-day access to quality health care services for all Albertans. Today's decision is the first step towards that goal.

Thank you.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's health care system has some of the best facilities and professionals in the world, and the citizens of this province are rightfully grateful for our good fortune. I'll join the minister in thanking former board members for all their hard work, particularly those who had the courage to stand up for their fellow citizens and speak boldly about the health care system's shortcomings.

As a doctor I always perform a diagnosis before treating a patient, but this government, in dissolving regional boards, has performed radical surgery without even checking the patient's chart, and they've done it without providing any evidence that they've done a careful, comprehensive analysis of the problems in the system and how two previous attempts at restructuring are going to solve this. Where is the evidence that this will improve access, quality, and cost-effectiveness in the publicly funded health care system?

This decision distances front-line health care workers from the decisions that impact them the most. It sets aside their valuable advice and experience. These people have devoted years to learning challenges and needs of local communities and regions. It signals a loss of trust between the government and the boards they themselves appointed.

Mr. Speaker, as a medical doctor I'm very troubled by this decision. I can tell you that I'm far from the only health care professional who feels this way. With the third reorganization in 15 years and the creation of a new provincial centralized board this appears to be about centralizing political power under a Premier who has proven that he doesn't like dissent. Most troubling of all, this new centralized control will make it far easier for this government to privatize our health care system. By getting rid of local boards, they've struck down a lot of defenders of the publicly funded health care system.

Will this new governance model address overcrowding, wait times, unhealthy work environments for professionals, and the shortage of health care professionals, or will it serve only to crush dissent and force those professionals to endure yet again top-down governance with no recourse but to leave or to continue struggling for limited resources, their voices silenced? Time will tell, Mr. Speaker.

Given the lack of evidence for this dramatic repeat disruption my diagnosis for the future of public health care is guarded. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, do you have a request?

**Ms Notley:** I have a request for unanimous consent for the third party to respond to the ministerial statement.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to my colleagues in the Assembly. Since the early 1990s the provincial government has

gradually centralized the administration of the health care system. We've seen locally appointed hospital boards replaced by 17 health care regions. We've seen health care region boundaries change. We've seen elected boards sacked in favour of appointed boards. We've seen 17 regions amalgamated into nine. We've seen the occasional hospital blown up, and today the minister announces that nine regions have been replaced by one.

At each step of the way Albertans have been told that these changes were necessary to make the system more efficient and to get costs under control, and at each step the health system has become less and less accountable to local communities. Any expected benefits in terms of enhanced efficiency have been far outweighed by the constant chaos of restructuring. At some point the government has to realize that the decisions it is handing down from the top are not achieving the expected results on the front lines of health care.

**1:50**

If the government really wants to achieve its goal of greater cost control, it should talk to the people who work in the system. Therefore, I'm calling on the minister of health to consult with all stakeholders in the health care system, including health care workers and the unions that represent them, about the decision he has announced today.

The biggest crisis, by this government's own admission, facing the health care system is the shortage of workers. Reforms to the system have to be reforms that will enhance our ability to recruit and retain health care professionals. Constant chaos and a lack of consultation have not and will not achieve this goal. Change for the sake of change will not reduce wait times in emergency rooms. It will not reopen one hospital bed or save the government one dime. We need to ensure that we take the time to finally get change for the better.

Thank you.

### Oral Question Period

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

### Health System Governance

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems that this minister's goal to improve the health care system illustrates again an ideological rather than evidence-based decision. It's about careful, rational analysis of the problems in the system, careful diagnosis, and this would logically follow into an appropriate treatment. My first question to the health minister: will the minister table the evidence that led the government to decide that centralization will improve the real problems of access, quality, and cost-effectiveness in our health care system?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the evidence is self-evident. We have doubled those health care expenditures from some six, seven years ago. The Official Opposition has raised on several occasions the issue around health region deficits despite that significant increase in funding.

I don't know about the hon. member, but when I was knocking on doors this spring, the number one issue at doors was the inability to access the system. We have to look at different ways of providing health care in the 21st century, and we're not afraid of change.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not about change.

It's about: where is the evidence that this change is going to make the difference you ask for?

To the minister again: how can the removal of local control into a centralized bureaucracy better address the complexity and region-specific needs at the regional level?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we need to be clear on what we're talking about here today. We're talking about governance. The health delivery system will remain relatively unchanged at the regional level, and that's the way it should be. In fact, I believe that we've got the opportunity, by strengthening our community health councils, to have more regional input and have this Assembly have more overall accountability with the provincial health board.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister promise all Albertans that this centralization will not open the door to further privatization efforts in the health care system?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member can continue to use the word centralization, but what we have here today is a provincial board representing various regions of the province. We have 83 members of this Assembly who are the regional representatives. If there are issues that appear to be centralized, then raise them in this Assembly.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The centralization of power under the heavy hand of this government signals a loss of trust between the government and the regional board members and a disconnect from the professionals. This is a blatant attempt to centralize power by a heavy-handed government that didn't even bother to consult the Albertans they're supposed to represent. My first question to the minister: why is the minister putting in place a hand-picked board only accountable to him rather than the regionally elected boards that are accountable to the people of Alberta?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear that we have had over the past number of years hundreds of volunteers that have committed tens of thousands of hours on behalf of Albertans for health care in this province, and we all should be grateful for that. But this is about looking forward, not looking backwards. One of the things that this government is committed to doing is that if there's change that's needed, we're going to have the courage to do it. This was an example of that today.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Why was there no public consultation for this move other than backroom discussions between government caucus members?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that consultation should be conducted with, in our particular case, the 71 colleagues that I have in my caucus in this Assembly. I can assure the hon. member that at caucus this morning it was very strongly endorsed that we move in this direction. I'm not interested in consultation where special interest groups dominate the discussion. I'm interested in what MLAs, after talking to their constituents – and they've got four days this weekend to talk to constituents – come back and say in this Assembly.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a done deal. Consultation is a little bit late.

Mr. Minister, is this lack of consultation with anyone other than the Tory caucus a sign of things to come and how accountable this government is going to be with health care in the future?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not quite sure what the member is referring to. This government is accountable to the people of Alberta, and it showed on March 3.

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

### Mental Health Services

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Individuals who suffer from mental illness not only have to deal with stigma and hardships, but they also live in a province that does not even put in the effort to help improve their quality of life. The recent Auditor General's report brought to light the fact that there has been little initiative taken by this government to successfully implement the provincial mental health plan. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: how much longer will people with mental illness have to wait before this government decides to take significant action on a mental health plan that was introduced four years ago?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, there has been good action taken, despite the provocative preamble by the hon. member. We have a mental health delivery system that, yes, could be improved, and we will continue to work to improve it. One of the reasons for taking the action we did today is to ensure that mental health is integrated into the delivery of the health care system and somehow doesn't have to stand on its own. I believe that as we move forward, you'll see an improved system for mental health patients.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. Again to the minister: in the minister's plan for a plan to address health concerns, why was there nothing to address the social factors that impact mental health, such as income, education, and housing?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we have committed a significant amount of dollars in our budget this year towards mental health and addictions. It's part of the recommendations of last year's task force on safe communities. We now need to implement those recommendations, and we're prepared to do that in the coming year.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. Finally, to the minister: why does this government continue to ignore the fact that our homeless shelters and prisons have become overwhelmingly populated by people with mental illness because this government has given them no other options?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not quite sure what the member is referring to, but I know that we've got – it's not my particular portfolio, but I think we have some of the most comprehensive programs in place to help people with homelessness. We have self-standing addictions treatment programs, which are now going to be integrated into the health system. So the hon. member is just simply not correct.

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

**Health System Governance**  
(continued)

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yet again the government has announced further changes to the structure of health care regions in the province. After sacking individual hospital boards, then creating 17 health care regions, conducting elections for the board members, sacking the elected board members, reducing the number of regions, amending the boundaries of the regions, and blowing up the occasional hospital, we have yet another plan to restructure. To the minister of health: by suggesting a further reorganization of health care regions, is the minister prepared to admit that his government got it wrong in the previous copious reorganizations that have taken place to date?

**Mr. Liepert:** No, I'm not, Mr. Speaker. Of course, as a government – and it's one of the reasons why this government has been in office for 37 years – we're prepared to change as circumstances change. In the '60s health care was delivered through hospital boards and long-term care boards. We saw the change coming. We were ahead of it by bringing in regional health authorities. We now believe we are ahead again by bringing in one regional board. I would suggest that we're going to see other provinces follow.

2:00

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister admit that the government will be spending a fortune on severance packages for senior board employees who will be let go, enough that it will take years to make up those losses in administrative savings?

**Mr. Liepert:** No, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell the House how long it will be again before his government re-establishes, oh, 17 or nine or maybe six new health care boards?

**Mr. Liepert:** I don't believe it'll be in our lifetime, Mr. Speaker, because I believe the model that we've put out there today, despite the skepticism of this particular member, is going to be one that's going to work best on behalf of Albertans.

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

**Mrs. Sarich:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The health minister announced changes to the health care system today, reducing nine regions to just one. My first question is to the hon. Premier. Can he please tell Albertans why these changes to our health care system were needed?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, in a televised address to Albertans in October, also during the election campaign in March, and most recently in our Speech from the Throne this government made a very strong commitment to a publicly funded health care system. Today we've taken that first step to reaffirm, to ensure that the dollars that are spent, the dollars through this change, go directly into improving health care delivery. This is all about administration. Front-line health care providers will not be affected. I firmly believe that as

time moves on and more decisions are made, we definitely will reaffirm our commitment to our publicly funded system.

**Mrs. Sarich:** Mr. Speaker, my second question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Can the minister explain why the new governance model is better for Albertans?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I have had the privilege of being in this portfolio for a couple of months now, and I've met with a number of the providers in the system. Each time it seemed to me that one of the barriers to providing seamless patient care was the regional health authorities just by the way they're structured. If you happened to live on this side of the road, you had health care delivered in one way. If the boundary happened to go down that particular road and you lived on that side, you got a different health care system. That's not acceptable. All Albertans deserve to have equitable health care.

**Mrs. Sarich:** Mr. Speaker, my final question is also to the same minister. Will this decision mean Albertans have to change the way they seek access to the health care programs and services?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this particular decision will not, but I have made it very clear that I believe Albertans have to recognize that we do have to be prepared to look at alternative ways of accessing the system. We've had the discussion in the past about midwives. We've had the discussion in the past about possibly having pharmacists diagnose. There are countless examples of ways that you can access the system outside of the traditional model, but it will have nothing to do with today's announcement.

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

**Contamination by Oil Sands Tailings Ponds**

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This year the government appointed the Alberta Water Council, and its report Policy Issues and Gaps on groundwater and surface water raised more serious questions about the knowledge and protection of our water in this province. What is very evident from these and other experts on water management in Alberta is that there are significant gaps that compromise how water management and conservation is carried out. I'm talking about reports from the subject matter experts of the Alberta Water Council. To the Minister of Environment. It's clear that there is a lack of knowledge of the interconnectivity of groundwater and surface water in many parts of the province. In their conclusion the Water Council confirmed that. Is the minister confident . . .

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

**Mr. Renner:** I think I got the last part.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the hon. member that just about a week ago we had a discussion in this very House around the estimates of Alberta Environment, and included in those estimates was an additional \$15 million to augment the exact same information that the member is just referring to. We need to and we have acknowledged and we will invest significantly into our database so that we do have a better understanding of the issues related to groundwater and surface water.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are talking about decisions made today without that very knowledge that you're talking about developing, Mr. Minister. Given the lack of knowledge in the area of groundwater and surface water, can the minister assure this House that there is no risk from the tar sands operations and tailings ponds leaching into the groundwater and surface water bodies in this province?

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

**Mr. Renner:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. That has been my consistent message and answer ever since this member has entered into this line of questioning. Nothing has changed. I don't know why he keeps asking the same question. Does he expect a different answer?

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

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister assure this House that the Athabasca River has not been affected due to groundwater contamination from oil sands waste products?

**Mr. Renner:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I've answered this question many times over. The answer again is the same. There is no evidence to indicate that there is any impact on the Athabasca River as a result of leaching or leaking or emissions from tailings ponds associated with activity in the oil sands.

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

#### Advisory Councils to Health Boards

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we heard that amongst other things the new Alberta Health Services Board will assume responsibilities for the Alberta Cancer Board, the Alberta Mental Health Board, and AADAC. Can the Minister of Health and Wellness explain why advisory councils are being created to manage cancer research, mental health services, and addictions services in Alberta when there were boards in place already?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I've said previously, today's decision was about governance and how to ensure that we have an integrated delivery of health care in Alberta. We do recognize the fine work that the folks at the Alberta Cancer Board and the Alberta Mental Health Board and AADAC have been doing. We want to ensure that that good work in terms of policy development and research is not lost, and we'll be creating strong advisory councils to the provincial board in those three areas.

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

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In addition to those three areas, two more. Another question for the Minister of Health and Wellness. What reassurance can the minister give that this decision will not negatively impact the great things that have happened already in the Alberta cancer prevention legacy and cancer research in Alberta?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I can give that assurance. We need to also recognize that while there has been some very strong work done in cancer research, it's not just cancer research where there are good things happening in this province. It's across the board. We need to ensure that work is not being done separately and apart from

the rest of the health care system. The cancer legacy fund is a very powerful message that this government sent, and it will continue to function.

**Mr. Rodney:** My final question is to the same minister. We all need to have a plan. I trust the minister has one when it comes to the advisory councils in managing provincial mental health services and addictions. Can he share those plans with the House and Albertans here and now?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, as we know in this House, the delivery of mental health services was integrated several years ago into the health regions, and that will continue with the new model. But we want to ensure that policy development and to some degree research continue through the advisory councils. With respect to addictions AADAC has functioned more as an interdepartmental operation. We want to ensure that it as well is integrated into the health delivery system.

**The Speaker:** I have on my list the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo. I've received two notes from the Official Opposition, and there are three different names, so I'm going with Calgary-Buffalo at the moment.

#### Edmonton Remand Centre

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Edmonton Remand Centre is on my mind today. Overcrowding, increasing safety concerns means the completion of this new facility by 2011 is essential; however, what is particularly on my mind with the Edmonton Remand Centre is the new cost of the project. Can the Solicitor General explain how the cost of the Edmonton Remand Centre has now more than doubled since the project was announced less than two years ago, in July of 2006?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, the original cost was done on a very preliminary basis, and we've gone through a detailed design. The cost came back to where it's at, and for the \$660 million investment Albertans are getting just an excellent facility that's going to serve our province very well.

2:10

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

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Solicitor General explain what method of budgeting – perhaps it was a Ouija board – has seen the price of this facility, initially \$308 million, now magically rise to \$620 million in just two years?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, we don't use Ouija boards on this side of the House. I think the results of the election on March 3 indicated that.

**Mr. Hehr:** Mr. Speaker, it appears patently obvious to me that Albertans cannot trust the Solicitor General's budgeted numbers. To the minister of the Treasury Board: will the minister undertake to review the Solicitor General's budgeting process, which appears to be fiction, in order to ensure Albertans that this is, in fact, a real estimate and it won't double again in the next three years?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** I can absolutely assure the hon. member that on this side of the House we do not only trust the Solicitor General; we trust all the ministers and their departments to bring forward good, sound budget numbers.



**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West and then the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Health System Governance**  
(continued)

**Mr. Weadick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Residents of regional communities like Lethbridge and Medicine Hat have worried for a long time that they are forgotten in provincial decisions about health care spending, expressing concerns about crumbling hospitals and overcrowding in emergency departments. Now the Minister of Health and Wellness has announced that all nine regional health boards are to be replaced by one provincial health board. My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Can you assure rural Albertans and residents of smaller communities that their access to health care will not suffer with this shift to one provincial health authority?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to ensure that the comment about crumbling hospitals doesn't go unanswered. We have some of the finest facilities in Canada in this particular province. I will challenge my colleague on those comments.

Now, I do agree with him on the issue of crowded emergency rooms. One of the things that we want to ensure in this new model is that we have strength in community health councils. They will play a very vital role. In addition to that, we will be ensuring that the new board appears before a cabinet policy committee to hear first-hand from that public input that the opposition talked about through our 71 members of caucus.

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister of Health and Wellness assure rural residents that the quality of their health care service will not be compromised when they no longer have a local board to champion their interests?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I can assure that it will not be compromised; however, what we need to recognize is that as we move forward, there are going to be different ways of delivering health care. We need to be more open to using technology. We may have to be looking at various modes of transportation to ensure that we get Albertans from whatever part of the province they're in to the best possible providers of the service, and sometimes that isn't always possible in person.

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Thank you. I'll address my final question to the same minister. Mr. Speaker, if there's no local board and, in fact, no health region, who do my constituents call if they have concerns about the health care they receive?

**Some Hon. Members:** You. [laughter]

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I think my colleagues have answered that question for me.

**The Speaker:** Shall I recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall or the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East? Calgary-McCall.

**Utilities Consumer Advocate**

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Bill 46 fiasco last year

exposed this government's undemocratic instincts with a move to put all intervention in utility disputes under the control of the government's Utilities Consumer Advocate rather than independent intervenors. Last-minute amendments attempted to cover up their flaws, but the current actions of the UCA are speaking louder than their words. To the Minister of Service Alberta: why is the UCA claiming the right to, quote, primary representation, end quote, on behalf of all consumers when the government claimed this would not take place?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The office of the Utilities Consumer Advocate continues to intervene and write hearings on behalf of Albertans, residential, farm, and small business consumers with the new governance board. We are also addressing concerns from individuals, consumers, relating to utility services. Since its creation in 2003 the UCA has helped more than 8,600 consumers and will continue to do so.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the transmission line hearings coming forward, a fair and transparent system is vital. Why is there still this consumer advocate, appointed by this government, trying to control the agenda of what appears in front of the Alberta Utilities Commission, also appointed by this government?

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Mr. Speaker, with respect to transmission hearings the advisory board of directors is currently looking at the issues. We're looking at the issue of governance with the UCA. We'll continue to work with consumers on any issues concerning intervening on their behalf.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister – member.

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish I was a minister on this side of the House.

Given that the Utilities Consumer Advocate states in an April 2 letter to the Alberta Utilities Commission that it will not be in a position to meet several significant deadlines, why is this body at the same time trying to take over all intervenor duties in complete contravention of this government's promise over Bill 46?

**Mr. Knight:** I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I'll have to take it under advisement. I did not understand the question.

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

**Sexual Orientation and Human Rights**

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saturday is the International Day Against Homophobia, a day aimed to build respect for gay, lesbian, and transgendered persons around the world. Here in Alberta the government still won't amend the human rights code to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. To the minister responsible for human rights again: in the spirit of striking an important blow against homophobia, will the minister reconsider his previous statements and do the right thing by introducing legislation to include sexual orientation as a ground protected against discrimination?

**Mr. Blackett:** Mr. Speaker, the answer to that is no.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that your so-called consultation on the issue has no budget and no timetable associated with it, will you admit that there is no consultation process and that you're simply trying to delay until the issue maybe gets dropped?

**Mr. Blackett:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to admit that. I never said the word "consultation." I talked about review in the context of, first, within our department. You're trying to put words in my mouth, and I'm not going to agree to this.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we'll probably have to get back to that one a bit later, but can the minister at least tell the House if his government as a matter of written policy opposes homophobia and discrimination based upon sexual orientation?

**Mr. Blackett:** Mr. Speaker, as it stands right now, the implication from the Supreme Court decision is that gays and lesbians are protected in Alberta. If individuals were to go to our website or talk to anybody in the Human Rights Commission, they would find out that they are indeed protected, and we will stand up for them.

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

#### **Health System Governance** (continued)

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, before 1994 the health ministry managed 128 hospital boards, 25 public boards, and 40 long-term care boards – 193 altogether – and then it went down to 17, then down to nine. Since 1994 Albertans are living longer, and we have services that other provinces can only dream about. I'll be heading home tonight to Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, and I want to know from the minister what I can tell constituents about the new long-term benefits of his new plan of governance.

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I believe what the hon. member can tell his constituents is that we will be driving towards a more efficient, effective, patient-focused, accountable, sustainable health care system in Alberta.

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

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Well, thank you. Again, what impact are these changes that you're proposing going to have on the health care workforce in Whitecourt-Ste. Anne and throughout the province?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, these particular changes will not have any impact on the workforce in Whitecourt. I believe that what we need to do and the next decisions we need to take as a government and as a Legislative Assembly are to provide the opportunities for those in the workforce to do what they are fully trained to do. We have countless examples of situations where professionals are not working to the full scope of their practice, and we need to ensure that we drive through the system ways that that can take place.

2:20

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Again to the same minister. I'm concerned that the health care staff may get mixed messages and be uncertain about their futures in health care, and I'm concerned that they're going to dust off their resumé and leave the health care workforce. What

can the minister do and tell me right now to assure these folks back home that their futures are certain?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the only way they're going to get mixed messages is if the media reports it incorrectly and members of this Assembly don't carry the message that we've been talking about today. However, the last comment of the member is something that we can't guarantee. We can't guarantee that – I believe he said that members of the workforce's positions are going to be guaranteed or something to that effect – because it's a changing environment out there. I do know that when you've got a shortage of people in the workforce, the last thing you're going to be doing is making changes to those that are already there. We've got to recruit new people to the workforce.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

#### **Biofuels Industry**

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When my blood pressure goes down, I'll ask my health questions.

Biofuel production is increasing in North America. There are important concerns that need addressing before going ahead with certain biofuel projects. Ethanol from food crops with government subsidies is one example. The amount of water required for the production is greater than the water supplies available. To the Minister of Energy: can the minister assure that Albertans' tax dollars will not be directed towards inefficient biofuel production using food crops?

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

**Mr. Knight:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the production of biofuels, particularly the biofuels industry in the province of Alberta, it's a broad area. We have tremendous opportunity here in the province to engage the fibre industry with respect to biofuels, the livestock industry, and of course there are opportunities for ethanol production from grain-based products in the province of Alberta. I would suggest that if you look at the scale of our involvement with respect to the issue, we would not impact global food supplies with respect to producing biofuel in the province of Alberta.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you. However, it is growing.

To the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: has the government performed due diligence and determined if there's a sustainable amount of water in Alberta, particularly in the south, for the production of ethanol from food crops?

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

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess that's kind of a strange question for the minister of agriculture. I thought you'd come from the grain side. I suspect my colleague from Environment could answer that question better. At this stage of the game we have very, very little ethanol production in Alberta. Certainly, we keep an eye on where it's going.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you. My next question can go to either/or. Given that there's a world food shortage and increased food costs, can the minister commit to only approving bioenergy projects in this region which will not put further strains on the food or water supplies? Either/or.

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

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I think it falls directly in the purview of my ministry, so I would take the opportunity to respond to the question. There are some very good opportunities in the province of Alberta for pods where synergies are developed with food production capability in the livestock industry and other industries and the ability to move those products through a complete cycle that allows for the production of energy and food that are very substantial and very positive on both fronts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Métis Nation of Alberta Association

**Mr. Allred:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Métis Nation of Alberta Association has been serving the Métis people in our province since 1932. In recent years the government of Alberta has been an important financial contributor to both the MNA central body and through it to the six MNA zones as well. However, the MNA central body did not receive its usual grant from the province for the 2007-2008 fiscal year. My question is to the Minister of Aboriginal Relations. Why was the funding not provided to the MNA central body last year?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, in fact, I tried very hard to find a way to release the '07-08 funds referred to to the MNA central body right up to our March 31 government deadline. However, members here might know that the MNA has been experiencing some internal difficulties for about a year now, difficulties that, I would add, have kind of precluded them from passing an internal motion, which is a legal requirement; hence, no motion, no money. Therefore, I was not able to release the central body monies prior to our deadline.

**Mr. Allred:** My first supplemental again to the same minister: how do you expect the MNA central body to continue with its important work without any provincial funding?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Well, Mr. Speaker, in fact, I'm happy to report that the Métis nation association did meet earlier this week. They had a quorum, they did pass a motion, and they endorsed both a new long-term framework agreement as well as a funding agreement. With the proper motion having been made, we'll now be able to release the funding for '08-09, and they will be able to go forward. I'm looking forward, frankly, to that. Congratulations to them for doing so.

**Mr. Allred:** My final supplemental again to the Minister of Aboriginal Relations: what about the funding for the six Métis member zones? Will their funding be continued as well?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, last year was a bit of an unusual year. Because of the internal difficulties, funding was provided directly by the province to five of the six Métis zones. This year, however, we hope to restore the traditional funding pattern, which

will be through the MNA central body, and therefore each of the six zones will receive their appropriate share of the \$1.5 million or \$1.6 million allocated to them. Again, I want to congratulate the zones as well for working so co-operatively now with their central body, and we're looking forward to extending that co-operation at our end as well.

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

#### Coal Royalties

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently there has been considerable discussion around the royalty structures for oil and natural gas and bitumen in this province, but there has been little discussion publicly regarding our coal royalties. My first question is to the Minister of Energy. Is the government of Alberta getting a fair return on royalties from coal?

**The Speaker:** Sounds like an opinion. Go ahead.

**Mr. Knight:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The short answer would be yes, and a longer answer, I suppose, would relate to the long-term viability of coal with respect to our baseload generation in the province of Alberta. Most of the coal that's mined in Alberta is mined directly for consumption in the electrical industry in Alberta. I think that everybody would agree that, in fact, that is very, very much in the best interests and to the advantage of all Albertans.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: why are Albertans, the owners of the resource, getting less than 50 cents per tonne for coal mined in this province to be used to generate electricity?

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, that's not necessarily the case in all instances because there is a lot of privately owned coal in the province of Alberta, and again, it would be the policy and, I think, the belief of this government that the coal that's used in the province of Alberta for the generation of electricity is certainly in the interests of all Albertans.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given that we are about to start using coal as a source for hydrogen to be used in the upgrading of our bitumen, does the government consider it prudent to have a separate royalty structure for coal that is mined for the purpose of extracting hydrogen?

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

**Mr. Knight:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That is, in fact, a very interesting area of discussion that is ongoing, I think, in industry and certainly in some government circles with respect to what we're going to do as we move ahead with technologies in Alberta not only related to coal, but there are many resources in the province of Alberta that will see some advanced technology begin to be applied to them. The result of those technologies and the incumbent situations that we will have as a government with respect to the royalty will be dealt with in due course.

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

2:30

### Crime Reduction

**Mr. Johnston:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems a day doesn't go by without Albertans hearing about another violent incident in our province. This government has promised to reduce crime so that Albertans feel safe, but we still have a higher crime rate than many other Canadian provinces. My questions are for the Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security. Crime is threatening our way of life regardless of whether we live in a rural community or in a larger city. Can the minister tell us what his ministry is doing to help prevent and reduce crime?

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

**Mr. Lindsay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Reducing crime so that Albertans feel safe is a top priority for this government. Our Premier committed to adding 300 police officers to the front line over the next three years, and we will be doing that. We're also going to be adding more sheriffs to our highways. We're also adding 30 new probation officers to provide increased support and direction to offenders so that they don't reoffend and revictimize Albertans. We're also working closely with crime prevention partners on awareness campaigns so that Albertans can better protect themselves from crime.

**Mr. Johnston:** My first supplemental, Mr. Speaker. While police around the province do an excellent job of enforcement, successful crime prevention also takes active community involvement. To the same minister: what can individual Albertans do to help prevent crime?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, individual Albertans, community organizations, and businesses must work together with law enforcement to prevent crime. We saw Mayor Stephen Mandel bring this issue to the forefront this week with his call for a new committee to address the root causes of crime. I encourage all Albertans to find out more about how they can protect themselves, their neighbourhoods, and their workplaces.

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

**Mr. Johnston:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental to the same minister: where can Albertans get the information they need to help them be effective partners in crime prevention?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Again, Mr. Speaker, my ministry has programs and educational materials for Albertans who want to help prevent crime by taking an active role in their communities, and I encourage all Albertans to visit my ministry's website for practical information on how to help prevent crime. We're also in the third year of a public awareness campaign that focuses on many positive aspects of crime prevention.

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

### Downtown Edmonton Arena

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. There is both anticipation and trepidation over the possibility of a new downtown arena for Edmonton. Much of the debate is over how to pay for a

new development. My first question is to the President of the Treasury Board. Is the government willing to support a community revitalization levy for this project? It would affect future school property tax revenue for the province.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Mr. Speaker, we have had no discussions with, have been approached by no individual or group at this point about funding for a downtown facility of any kind. We are aware of the mayor's proposal to develop and revitalize downtown Edmonton as well as downtown Calgary. While we absolutely support the mayor's initiatives for a revitalized downtown area, we have had no discussion about government support for a new downtown arena.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. To the Solicitor General: has his department been approached to consider a casino deal between any developers and the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission for a significant share of the slot and VLT revenues to go to offset the costs, similar to the deal that the government currently has with Horse Racing Alberta or the River Cree casino with the Enoch band?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Again, Mr. Speaker, we have not been approached by any organization looking at building an arena to offset those costs with revenues from our lottery revenues.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. The final question, to the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit: Mr. Minister, given that the Kaasa Theatre was destroyed during renovations for the Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium, has the minister considered approaching the developers to offer funding for a new, medium-sized theatre as part of a downtown arena?

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, I can say at this particular point in time that I haven't given that due consideration, but I have been in discussions with the mayor about a number of different issues with respect to the arts community, and I'll hold that under advisement.

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

### Grade 3 Achievement Tests

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a teacher of 36 years I am convinced that there is absolutely no educational value in requiring grade 3 students to write provincial achievement tests. Can the Minister of Education please explain what expenses are involved in developing, administering, scoring, and reporting the results of these tests?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, about 42,000 students write the tests, for a total cost of the provincial achievement test program of \$5 million. The cost is approximately \$11 per test for the English language arts 3 and \$7 per test for the mathematics 3. The difference in the cost is, of course, that the language arts written part has to be marked in Edmonton by classroom teachers. I would say that a large portion of the cost of administering the test is money that's paid out to teachers for writing the questions and for the marking process.

**Mrs. Leskiw:** To the same minister. I've never understood why we persist in testing students in grade 3 over and over again. Too much time is wasted preparing students for these exams, time the students could use to explore their world. When classroom time in grade 3 is better spent enabling students to explore their world and ask their own questions, what does he see as the educational value of requiring these students to write provincial achievement tests?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, in our business plan we refer specifically to two areas for testing: assessment of learning and assessment for learning. The assessment of learning part is so that we can be accountable for the money that's spent in education and ensure that we are achieving the standards that we need to achieve. The assessment for learning, which the hon. member refers to, of course, is the more important part of the assessment process. There have been a great deal of questions asked over the years – and certainly since I've become minister, I've heard these questions asked – about whether it's appropriate to do the assessment of learning process at the grade 3 level, and that's something I'm certainly prepared to look at.

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Again to the Minister of Education. A constituent has approached me about her French immersion children being required to write the achievement tests both in English and in French. Why do we punish grade 3 French immersion students for pursuing a second language by requiring them to do four tests in two different languages?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, a very good question. There are a lot of issues that have been raised around the writing of grade 3 provincial achievement tests and whether the stress level that is raised among grade 3 students is appropriate and whether there shouldn't be a different focus with respect to grade 3 in terms of assessing their achievement and even, indeed, whether we could do provincial assessment tests, if we're going to use them, in a time frame when they could be returned to the classroom in time to be of some value in the assessment for learning process. So very good questions which require further discussion and further answers.

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

### Women in the Trades

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We continue to hear reports about a shortage of skilled trades workers in Alberta. Encouraging more women to enter the trades could help fill this gap. My first question is to the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology. What is the government doing to help women pursue careers in traditionally male-dominated trades?

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

**Mr. Horner:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is home to many successful women apprentices. We have a number of them in our program right now. Trades-related business owners as well as actively supporting programs that help women participate in the trades, like the opportunities for women in construction program run by the Construction Owners Association. These initiatives include

apprenticeship scholarships for women. We feature them in a lot of our advertising and our communication to the K to 12 sector. It is certainly our intention to try to enable all those who want to get into the trades to get there.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental to the same minister: what is the government doing to encourage other underrepresented groups in Alberta to pursue the trades?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we do operate a number of preapprenticeship programs that help those underrepresented groups to prepare for apprenticeship training and to work in work site conditions and technical training. Similar skill development programs include the apprenticeship preparation for aboriginal people project. We, of course, have the RAP program, which is very successful in the K to 12 system, and currently there are over 1,500 Alberta students in the registered apprenticeship program in high schools.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplemental, to the Minister of Employment and Immigration: as the minister responsible for employment what is your department doing to ensure that Alberta women are getting the high-paid jobs that industry is known for?

2:40

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

**Mr. Goudreau:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are very, very active in creating opportunities for a woman to work in nontraditional occupations such as the construction trade. Over the last three years we've provided more than \$5.7 million, for example, towards the women building futures program, for tuition and living expenses for over 90 women who attended the program. That is one example of numerous other activities that we do, including things like the job corps activities, our partnerships that we have in Red Deer, and the career fairs that are very specific to women.

### Competitive Fishing Events

**Mr. Fawcett:** Mr. Speaker, many anglers in this province participate in competitive fishing known as tournaments or fishing derbies, but there have been concerns expressed by my constituents that these fishing derbies can negatively impact fishing stocks on certain lakes. My question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. What steps is the minister taking to ensure that competitive fishing events do not harm the sustainability of our fishing resources?

**The Speaker:** Okay. Policy now. A policy question, not a budget question.

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, my department began licensing CFEs, or competitive fishing events, in August of 2006. This was done after much consultation with the public and stakeholders. This licensing helps to minimize the impact on fish, on the resources, and ensures better survival of the fish that are caught and released during the events. Any competitive fishing event with more than 25 participants needs to get a licence, and we work in conjunction with

tournament organizers and have developed a set of best practices to ensure optimal outcomes.

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

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental question to the same minister. The minister recently brought forward some regulatory changes to fishing derbies. Can he explain why these changes were necessary?

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have more than 60 fishing derbies a year in Alberta, with almost 10,000 participants, and we needed to fine-tune the existing procedures. The new amendments do two things. One, they ensure that only the anglers that are on the lake participating in the tournament are exempted from the normal possession limits, so anybody who is not participating and gets over the limit will be in violation of the law. Also, it sets more explicit rules and regulations for those who do participate.

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

That's 118 questions and responses today, and we're going to have two more. The hon. Minister of Energy wishes to supplement an answer, which will then allow the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall to raise an additional question.

#### Utilities Consumer Advocate (continued)

**Mr. Knight:** Well, thank you very much. I misunderstood the question that was asked and have had clarification. If I may, Mr. Speaker. The Utilities Consumer Advocate in the province of Alberta is not at this time nor will it be in the future in a position where it's the only intervenor with respect to hearings in front of the Alberta Utilities Commission. Bill 46 very clearly indicates opportunities for individuals and others to appear as intervenors, and we will be making sure that this, in fact, is what happens on a go-forward basis.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the response, Mr. Minister.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member has an additional question if he wishes.

**Mr. Kang:** No. That's fine. Thank you, sir.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds from now I'll call upon the first of five to participate in Members' Statements today.

#### Members' Statements

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

#### National Police Week

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to mark National Police Week, which runs May 11 to 17. Every day police across Alberta do an outstanding job protecting Albertans and their families. Police officers will agree that their profession is highly rewarding and has a proud and renowned history.

Their profession exposes them to dangerous and potentially life-threatening risks every day. They consistently meet these challenges with incredible bravery and commitment, but they do much more. In the course of serving their community, police officers touch people's lives in many different ways. They act as social workers, teachers, mediators, and mentors. They reach out to members of our society who need it most: people who are hurt, people who are dispossessed, and people who have lost their way.

Mr. Speaker, these men and women are our everyday heroes, and National Police Week provides a unique opportunity for all of us to recognize these police officers for their commitment and dedication. On behalf of this Assembly and all Albertans I extend our warm appreciation and thanks to the brave men and women who put their lives on the line every day so we can live in safe and secure communities.

Thank you.

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

#### Camping in Provincial Parks

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Paradise or purgatory: punt park punks. With the opening of parks and protected areas throughout the province this May long weekend thousands of Albertans and out-of-province paradise seekers will literally be hitting the roads, roof racks filled to overflowing, hauling everything they can fit onto two, four, and six wheels behind them in their pursuit of the perfect park site. Whether these urban escapees find paradise or purgatory is to a large part dependent on their own preparedness.

Long before leaving your driveway, check off the list of supplies necessary for you to not only survive but thrive. If you're heading off to a mountain park, pack for both winter and summer as the weather can change dramatically. Check out your equipment before you leave so you don't get a nasty surprise if and when you arrive. Put up your tent in the backyard to ensure that you have all the poles, pegs, tarps, and ropes and that the material is intact. Reread the instructions and actually set up your old or brand new tent trailer before you leave your driveway.

Electricity is at best limited and in many parks nonexistent; therefore, realize the limitations of not only your car, truck, or camper battery but that of your trailer. You'll get a nasty early morning surprise if you try to run your furnace throughout the night unless you have a battery-charging backup such as a series of solar panels. Most external generators aren't permitted in parks, so don't depend on them. Wal-Mart doesn't exist in the wilderness. Ice melts quickly. For the sake of those who are seeking a natural experience, leave your boom box, your booze, and your bad attitude at home.

If you haven't already reserved and confirmed the campsite either online or by phone or driven out, registered, and set up your site, you're out of luck for this weekend. Save yourself, your family, your friends, and other campers the aggravation of driving aimlessly in the dark, frantically searching up and down the roads of campsites for a spot that was filled two days ago.

While the Alberta government may or may not be able to legislate common sense, they can enforce it. Hopefully, conservation and SRD officers, RCMP, and sheriffs will be highly visible not only this weekend but throughout the camping season to inform, preserve, and protect our people and our parks.

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

### Earthquake in Sichuan Province, China

**Mr. Xiao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to the devastating earthquake in the Sichuan province in southwest China. This province is a neighbour to Guizhou province, where I was born. I've been to this place many times and most recently about five years ago.

In the aftermath of the Monday, May 12, earthquake, which measured 7.9 on the Richter scale, the death toll continues to rise by the thousands each day. Entire towns have been razed to the ground, with no buildings left standing. As of today almost 20,000 people have been confirmed dead. This figure is estimated to reach 60,000, if not more, and according to some media reports, at least, it's going to reach more than 100,000. More than 10 million people have been directly affected.

There are 116,000 rescue personnel digging through the debris with their bare hands trying to reach survivors. Rescuers are still not able to reach three mountain towns near the epicentre, in Wenchuan county. Just east of the epicentre 1,000 students and teachers were killed or are reported missing at a collapsed high school in Beichuan county. People are struggling to survive the hour. The damage from this catastrophe will be felt for many years to come.

I wish to extend my condolences to the millions of families affected world-wide by the earthquake and offer my thoughts and prayers to the survivors.

Mr. Speaker, for the record, I'd like to restate this in Mandarin. [Remarks in Mandarin] Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

### 2:50 Red Deer Rotary Club Awards

**Mr. Dallas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the recent election I think that all the members of this Assembly would agree that volunteers are important to the fabric of our society. Last week Red Deer's Rotary clubs acknowledged two exceptional volunteers at their annual spring gala. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize both the Red Deer citizen of the year, Bill Olafson, and the young citizen of the year, Spencer Hachey.

Just a few highlights of Mr. Olafson's ongoing leadership and service include 11 years on the board of Westerner park, fundraising for the Central Alberta Women's Emergency Shelter, and improving drinking water in Africa. Nineteen-year-old Spencer Hachey was acknowledged for fundraising and organizing the purchase of wheelchairs for disabled people in Cuba.

In order to celebrate outstanding citizens, chairs Ray McBeth and Justice Jim Foster of the Rotary clubs of Red Deer spearheaded the erection of a custom-made clock tower at the old courthouse. The base is inscribed with the names of past and present recipients of these awards. I'm proud to say that Red Deer is known for helping others in our community and around the world. If you're ever in Red Deer, I would invite you to view the clock on Ross Street and 49th Avenue.

Mr. Speaker, these gentlemen have made their community proud and are role models that inspire us all. I would like all the members of this Assembly to join me in recognizing the accomplishments of two outstanding citizens, Bill Olafson and Spencer Hachey.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Nuclear Power

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this week we tabled media reports about a German study examining patterns of cancer in

children. The study aimed to find cancer clusters so as to examine what might be causing the illness in children five and under. The results of the study should cause anyone supportive of nuclear power to stop in their tracks.

Children aged zero to five living within five kilometres of a nuclear power facility were 60 per cent more likely to have cancer and 117 per cent more likely to have leukemia. Sensibly, Germany is moving away from nuclear power, having closed some of its older nuclear reactors already, and now has plans to shut down the other 17 by 2020. In fact, across Europe countries are getting rid of nuclear power. Italy, Sweden, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands have all moved away from nuclear power, closing nuclear facilities in favour of greener, safer power sources.

Here in Canada there is a ban on nuclear reactors in B.C. and severe restrictions in Manitoba and Quebec, which begs the question: with most of the world moving away from nuclear power, why is it that the Alberta government is even considering it? Are the Conservatives willing to risk the lives and health of Albertans living near a nuclear facility for a relatively small amount of power? Apparently so.

The proposed nuclear power plant for the Peace River area would generate 2,200 megawatts of electricity, but there are currently more than 10,000 megawatts of wind power tied up in government red tape waiting to come online. Why would the government look at such a potentially dangerous source of power, that creates potentially dangerous amounts of toxic waste, when clean alternative sources are available? Alberta needs a green energy strategy, one that develops solar, wind, geothermal, and other forms of renewable energy to reduce our pollution, fight global warming, and prepare us for the day when the world demands green energy sources.

Nuclear power replaces one problem with another. It's dangerous, it's bad for the environment, and it's something the Alberta government should reject out of hand.

### Presenting Petitions

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have another petition signed by individuals from Okotoks, Calgary, Edmonton, Leduc, Coronation, Airdrie, Strathmore, and a number of other locations in Alberta. They are all asking for the government to conduct a public inquiry into the local authorities pension plan, public service pension plan, and 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 concerned Albertans, and they urge "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."

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of petitions. The first bears 180 signatures, and it calls upon the Legislative Assembly to "pass legislation that will prohibit emotional bullying and psychological harassment in the workplace."

The second, which has 80 more signatures, asks for the establishment of "an independent and public inquiry into the Alberta Govern-

ment's administration of or involvement with the Local Authorities Pension Plan, 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 petitions signed by Albertans from Sherwood Park, Beaumont, Edmonton, St. Albert, Calgary, Red Deer, Fallis, Camrose, Leduc, Wetaskiwin, and Spruce Grove. They are all asking that there be 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."

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment on behalf of the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

#### Bill 14

#### Court of Queen's Bench Amendment Act, 2008

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General I request leave to introduce Bill 14, the Court of Queen's Bench Amendment Act, 2008.

This amendment is intended to ensure that, when appropriate, the provisions that apply to judges under the Provincial Court Act also apply to masters under the Court of Queen's Bench Act. Masters in chambers perform similar duties to judges and in many respects face the same issues and concerns. Amending the provisions that apply to masters will give masters in chambers more career options and will in turn benefit the courts by increasing the public's access to justice and the efficiency of court proceedings.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a first time]

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

#### Bill 15

#### Family Law Amendment Act, 2008

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again on behalf of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General I request leave to introduce Bill 15, the Family Law Amendment Act, 2008.

This bill will establish a new and much-needed service for separated and divorced parents and their children. With this new service, called the child support recalculation program, many parents will no longer have to go to court to recalculate child support orders as changes in their incomes will be assessed through an administrative process. The child support recalculation program will improve access to justice by offering a simple, low-cost way for parents to keep their child support orders current.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter from Ann Goldblatt of Edmonton, which coincidentally arrived this morning, which says that the move

towards greater centralization of health care administration would make planning unmanageable and reduce avenues for citizen input.

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

3:00

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have four sets of tablings. The first is a letter from Serge Mercier, who is the CEO of Le ROCC Inc. and was the instigator of my French questions last week.

Why is the government willing to provoke this community who is only interested in serving the interests of the province and contribute to its development and why is this government willing to go against the will of its constituents that have clearly expressed their support for the official language policies of our country?

In his second letter, which was sent May 13, just a portion of it says:

The francophone community of Calgary receives a hard blow from the government of Alberta. Following a controversial decision by the Department of Alberta Employment and Immigration, the majority of francophone services will disappear in Calgary for an indeterminate period of time.

My next tabling comes from family and community support services with regard to their sustainability initiative. In it they note that "funding for Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) is not keeping pace with inflation, service demand, or population growth – and it has not for years. FCSS funding has trailed provincial CPI since 2004."

Then, Mr. Speaker, I have 154 letters from my Calgary-Varsity constituents calling upon the government to reform labour laws by introducing first contract legislation, full legal recognition of bargaining rights for public employees, one labour law for all unionized workers, automatic certification of workplaces where more than half the employees have clearly indicated their desire to be represented by a union, and legislation outlawing the use of replacement workers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Others? Mountain-View, I called you before.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Western Sky Land Trust I'm tabling five copies of their appeal to Albertans to help protect the Bow River watershed and under their auspices a conservation program for all Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Goudreau, Minister of Employment and Immigration, pursuant to the Engineering, Geological and Geophysical Professions Act the Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta annual report 2007.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Knight, Minister of Energy, a letter dated May 15, 2008, from the hon. Mr. Knight, Minister of Energy, to Dr. Taft, hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, attaching information regarding budget 2008 nonrenewable resource revenue forecasts.

### Projected Government Business

**The Speaker:** The Official Opposition House Leader.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Under



Standing Order 7(6) I'll ask the Government House Leader to please share with those assembled here the projected government business for the following week.

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Monday being Victoria Day, we've anticipated adjourning after today till Tuesday. Tuesday afternoon under Government Bills and Orders Committee of Supply will continue with the estimates of Municipal Affairs; time permitting, second reading of Bill 1, Bill 3, Bill 4, Bill 12, Bill 13; and as per the Order Paper. In the evening at 7:30 in Committee of Supply Housing and Urban Affairs estimates would proceed for three hours, and then we anticipate completing second reading of Bill 1 and Bill 4, debate on Bill 3, 12, and 13 as time permits, and as per the Order Paper.

Wednesday, May 21, in the afternoon under Government Bills and Orders in Committee of Supply the main estimates for the Solicitor General and Public Security for the two and a half hours. Time permitting, second reading on Bill 3, Bill 12, or Bill 13 could proceed. In the evening at 7:30 in Committee of Supply the estimates of Finance and Enterprise and the Treasury Board would proceed for three hours. After 10:30, then, second reading of Bill 3 would proceed, Bill 10, on which we anticipate moving a motion to refer to one of the standing committees, Bill 12, and Bill 13 in second reading.

On Thursday afternoon, May 22, under Government Bills and Orders in Committee of Supply, as I indicated to the House yesterday, the remaining time for the estimates of Agriculture and Rural Development. The Committee of Supply vote would then proceed and then in Committee of the Whole bills 1, 3, 4, 12, and 13 and as per the Order Paper.

I would also advise the House that we do anticipate that a bill entitled the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act will be available to the House next week, and if it is available to the House next week, it could proceed as early as Wednesday evening.

### **Orders of the Day Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Cao in the chair]

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

### **Main Estimates 2008-09**

#### **Sustainable Resource Development**

**The Chair:** I would like to call on the hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development to start the debate.

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Chair. Sustainable Resource Development's 2008-2009 operating budget is \$361 million. That's approximately a \$25 million increase over our 2007-08 operating budget of \$336 million. This increase is primarily due to three new areas of expenditure: a \$7 million increase to complete the land-use framework and begin to implement its recommendations, an \$8.6 million increase in the nominal sum disposals relating to the transfer of tax recovery lands to municipalities, and, third and finally, a \$9.2 million increase related mainly to the rising cost of doing business and salary increases. Our 2008 budget addresses both our immediate and long-term needs.

The most significant 2008-2009 budget addition is the \$7 million to complete the land-use framework and begin implementation of its

recommendations. The land-use framework is my top priority as Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. The total funding for the land-use framework over the next three years is budgeted for \$42 million. The \$7 million allocated for '08-09 will be used to establish a planning secretariat to implement the new policy initiatives endorsed by the land-use framework. The secretariat's role will be to develop and oversee an effective land-use planning system in Alberta. The \$7 million is allocated during the startup year for implementing the policy recommendations of the framework. The out-year projected budget for the second year is \$15 million and \$20 million in 2010-2011.

This new integrated land planning system will integrate land and natural resource planning in Alberta that encompasses both public and private lands. The system will provide a regional planning process. The planning secretariat will provide the leadership, support, and expertise needed to give direction to Alberta government ministries on land-use policies and processes. The secretariat will also work with and help municipalities and others to meet their new land-use obligations. The planning group will provide a government-wide perspective on land use in Alberta.

Implementing the policy recommendations of the land-use framework is imperative for the health of our province, and choosing well in this area is important because when it comes to land use, some choices once made, choices about where to put new roads or where to put new subdivisions or power lines, are difficult if not impossible to undo, so we must choose wisely. Our land-use policies will address the competing uses on the land that face Albertans and provide a sustainable approach that balances the economic, environmental, and social objectives of Albertans. We anticipate that the draft land-use framework will be finalized this fall, at which time implementation will begin.

**3:10**

In support of the land-use framework Budget 2008 also provides \$4.2 million in funding for the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute. Total funding to this institute is projected over the next three years at \$12.6 million. This is the second operational year for the Biodiversity Monitoring Institute. I'm proud to report to this House that this is a world-class program that is built upon the experience of other nations and has incorporated their best practices into what is truly the best in the world. This program monitors Alberta's plants and animals and activities that impact them. It provides a scientifically credible, transparent process for gathering the data necessary to meet the biodiversity monitoring needs of government, industry, and Albertans, and it will be an important component to help guide future planning under the land-use framework, particularly the cumulative effects component. It will also help and assist Alberta's forestry, energy, and agricultural sectors to meet their respective stewardship commitments.

Budget 2008 continues to allow Sustainable Resource Development to pursue its proactive action against the mountain pine beetle infestation. A total of \$55.2 million in funding will be used to prevent pine beetles from taking hold in the boreal forest and to minimize the spread of beetles north and south along the eastern slopes. This reflects a \$5.2 million commitment in base funding and an additional \$50 million approved from the emergency funding from the sustainability fund. The emergency funding will be used for operational activities such as removing the infested trees, conducting the survey activities to identify infested trees, forecasting beetle populations, and also helping municipalities to manage infestations on lands within their jurisdiction.

We've worked closely with the Canadian Forest Service in this fight against the pine beetle. Their leading scientist, Dr. Allen

Carroll, has stated on numerous occasions that it's critical that Albertans continue to pursue an aggressive campaign against the pine beetle. The highest probability of success in suppressing beetle populations is when the population is weak and susceptible.

Pine beetle is not the only threat facing our forests. Our vast tracks of forest also face threat from wildfires. Our base budget this year for wildfires is \$113.1 million. This funding recognizes the cost of being prepared to fight wildfires in Alberta. This includes training of personnel, securing of aircraft, hiring seasonal workers, operating our air tanker bases and lookout towers, and related activities. This base budget is not used to fight wildfires. Prior to 2007 startup operations for wildfires relied on both base budget and supplementary estimates. The current funding approach provides greater stability and allows the ministry to be ready to fight wildfires at the start of the season. All costs associated with the actual fighting of wildfires will continue to be addressed as required through a request to the sustainability fund since it is impossible to predict the cost of fighting wildfires on an annual basis. There are simply too many variables.

With respect to the line item with nominal sum disposals, I want to make it clear that this is not a normal expenditure. The \$8.6 million for additional nominal sum disposals is an accounting measure required by our accounting procedures that allows us to transfer tax recovery land back to municipalities. Accounting rules require us to show this as a budget expenditure. This is related to tax recovery lands and the anticipated volume and values of the transfer, both of which we anticipate going up this year.

Tax recovery lands are lands that the provincial government has acquired from municipalities because of tax default and subsequent municipal collapse. Mainly this occurred during the '30s, during the Depression. Eligible municipalities may buy back these lands from the government for \$1, a nominal sum – that's why they're called nominal sum dispositions – under certain conditions. Again, our accounting requirements require us to charge. When we return tax recovery lands for this nominal \$1 fee, we must charge our operating budget for the difference between the \$1 sale price and the fair value of the land. In the past we have budgeted upwards of \$4 million to satisfy these government accounting requirements on these types of land sales. This year, however, we anticipate almost double that amount coming forward.

In terms of capital spending, very quickly, I'll note that we have allocated \$20.6 million to the forestry program's ongoing capital planning initiative. This funding will be used to upgrade provincial air tankers, air tanker bases, and a complete critical maintenance at SRD facilities. Fourteen million dollars will be allocated to continue modernizing the engines of our air tankers, changing them from piston power to turbine power. These upgrades will allow our aircraft to work at higher temperatures and higher elevations. Six million dollars has been allocated to upgrade the Pincher Creek air tanker base to handle the heavier aircraft and \$600,000 for maintenance on housing properties.

Finally, we are also allocating \$3.7 million in capital funding for each of the next two years for the provincial grazing reserve multi-use capital reconstruction project. This reflects our commitment government-wide to maintain and reconstruct government-owned capital assets, in this case the 32 provincial grazing reserves in Alberta. These reserves provide community pasture opportunities to local livestock producers throughout Alberta. This reconstruction will have many benefits, not just to livestock operators, who will be able to graze more cattle on the land and better quality grazing, but also the fences will be more wildlife friendly. Fences around water will keep cattle away from shorelands and provide better environmental protection. The provincial grazing leases are also used by

numerous recreational users, so this will be a benefit to a wide variety of Albertans.

I think, on that note, that those are the highlights. I'll finish and welcome any questions you might have.

**The Chair:** I would now like to recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View. Would you like to use the 20-minute dialogue?

**Dr. Swann:** If the minister is comfortable, we could have a back-and-forth dialogue as opposed to 10 minutes and 10 minutes.

Mr. Minister?

**The Chair:** Twenty minutes between the two?

**Dr. Morton:** In what format?

**Dr. Swann:** As a back-and-forth dialogue. As opposed to me going for 10 minutes and then you talking for 10 minutes, we could just dialogue about the issues.

**Dr. Morton:** Okay.

**Dr. Swann:** I find it more constructive. I think you probably will as well.

**The Chair:** All right: 20 minutes. Go ahead.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the minister and his staff for attending today for this important estimates discussion for Sustainable Resource Development. The highlights certainly are evident in the commitment of another 7 per cent to your budget, and the issues are of great importance to Albertans and the future of the province. I want to acknowledge your commitment, as demonstrated in the last few years and sustained in this last decision to keep you as minister, to sustainable, responsible management of our land, forest, and all the developments that occur therein and your primary commitment to the land-use framework, which I think most Albertans who have paid any attention to this recognize as the most fundamental need in Alberta today, with the unparalleled growth and development from the oil sands in the north to the eastern slopes and all the areas in between.

I'd like to focus my first questions around the land-use framework, if I could, and recognize with your early comments the importance that we choose wisely for the future and that, indeed, this may be the only chance we get to pause and reflect and make decisions that will be in the long-term best interests of all Albertans and the environment and the species that we value in this province. As you've said, Mr. Minister, once made, these land-use decisions in many cases become irreversible, and the impacts on not only that particular area but on the watershed, on the development options for the future, private and public, the impacts for recreation and tourism, the impacts for, indeed, our emissions as a province have so much to do with these kinds of decisions, especially water management and fossil fuel use. So my questions around the land-use framework will not surprise you.

3:20

I would appreciate some comments given your significant commitment and budget to this. I would appreciate your comments on the cumulative effects management and whether you have not only more money but new expertise in the area of measuring cumulative effects and how that is going to be incorporated into

decision-making in the land-use framework. More specifically, to the stage at which we are at in the land-use framework and its draft position and the progress we need to make on it, what exactly are you as minister prepared to alter, to slow down, to redirect, to consult more widely on before approving given that you have acknowledged, as others have, that the system of planning in this province is broken? We cannot continue to make decisions as we've made them in the past, and you're committed to making wise decisions that will not have irreversible negative impacts on our future decisions. Can we see some indication that we're serious about a new way of planning and allocating our resources before regretting some of those decisions? Can we see evidence that a precautionary principle might guide some of our decisions in the interim between a draft and full legislative land-use planning and framework?

Related to that, I already heard comments from you on the issue of access management plans and how appropriate that is. Clearly, if we're making those kinds of decisions in the long-term best interests of areas, particularly in the eastern slopes, we have to recognize that with some of the decisions now being made in the oil sands and our boreal forests and some of the decisions being made in the strip mining for coal and some of the decisions being made for prime agricultural land all of this has to be seriously considered in the context of a brand new way of thinking and planning for the future.

With those few questions, Mr. Minister, perhaps I could get a little stronger sense of how this land-use framework will influence decision-making over the next four or five years as we wait for its finalization.

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Chair. How long am I supposed to take to respond to that?

**The Chair:** Between the two you have 20 minutes.

**Dr. Morton:** Okay. Thank you. I thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View for his questions. I'll try my best to respond to them. I'm under some constraints, of course, because the draft of the land-use framework has not been publicly released yet although I suspect the hon. member has seen a copy, judging from the smile on his face. It seems like everybody else has. With that caveat, let me begin by saying that on the question with respect to cumulative effects and what the commitment is in terms of financial commitment and expertise, I think people familiar with policy in this area understand that the land-use framework is the necessary complement to our Water for Life and water strategy more generally. Issues of water quality and water quantity are determined by watershed, and watershed is on the land and affected by land use. One of the purposes of the land-use framework is to act as a necessary complement to our water strategy.

The cumulative effects approach. Again, when the draft document is released, I think the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View will be pleased to see that a cumulative effects mode of analysis that identifies carrying capacity and thresholds for regions or watersheds is the approach that will be adopted. It's intended to dovetail with the policies dealing with water and with the regulatory actions and administrative decisions made by the Ministry of Environment. If you look at the breakdown of the budget for the new monies that are set aside for the land-use framework, you'll see that it proposes to create a new land-use secretariat. Some of the people on that secretariat will be a combination of permanent staff and also people

that will be joining us from other ministries, other departments with specified expertise. So in the area of cumulative effects and water obviously we'll have some expertise, some specific staff people on permanent staff and will also work with people already with that expertise in Environment or in some cases in Sustainable Resource Development as well.

When we're dealing with the region that will comprise, for example, the northeastern portion of the province, which encompasses most of the oil sands, since both Sustainable Resource Development and Environment now have both oil sands units within their administrative structure, obviously we would work closely with them. I'll leave it at that in terms of answering his first question about cumulative effects.

With respect to the second question as I understood it, about showing that we're serious about this, I guess I want to begin by correcting an assertion made by the hon. member that somehow I've conceded we've made mistakes in the past. I think a check of *Hansard* last week or the week before would find that I said just the opposite when a similar question was asked.

Somebody asked – in fact, I do believe it was the hon. member – how come we waited so long to do this. Why didn't we start 16 years ago? Well, 16 years ago the challenges facing this province, the challenges facing the Conservative government of the day were totally different. We had \$2 billion a year deficits, a mounting provincial debt that went up to \$24 billion, an economy that was stalled, people losing homes, businesses going out of work. The challenge to the Premier of the day – since he's no longer a member, can I refer to the Premier of the day by name? The challenge facing Premier Klein was to restart the economy, to kill the deficit, to dig us out of debt. To his credit he did just that over a 14- or 15-year period. Ironically though, the very success of that effort, then, the extent to which the economy has recovered and perhaps more than recovered, and the phenomenal rates of growth that we've seen in the last seven years have created a new set of challenges.

I'm quite happy that I'm on a new team with a new Premier, who's responding to those challenges and who has done me the honour of asking me to be the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development and to take on the land-use framework initiative as the lead minister. I work with six other ministers and six other departments as well. So are we serious? Yes, we're serious. We've worked on this for almost 18 months. We've done extensive public consultation, extensive stakeholder consultation.

The hon. member will be happy to know that the official release of the document is only a week or so away. Upon doing that, we will immediately undertake further public consultation and stakeholder consultation. The stakeholder consultation includes not just public meetings but also private meetings with a variety of environmental groups to get their input on where they think we've done the draft, where they think it's strong, but also to point out where they think it might have weaknesses and can be improved. We take this very seriously. We've dedicated time and money to it, and I think our actions will speak louder than words, so I'll finish my words.

**3:30**

Finally, with respect to the idea that somehow we have to stop everything before we go forward, again, I've rejected that concept before. I think it speaks to a broader issue that may be the difference in philosophy between our party's approach to this issue and perhaps the parties opposite.

The purpose of the land-use framework, as we see it, is to manage growth, not to stop it. We reject as overly simplistic that to save the environment we somehow must have to stop development. The best environmental regimes in the world, not by chance, are found in the

wealthiest countries in the world. This isn't by accident. Protecting the environment costs money. It costs lots of money in a case like ours where the economy is resource-based.

The goal of the land-use framework is to sustain our growing economy but balance this with Albertans' social and environmental goals. This is what the land-use framework is about: smart growth, ensuring a future with plentiful opportunities, and a healthy environment.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Minister, and I applaud your efforts to champion this cause.

I would just follow-up with two more questions. With respect, we're not talking about a black-and-white difference between your approach and this opposition party's approach. We're not talking about stopping development; we're asking you to use the very principles that you've acknowledged are needed: a cumulative effects assessment, a balanced approach, and to use your power as a minister along with the Environment minister to ensure that there's responsible growth between now and the implementation of this framework.

It's clear that implementing this framework is difficult. This is the third attempt in 15 years to try to get a land-use framework. Do we understand the barriers to implementing a land-use framework? Have we learned from the two previous attempts? Are we going to have the mechanisms and the political will to actually overcome those obstacles to this challenging implementation and get these into legislation with the kinds of directions that you've been talking about? And, indeed, are you and the Environment minister prepared to say to Energy, to whatever other departments are pushing for unmanaged or unsustainable kinds of growth, especially in the oil sands, for example, that we have to reconsider, we have to take some responsibility as a government, we have to make different decisions than we have been making for the last 15 years if we're truly serious about our commitment to the future and to sustainable development?

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Chair. Again, the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View seems to be questioning our commitment and whether we're serious or not. I think that in the end, as I said before, actions will speak louder than words, so I'm not going to sit here and make a long list of boasts about what we're going to do. We'll just do it as things unfold.

Just with respect to the comment about the oil sands I would have thought the hon. member would know that, in fact, most, if not all, of the operators there are well aware of not just the legal requirements that both the provincial government and the federal government impose upon them in terms of their standards of operation, their obligations for reclamation, those types of things, but they're also well aware of the extra legal, the social expectations that are accompanying the unpredicted and, frankly, unpredictable boom that's taken place in this province, particularly in the north, since 2001.

Without going into too much detail, I'd simply note that hardly a week goes by where we don't meet with a group – this week, for example, the boreal forest initiative, both the Canadian version and I think there's a U.S. branch out of Seattle – to discuss plans in the north for how to identify potential environmental set-asides. I think we're getting into a second generation of environmental groups, sort of away from the Suzuki confrontationalists and into environmental groups that seek a co-operative working relationship with some of the oil sands companies and some of the forestry companies.

Just take the example of the group that I just mentioned, the

Canadian boreal initiative. As part of their financial sponsorship and as part of their board of directors they have corporate representation from the FMA holder in that area and from a number of the oil sands operators in that area. I'd like to think that in the province of Alberta we're moving beyond some of the theatrics and overheated rhetoric of the last decade or two, although I still see quite a bit of it, and into a constructive approach of finding practical solutions to the challenges of harvesting the opportunities, whether it's bitumen in the sands or timber in the forest, but doing it in a way that's responsible.

The hon. member talked about responsible growth. That's what this party is about. If that's what his party is about, then maybe we have more common ground than I thought.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just before we leave this issue then, could the minister give us any example of where actions have resulted in a slowing in any way of approvals for heavy oil activity or eastern slopes developments? We are asking for signs of real commitments to decision-making that's based on cumulative effects, that's based on balancing natural capital and other values, such as tourism, recreation, with that of economic development. What are some examples that would illustrate the minister's commitment to make different decisions in particularly oil sands and eastern slopes activities?

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

**Dr. Morton:** Well, thank you, Chair. I am not the primary government agent or primary government mover with respect to oil sands and northern developments. Again, I don't want to get too deeply into details, but I'd be happy to give to the hon. member and to this Assembly just two examples that are closer to home for me and, actually, for him too.

**The Chair:** We are now in the second 20-minute period, so continue on.

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you. I have had a number of meetings with respect to forestry practices with groups from British Columbia, groups from California, and the U.S. Forest Service on my trip to Washington with the Premier in January where we've discussed what sustainable forestry looks like in the 21st century. Everybody that I've talked to in British Columbia, the California stewardship council, and the U.S. Forest Service has made it very clear that the old Smokey the Bear approach to managing forests of, you know, put a fence around it, put out all the fires, and keep everybody out is not a long-term strategy for healthy forests. Healthy forests, at least in the Canadian west and the U.S. west, depend upon a pattern of disturbances, natural or manmade. The natural disturbances are mostly forest fires. But even before Europeans came here, the natives routinely started forest fires to cause that disturbance to regrow pastures for ungulates. So there's a continuity in management here.

I'll just leave it to say that I've had conversations now with a number of FMA holders in Alberta talking about a new approach to our forestry models in which this pattern of disturbance modelling becomes the model and that the object of the forestry policy is not simply to maximize annual allowable cut, but the object becomes long-term healthy, sustainable forests and that forestry becomes a means to that end. I consider this to represent a change, one that I'm going to work on.

3:40

Another simply more specific example, again, that the hon. member would be familiar with – hold on just a second; let me check with something here. Actually, on second thought, Chair, the second example I was going to use, I think perhaps I'd better refrain because it will be before one of the administrative tribunals shortly. I'm not sure, but it might be inappropriate for me to comment in this Chamber about something that's going before an administrative tribunal.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you. Would the minister comment briefly on the status of Marie Lake and any land-use planning around Marie Lake and applications and how his ministry is going to approach that decision in the context of your land-use framework thinking?

**Dr. Morton:** Actually, the hon. member in the question he just asked partially answered his previous question because he's given an example of an instance in which development has been held up or postponed pending a better understanding of environmental effects of the proposed development. But on the larger question that he has just asked – namely, what does the land-use framework propose to do about future Marie Lakes? Again, being somewhat circumspect in what I say since it's not a public document yet, but the question of identifying significant surface issues prior to the sale of subsurface rights is specifically addressed.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you. Let's move on, then, to habitat and wildlife protection issues. Page 272 of your business plan encourages leading practices in habitat conservation, and clearly one of the challenges of our modern society has been to preserve habitat, to preserve species. The natural history of our impact on the planet is to gradually erode and reduce and to eliminate at the fastest rate in history species on the planet. How much are we investing in this for the future of Alberta, and can you give us some sense of what's being directed towards species protection? You comment on the grizzly bear recovery plan and how we're invested in that, some of the woodland caribou and their concerns, and some comments on the wolf cull that's being discussed with some controversy. It appears that overall we have almost 15 per cent of species in the province that are either at risk or may be or undetermined, that is the mammals. What is your anticipated number of species at risk in the coming couple of years, and how does the minister plan to meet the targets in the business plan? Are there any new strategies or initiatives to be launched?

Thank you.

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Chair. The hon. member began by talking about habitat issues and then seemed to shift fairly quickly to species issues, so I'll maybe begin by just saying a few words about habitat and then moving on to some of the specifics with respect to the species that he identified. Again, without going into too much detail, the draft land-use framework does have a section that very specifically identifies the importance of conservation and stewardship. All species, not just the cute or iconic ones mentioned by the hon. member but all species – insects, birds, all living things – depend upon an environment and habitat, and that question of habitat precedes questions of species.

In the southern and central portions of our province over half the land, which is half the habitat, is on privately owned land. Therefore, if we're going to address the issue of habitat, which we must and which we are, we have to do so in a way that co-operates with private landowners. The draft land-use framework makes it very clear that if habitat conservation on private lands is a public good, which of course it is, and if it imposes costs on the landowner, which it does, either actual cost or opportunity cost, then the public should help share those costs.

There are a number of initiatives proposed in the draft land-use framework, policy tools that are probably not household words to most Albertans yet – but I suspect that the hon. member is familiar with them – such instruments as transfer of development credits, land conservation offsets, land trust and conservation easements, tradeable development credits, and lease swapping. Actually, that last example is on public lands. We in this party are very conscious of the importance of habitat and will be bringing forward as part of the new land-use framework a number of new initiatives that address habitat conservation.

With respect to a couple of the species at risk that the hon. member identified, with respect to the grizzly bear I stated just two weeks ago, I believe, in response to some questions that we would continue to suspend or have the moratorium on the grizzly bear hunt. The three-year moratorium that we announced in '06 would be coming to an end next year. We'll suspend that or continue that moratorium until we finish the DNA-based population count. So we are taking action on that.

I would say that the Grizzly Bear Recovery Team report, that I've received, is one of the best-documented policy reports that I've seen in my almost year and a half now at this post, and I'm optimistic that we're going to be able to act on what I see as the core recommendations of that report, which, by the way, doesn't say that it's imperative that grizzly hunting be stopped. It may be; it may not be. The real problem in terms of grizzly populations is the unrestricted or unregulated motorized public access into core grizzly habitat. The Grizzly Bear Recovery Team report is now on the web, so Albertans can see this. I'm not sure if what's on the web goes into the detail that the full report goes into, but it's done a very thorough, scientifically based, and I think quite conclusive identification of where core grizzly bear habitat is. We know what needs to be protected, and we know what needs to be done; that is, you cannot have unregulated motorized public access into those areas. I think that's a solution we'll be able to deal with in the coming months.

With respect to wolves let me start by saying that 30 years ago wolf population estimates for Alberta were somewhere between 500 and a thousand. Today the wolf population for Alberta is estimated to be in the vicinity of 7,000. Again, that's a record that I think the province can be proud of and that particularly our fish and wildlife biologists can be proud of, that through our management we have 10 times more wolves, if you like, than we had 30 years ago.

3:50

With respect to the specifics around wolves in the Rocky Mountain House area west of Rocky and the proposed study there, I've had the opportunity to meet a good number of the wildlife biologists at the University of Alberta. In fact, somewhat by chance of personal circumstance I know a number of the PhD students there, too, working on both wolf projects and a cougar project, so I've had a lot of time to discuss this with them. Again, the wolf population in that particular area is one of the strongest in the province. In fact, it's so strong that it's taken a pretty heavy toll on ungulates. The proposed pilot study there was to continue an experiment that had been done in other jurisdictions, what they call a biological fence –

I won't go into the details of it – having the alpha male and female without the rest of the pack defending their territory.

When the next version of the wolf episode flared up further north with respect to the caribou, a number of people phoned in or e-mailed and said: if the research proposal being pursued by the University of Alberta biologist in the Rocky Mountain House area was a success, then that would solve, to a large extent, the wolf-caribou issue of Grande Prairie. So there is a link there.

Again, is development an issue? Yes. Has our integrated land management initiative, which will feed into the land-use framework, made a difference up there? Yes. The reuse of existing well sites in the caribou area, the reforestation of cutlines, sharing roads: the surface impact of development in that area has already been reduced significantly by our integrated land management approach, and we'll continue to do that.

I guess I'll just end again with an anecdote. I received an e-mail yesterday from, I assume, a U.S. hunter that had just been up in Alberta with one of the guides that guides out of Rocky, Lorne Hindbo, whom I happen to know and who is, again, one of our outstanding guides. They'd been on a spring black bear hunt. He said that because of the cool weather they didn't see any black bears, but he said that he'd never had a better three days in his life. They saw elk, white-tailed deer, mule deer, bighorn sheep, cougars, and four different grizzly bears in two and a half days of horseback riding west of Rocky Mountain House. Again, I realize that that's anecdotal and not scientific, but it was the words of one visitor to Alberta that was a big booster of what he saw. Whatever we were doing here, he thought it worked pretty well.

Thank you.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you for those responses. Clearly, habitat protection is on the minds of a lot of Albertans, and legislated protected areas are very important. Has your government considered the creation of new protected areas, and how is this being addressed in your land-use framework? In particular, will the plan for parks be incorporated in a similar vein to how the Water for Life strategy was incorporated in this government?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Chairman, the land-use framework recognizes park designation as one of the oldest forms of land-use policy, setting aside land. Of course, Alberta has the distinction of being the home of what I believe is the first international park in the world, Waterton Glacier peace park. Then, of course, probably our two most famous parks, again national parks, Jasper and Banff. That type of protected use, obviously, will figure in the land-use framework.

I believe the minister of parks and recreation was in an internal policy review process in one of our caucus committees just this week, and the consensus was that the parks initiative and the protected areas initiative do have to be co-ordinated better with the land-use framework, both for us to work with parks and parks to work with SRD. That is forthcoming.

Again, I would tell you that on this side of the House and in our caucus we do not accept the idea that there's only one kind of park, that you put up the walls and keep everybody out and allow virtually no human activity inside those boundaries. Our view of protected areas includes the appropriate types of human activities. Also, when it comes to forestry, in a certain sense I heard, again from both the U.S. Forest Service and from the Canadian Forest Service and from the California stewardship council, that realization that the Smokey the Bear approach to forest management from sort of the postwar era, the 1950s, when probably a lot of people in this room grew up and remember Smokey the Bear and that approach, just doesn't

work. What you end up with is a bunch of over-age forests that are more prone to fire, more prone to insects, more prone to disease, and are not a healthy forest.

You need some type of disturbance sequencing to keep a healthy, age-balanced forest, and ironically we may be in a better position to do that in our provincial forests because of the flexibility of use than some of the parks are. But even the parks are now revisiting that. In fact, I have meetings planned in both Jasper and Banff in June to talk with park wardens about trying to better co-ordinate our forestry management practices with theirs.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, the last 20 minutes of the first hour.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Well, while we're talking about forests and alluding to forest health, the mountain pine beetle is clearly a question. You're making a big investment into it. There's a lot of discussion and concern in the Kananaskis area and the Elbow Valley area west of Calgary that we may not be following the most constructive approach there from the point of view of protecting our watershed and ensuring quality and quantity water for half the people of Calgary. There's been discussion about the possibility of buying back some of the foresting rights from Spray Lake Sawmills. We think that is a good idea. Albertans in southern Alberta, the Calgary area, who recreate in that area believe that we should be doing more to protect the Elbow Valley watershed. I'd very much like to hear your comments about the possibility of designating a protected area there, ensuring that we have control over the tributaries to the Elbow.

The related aspect to that is the evidence from British Columbia that selective logging of mountain pine beetle is much more environmentally friendly than some of the block cutting that the minister has talked about in this House before.

Really, two elements there: can we see some, I guess, commitment to, again, a watershed-type approach, putting water first, and can we look at logging in a different way that according to at least some studies would suggest better protection for watersheds?

4:00

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, again, maybe those of us on this side are closer to the hon. member's party than I thought because water first is also our view of eastern slopes management. Again, since I have said this for the public record already, I don't mind repeating it here. One of the recommendations of the draft land-use framework is to make watershed and recreation the priority uses for all of the eastern slopes. That relates to or ties into the allusion I made earlier about undertaking conversations with some of the FMA holders on the eastern slopes to rethink whether maximizing annual allowable cut should be the forestry goal or making forestry the means to the end of a sustainable, healthy forest, a sustainable, healthy forest that sustains a vigorous and profitable forestry industry as well.

With respect to the mountain pine beetle, over the last three years, including this year's budget, we now have committed I think a total of up to \$180 million. We're not rock solid on the figure here. I'd be happy to provide it. Certainly, including this year's budget we're well north of \$160 million on the pine beetle over the last three years. Earlier you were asking if we were serious about forestry health or serious about the environment. Well, I think actions speak louder than words, and we've put our money where our mouth is on that.

Two points. Anybody who's travelled through British Columbia

in the last five years has seen the devastation that the pine beetle has wreaked there. I just came back last Friday from a one-day conference on forestry. The conference was in Vancouver, so there was quite a bit of focus on British Columbia. Basically, the interior of British Columbia's forestry industry is not going to have any pine to cut starting in about six or seven years, and it won't have any pine for the next 20 or 30 years. It's not just an economic issue, although it's going to be darn hard on the communities that depend upon pulp and paper and forestry for their economic livelihoods. It's going to be a social disaster as well as an environmental disaster in the interior of British Columbia. The young people there today, five-year-olds, won't see a mature pine forest until they're 60. That's something that I vowed and talked about with caucus members: we're not going to let that happen in this province. We work closely with the Canadian Forest Service, and we work closely with our counterparts in British Columbia to craft our mountain pine beetle strategy here.

With respect to Kananaskis Country in particular, for the obvious reasons of where I live and the constituency I represent I've tried to give it my highest level of attention and allocated my time to paying particular attention to what we're doing and how we're managing pine beetle in the eastern slopes. I understand why a lot of people were upset about the winter harvesting that was done by Spray Lake not inside the park of Kananaskis but on the outskirts of it. I'll take this opportunity simply to point out not just to the hon. member but for the record that that's really the pinch point, sort of the battle of the bulge in Alberta's fight against pine beetle in the southern part of the province right now.

You have the convergence of three different valleys there, all coming from British Columbia: the Bow, the Spray, and I'm forgetting what the name of the river is down through Kananaskis. Three different valley systems all come together right there at the entrance to K Country, and in each case with our pine beetle surveillance policy, where we do the surveillance – this is in the spring – we can see from a number of symptoms where new infected trees show up. The pattern is very clear. Obviously, the closer you get to British Columbia, the higher the incidence of infested trees, and then it diminishes. It comes down.

The pine beetle can't go over the tops of the mountains. The pine beetle comes through the passes, with the exception of Crowsnest, which is further to the south. There are three passes that come through right there, and they all come together right at the entrance to K Country. We believe, based on science, that it is most important that we not let pine beetle get past that point. We do have, ironically or paradoxically, because of the success of our fire suppression, a large amount of over-age timber right there. As I said earlier, it's that over-age timber that is most susceptible to pine beetle.

There was a targeted harvest in that area. You can see it from the Trans-Canada highway if you drive up to Banff or Canmore, and I encourage you to take a look at it. In fact, I'd encourage everybody here to actually turn into Kananaskis, go about four or five kilometres down the road, and go into the Barrier Lake parking lot. There's a display and an explanation there that explains most of what I've just said, and there's a computer-simulated model of how the cut was done this past winter, leaving significant amounts of tree cluster, irregular fringe; in other words, doing precisely a simulation of what a fire would look like.

Maybe not this summer – the first year after a cut no one is going to pretend that an area that's been logged is attractive – but you'll see as that fills in over the next couple of years that most of that area will be almost indistinguishable from a naturally occurring meadow resulting from a forest fire. The trees that come back there are going to be a younger generation, obviously, that are more resistant.

To conclude on this particular issue, I appreciate the fact that many people in the Calgary area and particularly my own constituents, particularly a lot of the people out in Bragg Creek on the west side of my constituency, don't like to look up and see a harvested forest. I'm the first to admit, as I just did, that it's not aesthetically attractive in the early years, but I think that as the minister of forests my obligation or my commitment is to the long-term ecological integrity, the long-term health of the forest and not the short-term aesthetics of humans.

For us five or 10 years is a long time. In the life of a forest five or 10 years is just a blink of an eye. Responsible, sustainable harvesting on this disturbance model with rigorous regeneration and replanting, I think, promises to give us the kind of forest health and, resultant from that, the kind of quality watershed that the hon. member wants and was asking about.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could we switch, then, to confined feeding operations and the NRCB? I hear from a number of places in southern Alberta that there appears to be a lack of consistent application of the regulations relating to the enforcement of standards for confined feeding operations. I wonder if the minister could comment on that and relate back to some of the Auditor General's comments in 2003-04 and again in 2006-07 where he'd felt that the NRCB had failed to demonstrate effective management of environmental risk.

**4:10**

If I could just give an anecdote here, Mr. Minister. The Thorlakson feedlot continues to be a sore point for people in that immediate vicinity. The Thorlakson feedlot is just north and east of Calgary and continues to spill its water into various man-made channels and natural channels, that continues to affect landowners to the east. Over the course of the decade there have been continued visits from SRD folks, Environment folks, asking the corporation to do things. They make minor changes. The overall result is a continued impact on people east of the Thorlakson feedlot. It's only one example of several that I've had complaints about. The lack of, maybe, manpower may be a part of the lack of a willingness to go up against some of these large owners. It's not clear to me how it is that we allow things to go on for a decade without actually enforcing the regulations. How are you feeling about the NRCB and its role in fulfilling those guidelines highlighted by the Auditor General?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Chair, with respect to the Auditor General's comments I'll have to provide a written response for the hon. member, but for the record I'd say that I reject and don't accept his allegations of nonperformance on the part of the NRCB in terms of lack of enforcement of the regulations that are appropriate here.

The hon. member, I'm sure, is aware of the fact that the statute and regulations dealing with confined feeding operations had a grandfathering provision. Understandably, the grandfathering provision did not impose all the new regulations and the new rules on existing feedlots. However, they are subject to a certain number of those regulations and rules, and if they're in violation of them and if there's a complaint, they're investigated.

We certainly don't have any lack of letters coming into the Sustainable Resource Development mailbox complaining about various and sundry issues. I definitely do have a whole batch of letters on one particular feedlot operation right now and have pushed the department fairly strongly on double-checking and verifying the initial factual accounts and then a decision of our field agent. I was

impressed with the fact that the field agent's decision and facts stood up to a lot of scrutiny from the department. It doesn't necessarily solve this particular problem, but I've heard the hon. member make allegations before about other specific feedlots. The allegations are usually based on anecdotal evidence from someone who's unhappy that their complaint wasn't successful, and it doesn't show necessarily a lack of due diligence on the part of our enforcement mechanism.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps we could switch to game ranching and some of the implications, the connection to confined feeding operations and its connection to chronic wasting disease. I'd just like to ask a few questions about the minister's perspective on how wasting disease has moved from game ranching out into the wild and how he intends to address this in a more substantive way than simply culling every couple of years, actually getting at the root issue, which is the game ranching industry, and talking a bit about a longer term national approach, perhaps international with the U.S., in trying to get a handle on this.

Between 1996 and 2001 tons of wild meat and antler velvet were consumed. Only in retrospect was it identified that some of those animals were affected by wasting disease. There are human health implications to allowing this to continue. Clearly, our present approach is dealing with symptoms and constantly trying to catch up to a growing problem in wildlife but also, again, some human health implications as it's so much more transmissible than bovine spongiform encephalopathy. Some of the experts in Canada and the U.S. are saying that we have to take this much more seriously than we have and look at some of the root causes, and certainly this government in its subsidizing of the game ranching industry has not been part of a solution over the last 20 years. Would the minister care to start with talking about what the benefits are of game ranching and what he hopes to see as a future legacy for game ranching in Alberta if we don't get a handle on some of these serious side effects from game ranching?

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The alleged connection between game ranching and CWD is circumstantial and not proven. Certainly, circumstantial evidence is fairly strong in some areas, for example Colorado. But the incidence of CWD in Alberta is concentrated along the Saskatchewan border – it certainly has taken hold in Saskatchewan – and our efforts both at hunter harvesting and also professional harvesting after the season in order to thin out the herd has been focused there. The majority of game ranches in Alberta are nowhere near the Saskatchewan border. If there was a direct, one-to-one connection between game ranching and CWD, you'd expect that there would be some evidence of CWD found deeper to the west into Alberta, and I don't think the hon. member can point out any such instances.

I'm not going to get into the whole issue of game ranching, but I will say that we have taken the chronic wasting disease issue amongst ungulates seriously because of its threat to both our deer populations and also the potential threat that it may have to our cattle. Again, I would like to say for the record that the staff biologist that we have in the fish and wildlife division of Sustainable Resource Development is widely recognized in North America as one of the leading experts.

**The Chair:** The first hour has expired, so now I would like to recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is a great opportunity to be able to get up today and have a bit of a conversation with the minister around the area of Sustainable Resource Development. I have, perhaps, a bit of a scattergun approach, so I'm sorry; in your responses to me you may be shuffling around. I didn't have as much time to get ready for this as I might have liked. I have a few issues that I want to ask you about. Hopefully, we'll get through them. I'm pretty sure we will, actually, in the period of time I have allotted.

Generally speaking, of course, I just want to support a lot of the statements that have been made by previous speakers about the importance of the work that the ministry does, about the importance of ensuring that development in Alberta is done in a way that is sustainable in terms of our wildlife and our natural settings as well as how that's balanced with industry. We know and there has of course been a lot of talk over the last few years about the exponential pace of development in Alberta as opposed to the pace of development that we were looking at just a few years before that and the fact that that pace of development puts extreme pressures on our natural resources and the fact that we, as a result, need to step in and start managing that. I understand that a lot of those objectives will be met through the ultimate implementation of the land-use framework.

4:20

In getting ready for these estimates, I had an opportunity to go back through previous estimate discussions, and I see that at about this time last year there was talk about the land-use framework being distributed for everybody for consultation last spring. My understanding is that you sort of have a leaked version of it out and that there's talk of it being further consulted, and then at some point, perhaps in the fall, I wasn't quite sure, we would get something more concrete. My first question is simply: what is the timeline on the public sharing of either a draft or the final version of the land-use framework, and then what's the timeline in terms of the first steps towards its implementation?

A lot of the issues that would be covered in the land-use framework have already been touched on by my colleague in the Liberal caucus. One thing he may have mentioned but I didn't perhaps hear is the issue around urban sprawl and the many problems that that creates in terms of both our natural resources and our farmland. For instance, we have the spectre of a second ring road being discussed in Edmonton. We have a lot of information out there that that is a recipe, an invitation, almost a direction for further low density development on the outsides of the city, therefore taking up a lot more land. I'm wondering if the minister has any comments about that issue in terms of whether it's something that he sees the government taking action on to restrict and whether we can expect to see that issue being addressed in the land-use framework.

I'll stop there with those two or three questions.

**Dr. Morton:** Is it your intention that we proceed the way we did with the Member for Calgary-Mountain View?

**Ms Notley:** Yeah. I should have probably mentioned that.

**Dr. Morton:** Okay. Thank you, then. In terms of the time frame for the land-use framework I think the previous minister had indicated that he was hoping to take it public last year, but upon my becoming the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development in December 2006, the progress that had been made to that date had been at a fairly high level of – I wouldn't say just platitudes but sort of the easier things. We determined at that point that it would be advisable to do a much more extensive public consultation both community-



based – I think we went through 17 communities last May and June with open houses and a very good display, a very informative display – and also a web-based questionnaire and also extensive consultations with a group of five different stakeholder groups. That public consultation process, which I think was a very good investment of our time, took up the better part of last year. Then, of course, there were events this winter that further postponed matters.

We've spent a lot of time in caucus just this week addressing the land-use framework, and based on the decisions that have been made, I'm confident that a draft will be available to Albertans and, obviously, to opposition members before the end of the month. We'll have a further consultation period on the draft for the rest of May and June, and if people still want to talk to us after June, we can talk into July. But I would hope that by the end of the summer we will have had the opportunity to consult with both Albertans in general and also the stakeholder groups again, and the team that's working on the land-use framework would bring back, then, a final draft to this party's caucus for approval in the fall. So that's the timeline question.

In terms of urban sprawl, yes, the draft land-use framework very much addresses that issue. It identifies both the capital region and the Calgary region for priority action. There's sort of a recommended timeline for implementation of many of the recommendations in the land-use framework, but there are several time-prioritized items – two of them are the capital region and the Calgary region – for an approach to better integrated regional planning.

It also addresses the issue of rural sprawl, which is the spread of acreages, in particular, across rural Alberta, and makes some recommendations with respect to ways in which MDs with the help of the provincial government can encourage cluster development. Again, the objective is not to stop growth but, rather, to manage it. So we can still allow residential development in rural areas but in a way that doesn't consume as much open land and consume as much farmland. So that issue is addressed, as well.

Just in closing, though, for the record, Mr. Chair, I'd like to point out that while the land-use framework is proposing these on a go-forward basis, many of the recommendations have already been put in place by this government, certainly the Premier's leadership in the capital region area, where he has shown quite strong leadership in getting the communities around Edmonton and the city of Edmonton to get together and begin to work co-operatively in terms of transportation and utility planning. So this is already happening. The government of Alberta has also assisted the Calgary Regional Partnership, which is a voluntary group of the city of Calgary and I believe it's 17 other towns, cities, and MDs around Calgary, in working out something similar. That's already under way.

As I mentioned earlier in response to questions from the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, the cumulative effects methodology of land planning figures prominently in the land-use framework. The hon. Minister of Environment has already initiated a pilot project dealing with cumulative effects in the heartland area, just to the east of Edmonton, and I can report that we have a second pilot project dealing with cumulative effects down in the southwest area of the province, that will be rolled out sometime this year.

So, Mr. Chair, it's not just a question of the land-use framework saying what the government is going to do. A lot of the things that are proposed in the land-use framework are actually already under way in various stages.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you for those answers. Just following up on that issue ever so quickly before I move on. I would just suggest my hope that the issue of the second ring road in Edmonton, which to my understanding is simply in the discussion stages, that there's

been no decisions made – and I could be wrong on that, but that was my understanding – that that is something that would be addressed in a preventative way through some of the recommendations coming out of the land-use framework.

I'm just going to move on briefly to the issue of Métis harvesting. My understanding of where things stand with that right now is that there had been an agreement that had been negotiated in principle, and then through your ministry that agreement had been rejected and a different set of rules had been put in place. Since that happened last fall, there were a number of members within the Métis community who went out and continued to harvest in line with what they see to be their rights under previous court decisions, and I believe there are a number of matters that are before the courts at this point as a result of this whole issue not being resolved. I'm just wondering from a budget perspective if there is a line item there that addresses the litigation costs arising from the failure to reach agreement with the Métis nation and whether there are any ongoing efforts to do a better job at coming to a consensus on the harvesting agreement with the Métis nation.

That's one group of questions.

**4:30**

I'd like to switch base really quickly to the issue of wildlife management and the one issue that, of course, we heard a lot about in the news two or three weeks ago in terms of the waterfowl up in Fort McMurray. My understanding is that when there is an event that negatively impacts on the health of wildlife, it is the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Development that needs to be involved in terms of enforcement and investigation in those cases. I'm wondering if we can be provided with all reports or audits or investigations around any type of wildlife compromise that has arisen over the last two years in the Fort McMurray tar sands area, unless you can give me numbers and reports today. But if that needs to be done in writing, that's fine.

Then the third thing that I wanted to talk about, just jumping again to a slightly different area, is the whole issue of the forest industry. We've had, you know, quite a bit of discussion in the past and I know that, again, there has been discussion in the media about the state of the forest industry, the fragility of the industry and the extensive number of jobs that have been lost in the industry as a result of a number of international factors and also, of course, the threat of the pine beetle. I'm wondering if I can get some comment from the minister on any initiatives that are being considered for the purposes of dealing with what you referred to at one point in your comments just recently, the social impact of that industry's fragility, the many job losses we have.

You know, roughly 3,000 jobs have been lost in, I believe, the last year. While some are being taken up right now by the oil and gas industry, we have a big problem with those communities that, of course, rely on the forest industry and have historically. In terms of the broader sort of social and employment consequences of the rather poor state of the forest industry I'm wondering if I can hear some comments from the minister on initiatives that are being considered by the ministry at this point.

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me begin by addressing the Métis harvesting issue. There's a considerable amount of misinformation out in the public realm, and it would appear that the hon. member has fallen victim to some of this. I think it should be stated for the record that the initial agreement that she referred to, the interim Métis harvesting agreement that was approved in I

believe it was October of 2004 – the decision to rescind that agreement and to renegotiate it was taken not by me, not by the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Development, not even by this government. It was taken by the previous government, and it was taken by a vote, a near unanimous vote, of caucus.

The previous government of Premier Klein and the current government have made it clear repeatedly on the public record that we accept the Powley decision and we accept the harvesting rights established and defined by the Supreme Court in the Powley decision. What it turned out was not acceptable were the terms and conditions of implementing Powley that the first Métis harvesting agreement tried to set out. I won't go into the details of that, but suffice it to say that there was inadequate consultation with caucus and a number of other affected groups.

There was then an attempt that took place from the spring of '06 to the spring of '07 to negotiate a second agreement. Those negotiations stalled, no progress was being made, and at a certain point both parties had the opportunity to invoke a 90-day unilateral ending of the agreement. So that was invoked I believe on April 1 of 2007. There were 90 days, then, to conclude a new agreement. Negotiations failed, so the agreement came to an end.

Does that mean that legal Métis harvesting has come to an end in Alberta? Not at all. There is a protocol in place within the department that follows the Powley decision and allows people who meet the Powley test to be certified as Powley harvesters. The last time I checked the statistics on that, we had received over 300 applications for certification as Métis harvesters and had approved, I believe, approximately 200. In other words, there is legal Métis harvesting taking place in the province of Alberta now. It is true that there is a group out there that has purposely broken the law in a campaign of civil disobedience, and as things should be, they've been duly charged with breaking the law. Those cases are coming to court, and for obvious reasons I won't comment on those cases other than to say that the normal prosecution will take place.

I'll just finish by saying that it's always been the position of both Sustainable Resource Development and the government that we would prefer to have an administrative agreement to determine who qualifies for Métis harvesting under the Powley test. That was the attempt that failed in the first interim agreement, and it was the objective of the second set of negotiations that failed to reach an agreement. We'd be happy to undertake negotiations again.

With respect to Sustainable Resource Development's involvement in oil sands and specifically with the intersection of wildlife and fisheries, impact on wildlife and fisheries in the north and specifically in the oil sands . . . [Dr. Morton's speaking time expired]

**The Chair:** I now recognize the hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If the conversation can go back and forth for the next 20 minutes with your permission, I would prefer that.

**The Chair:** Proceed. Twenty minutes.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you. Minister, thank you to your staff, especially those out in Whitecourt-St. Anne, that do such a good job with our local companies and for our citizens.

**Mr. Boutilier:** And Fort McMurray.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** And for the Member for Fort McMurray as well. We've had a lot of talk in the Legislature about the competitive

issue with our forest industry, and I don't have to go on long about the issues that our forest industry is faced with right now. I'm hearing from a lot of my small loggers that there's a movement within your ministry to make things tough for those folks. It's a targeted issue with making sure that the right inventory gets cut, gets weighed, and is accounted for. We all want that. We want to make sure that the Crown's resource is recovered and recorded properly.

Some discussions with my small loggers, saying that SRD staff is forcing them to only one solution, and that's a solution of putting in a weigh scale that's expensive. At this time, in the scope of what they're being faced with with high input costs and low margins on their wood, they're saying that is unreasonable.

If you've ever been in a log truck, you know that they have scales on the trucks themselves. They're pretty accurate. I mean, they're so accurate that even the Department of Transportation recognizes them, our own department, and I know there's a concern with SRD staff that the scales in the trucks aren't federally recognized. To me that's a kind of a cop out. I mean, we recognize them at our weigh scales. We should recognize them as an accurate measurement for logs. Also, you could install the weigh scale at your small logging operation, and you could drive around it if you wanted to, if we were really worried about the accuracy of what's being counted. So, you know, it doesn't matter what system we have, it can always be beaten.

4:40

I say to you, and I'm appealing to you, that within your business plan and within your ministry we need to work out a solution to this problem. I've talked with the Member for Rocky Mountain House. He's getting the same concerns. I know the concerns will also come from the small loggers in West Yellowhead and throughout the province. Just wondering if there's some flexibility within your business plan to meet the needs of these small loggers.

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne, for that question. We have discussed that issue in this House before, and you're correct. I did indicate that my information is that this is a question that falls partially under federal regulation. As he might guess, I'm not used to personally defending anything Ottawa does, but in this case it's not a question of defending it; it's a question of whether or not there's a legal obligation because of the interprovincial transportation.

I can tell you that I have reconstituted the Forest Industry Sustainability Committee with three MLA members and three industry members. This will be the same committee that we constituted last fall, and it gave me a report in December that we're working on implementing now. I've reconstituted that committee. The chair has stayed, an MLA, but two new MLAs are on it. Both that committee and also the forestry division of Sustainable Resource Development are investigating this issue and looking for a more pragmatic and less expensive solution.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you to the minister for that response. What I can take back this weekend when I go home to the constituency tonight is just to tell my constituents they can wait, that they won't be forced out of business, that there's going to be a common-sense solution put to the local MLAs and that staff will come up with a resolve to this issue. I thank you for that.

The next thing I want to talk about with the minister. You know, a lot of pressure's on our large FMA holders right now, and you and I have discussed this in the past when it came time for FMA

renewals. Are we going to tie these FMA renewals to having an active mill? You know, we may have some mill closures throughout the province in order to adjust shipments. Will we still allow our mills to be able to operate the FMAs and, you know, continue to have good silviculture practices and continue to maybe trade logs for chips even if a sawmill is not operating? I'm just concerned that if we're not flexible over the next couple of years, we may see some further pressures on our industry. I'm just wondering how flexible you and your department are going to be on this issue knowing that some FMA renewals are coming up shortly?

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, the issue that the Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne identifies is an important issue, and it is on our agenda. Of course, the pertinency requirement, I believe it's called, that is found in most FMAs, has been the subject of a fair amount of discussion and, again, is another one of the issues that the Forest Industry Sustainability Committee will be addressing this spring.

For the public record, though, I think it should be pointed out that there's another side to the coin, and that is the local communities adjacent in which the mills operate. Many of those communities depend upon that mill not just for jobs but also for a variety of property tax or business tax. So it's not a cut and dried decision to simply say: "Oh, yeah. There doesn't have to be any connection between the FMA and the mill operating." The FMAs were designed with that in mind, but we're certainly in the process of looking at long-term sustainability of the industry. That issue is on the table.

I would like to point out, though, that in the past 17 months the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Development and particularly the forestry division has actively pursued measures that are intended to respond to the difficulty the industry is in. I'd preface anything I'd say by saying, of course, that we are not going to do anything that violates the softwood lumber agreement that was entered into in the fall of 2006 and under which Alberta and British Columbia operate under a certain set of rules. But within those confines, which we respect and comply with, we've certainly worked hard on the battle against the mountain pine beetle in terms of trying to protect wood supply and also resequencing some of the forestry management plans to get the older stands, the more vulnerable stands of wood, out of the path of or out of proximity to the pine beetle in a way that is in the interest of all Albertans but also the FMA holders.

Last March we did update our timber dues system to reflect the lower market prices. Since that was a set of rules that had been in place prior to the softwood lumber agreement, there was nothing illegal about that under the softwood lumber agreement because that was a system that predated the SLA. Again, not just for the forestry industry but for all companies and corporations operating in Alberta this year, if you have a large number of employees, we've given you a substantial reduction in operating costs, or will as of January of next year, by eliminating the health insurance premiums. That will be a big reduction in payroll cost.

Alberta FMA holders are amongst the highest in the world in terms of the amount of our forest that is third-party certified. Third-party certified means meeting a certain set of standards for environmental practice. Most of the operators in Alberta comply with something called the Canadian Standards Association, the CSA, certification, which is a very rigorous test with a lot of integrity.

4:50

Unfortunately, the group that recommends forestry products for

construction uses the so-called LEED system. The LEED system, which was developed in Europe, has predictably adopted a European standard for their LEED system of certification. Again, our division has been working carefully behind the scenes with the LEED certifiers to persuade them and show them that the CSA certification is every bit as good as the so-called CFS, certified forest stewardship, system. We've been working closely with the industry to try to take measures that will help it stay competitive and weather the storm but without any violations of the softwood lumber agreement.

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

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you. I do appreciate you pointing out the two sides of the issue on the FMA renewal. I know that when I was mayor of Whitecourt, it was pretty important for me to have those taxes coming in from that mill. It provided about one-third of the taxes for our community, and to keep that mill operating was important. I guess that being in the Legislature here, I'm looking at a little bit bigger picture just trying to keep the industry here, you know, afloat.

I do appreciate your personal support on getting rid of the health care premium. You know, for the forest industry, to a company that doesn't pay income tax right now when the market is low like West Fraser in my constituency, with 2,100 employees, that's \$2.1 million. To Alberta Newsprint, with 290 employees, that's \$290,000. To Millar Western, with 1,000 employees, that's \$1 million, and that's taken right off their expenditure side. I think it needs to be pointed out to a lot of folks that there are industries that are in trouble like this that do appreciate that tax cut. That's what it is: a tax cut.

The minister mentioned something about certification and the importance of certification around the world. You know, I find it funny when we talk about lumber coming from sources that never supplied any kind of certification out in the forest: forests in Russia and forests in Brazil and forests all over the place. I think the consumer really looks at what that two-by-four is going to cost him. I don't know if he looks on the end of that board and sees that CSA certification.

As your department goes and works all over the world to try to break into new markets so that our forest industry can sell into new markets, how are we going to get that message across about the certification and what the consumer needs to look for? Is there something within your budget that you're out there promoting the branding? We heard the Premier talk about branding Alberta. Is your department working with him to make sure that the consumer out there in the market understands the branding and the certification that happens within Alberta in order for us to get into those markets or at least stay in those markets that are so important to us?

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The issue of third-party certification is increasingly on the minds of consumers. We've seen a number of campaigns by environmental groups that target certain producers for failing to meet certain certification standards. I might add that a lot of those campaigns use a lot of false and misleading information as well. But I think, whether consumers are buying two-by-fours or whether they're buying beef or vegetables, that environmental awareness and source of the product is increasingly a factor in consumer decision-making. So I think that pursuing the third-party certification is very worth while for Alberta.

In fact, Canada can boast that it has more certified forest than any other country in the world, but again we haven't done as good a job

in getting that message out. It's my understanding that part of the information campaign that the Premier has announced in recent weeks, while a lot of its focus is on oil sands, is on responsible balancing of economic development and environmental stewardship, not just in the oil sands but across the board in Alberta. I expect and will do my best to make sure that the forestry industry gets some portion of that budget and some portion of that time and energy to sell what is a very good story. Canadian forestry in general and Alberta in particular is at the top in terms of reforestation, in terms of third-party certification. We need to get that message out, and we'll certainly work to do that.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Minister, for expressing an interest in that.

My last question is on the fisheries. It has been a number of years since we've moved to barbless hooks. I know that you're an active fisherman and am just wondering if there's been any follow-up study that our fisheries are any healthier since we've moved to barbless hooks, and I'm wondering how you're doing personally. Are you losing a lot of fish since you moved to barbless hooks?

**Dr. Morton:** I'll provide a written answer to that question.

**The Chair:** All right. Now I would like to recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** You will use the 20 minutes?

**Mr. Hehr:** If I get that far, but if we can go back and forth, Mr. Minister?

**The Chair:** Okay. Go ahead.

**Mr. Hehr:** Okay. I appreciate that in your position as sustainable resource minister you have a lot to do with a lot of different areas. You know, I assume that you're involved in discussions around oil sands development as well as forests and wildlife and the like. I'm of the belief that, maybe to our own peril, maybe not, we will drag out every last fossil fuel within Alberta in due course over the length of our province, whether that be in 60 years, 100 years, 200 years. That's just sort of the philosophical background I come from.

Just sort of touching on what my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View discussed earlier and you made reference to, that it was often this side of the House that called for a slowdown or a moratorium on some oil sands development, I'd just like to remind you that there are even some members of your party. I don't think they've bought memberships into ours. In particular, former Premier Lougheed also indicated that in his opinion this would be the wisest move Alberta could take. I was just wondering if you have had discussions with Mr. Lougheed on this front on what his views are and how your views currently maybe differ from his on sustainable resource development here in Alberta.

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Chair. Well, like many Albertans, I'm a great admirer of former Premier Lougheed. I actually spent quite a bit of time studying how he defended Alberta and Albertans against the predatory policies of the Liberal Party of Canada, their party. I think that's one of the reasons that Premier Lougheed is remembered so fondly by Albertans, because he wasn't afraid to stand up to

Ottawa and draw the line and say that these are provincial resources and they'll be governed by provincial regulation and provincial policy. I think that spirit is still alive and well in the caucus today.

5:00

With respect to the issue of pace of development I think that since 2001 and really, in my mind, since 9/11 the whole security of supply issue has become such a strong driver of world energy prices and particularly in North America. Everybody can see that the pace of development in our province has put pressure on a lot of what we do. Again, I think it's to our leader and our Premier's credit that he has made it very explicit that one of the primary goals of the policies not just in this area but across the board – infrastructure, municipalities, education, health, as we saw today – is to respond to those growth pressures. I'm very much on the same page, as I know everybody in the caucus is, with that general direction.

On the question of exhausting hydrocarbon resources in the province, I'll just maybe make a couple of observations. Anybody on this side of the House would remember the former Minister of Energy, Greg Melchin. Our former colleague pointed out a number of times that question of Alberta natural gas. Before you arrived here, hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, I think your colleague just to your right there had suggested that we should leave that gas in the ground till it gets more expensive, right? Leave it in the ground; you'll get higher money for it later.

Well, there's very, very cheap natural gas in other parts of the world, under a dollar an mcf, but it's far away from markets. They have these things called liquified natural gas tankers that can and do bring natural gas. In fact, one of the fastest growing areas in the international energy business is liquified natural gas tankers and ports. They fill them up for less than a dollar an mcf in the Middle East, and they don't even know where they're headed until they leave port. They go wherever the price is highest.

If you look at liquified natural gas imports into North America, in the winter of 2006, when gas prices in North America went up to over \$15 or \$16, even with the lack of number of ports liquified natural gas poured into North America. That was one of the things that's caused the depressed price of natural gas starting a year and a half ago: because of all the LNG that came in. The minute the price of natural gas went down in North America, the LNG tankers are going back to Europe now. So it's a mistake to think that you can just leave it in the ground and it's going to be worth more later.

I'd say that maybe that was the philosophy in Saskatchewan. If you look at Saskatchewan's energy policy, in the last big boom, in the mid-70s, Saskatchewan lost a key Supreme Court decision on windfall profit taxes, and it went back and relegislated a different way of achieving the same things. So for the next 30 years while Alberta prospered, Saskatchewan had three decades of – let's just call it modest – modest economic activity. We know that just by the number of people from Saskatchewan that are in Alberta that are neighbours and, I think, even the number of people from Saskatchewan that are in this Assembly.

Again, I'll finish with an anecdote. I think anecdotes sometimes are as important as statistics. I have a new neighbour who just bought a house one house away from me. The price of that house would have been somewhere between \$600,000 and \$700,000. This individual and his wife moved to Calgary from Fort McMurray, and he had been pipefitting for five years. He's 30 years old. Everyone talks about the downside of our prosperity, of our boom. There are a whole bunch of young people – young couples, young individuals – that have had amazing economic opportunities, both skilled workers, like my new neighbour, and lots of professionals that have had the opportunity for home ownership and financial

security that maybe we take too much for granted these days. I'm proud to be a member of a party that has governed a province for 35-plus years, that has created that type of economic opportunity for so many young people.

I think we'll strike the right balance. Like I said, the land-use framework is not about stopping growth; it's about managing growth. I think that's where we're headed.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, thank you, Mr. Minister. I'll just respond to a couple of things. I don't know if I ever said leaving it in the ground for eternity is what my plan was. What I was simply saying there is that there comes a time and a point in Alberta when things reach their limit, and it might be time to take a pause. This might be a time to take a pause. I wasn't suggesting that we leave it in the ground for a hundred years.

Another thing – and I think you might know this. I believe Joe Clark actually drafted the NEP. The federal Liberals had the unfortunate plan of implementing it.

**Mr. Hancock:** Not a chance. It was a business decision.

**Mr. Hehr:** I honestly think I read that, but I could be totally wrong. Anyway, let's get off the NEP. I was eight years old when it happened, and we moved on. Now that I've gotten that off my chest, we can move on.

I'm moving to the open spaces pilot project that you had going on. I believe that is for the hunting for habitat program. If you could just tell me sort of the status of that program and whether that is starting. It was supposed to be a five-year pilot project that was beginning in the fall of 2008.

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Chair. The basic premise of the open spaces initiative that we worked on last year was that the key to healthy fish and wildlife population is healthy and abundant habitat, and in southern and central Alberta 50 per cent of that habitat is on private lands. Therefore, if we care about healthy and abundant fish and wildlife populations, which we do – that is one of our five mandates in the ministry, and certainly I think it's a shared objective of all of our elected members and all of our party members generally – then we have to pay attention to habitat. If that habitat is on private lands, particularly with the very growth pressure that you just referred to, it's good policy, makes sense to find ways to incent private landowners to maintain or improve habitat. If it's a public good, why should the cost of maintaining or improving that public good rest on the shoulders of private landowners?

So we came forward with two pilot projects: hunting for habitat and the recreational access management program. The hunting for habitat one was the focus of most of the criticism over the course of the winter. I think there was a lack of adequate consultation with various conservation and hunting groups over the details of that.

**5:10**

This party has learned both through good experience and bad that it's important to listen to what the people of Alberta say, so we've put the hunting for habitat initiative on the shelf for now, and we'll be discussing this summer – we're in fact discussing already with various hunting and fishing and other conservation-oriented organizations. If you didn't like the way we proposed to compensate landowners under hunting for habitat for keeping habitat, maintaining or improving habitat, what are the other alternatives? What are some better ideas? Maybe there are some better ideas out there. I

think the benefit of the discussion or the dialogue that took place over the course of the winter was that it forced a broad recognition that habitat conservation on private lands has become an important priority in this province precisely for the reason your previous question identified, because of the pace of growth. Maybe with hunting for habitat the compensation mechanism there wasn't the right one. Maybe there are better ones, but it's an important beginning.

We do intend to proceed with the recreational access management plan, or RAMP, which is the second component, on a pilot project in the two southern WMUs, 108 and 300. There the compensation for habitat maintenance and improvement and hunter access is paid for by the government, so the charges, which I don't think were legitimate, of paid hunting that were lodged against the hunting for habitat program haven't stuck with the recreational access management program. Our intention is to proceed with that one on a pilot project in WMUs 300 and 108 for the next five years and then see what the response is. Again, the focus on that is incenting private landowners to both do habitat conservation improvement and to encourage public access.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, on that note, I have a couple of specific questions on those pilot projects on the hunting. What do you guys have budgeted this year to be paid for this hunting? Going forward, do you have any more plans with paid hunting? Will this maybe be applied to game ranches? Will they be included in the ministry's plans?

Just those two questions on that topic. Then we can move on.

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Chair. The estimated cost of the RAMP program is between \$300,000 and \$400,000 over the next couple of years. Again, there were a lot of allegations made that this was a form of game ranching. If you think clearly about it for a moment, you can see that nothing could be further from the truth. There is no private ownership of any game, under either the RAMP or the open spaces. The game involved is free to go and come where they want. In fact, the principle of Crown ownership of wildlife, which is to say public ownership, was a founding principle of the whole program. In a game ranch the rancher is the proprietor of the animal. He owns the deer or the elk in the same way that a rancher owns a cow. That is not the case under either of these programs. That was one of those sort of close but false analogies that often get used in a politicized debate.

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

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you very much. If we just go to public land sales – you may have to get back to me in written answers, but maybe you can answer them now – how much public land was sold in '07-08, in that year, or in the previous years as well? Was this money added to the general revenue of the government? How much public land does the department anticipate to sell this year? Are there any projections for public land sales over the next few years over and beyond the immediate time frame?

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. In fact, I do have that information fairly close to the surface of my brain because it was a topic that I was asked to speak to the Alberta Fish and Game Association about when I spoke to them in February. Over the last 10 or so years the

average amount of Crown land sold has been less than 10,000 acres a year. The majority of that land is in the north, and it's inside existing municipal boundaries. It's Crown land that was once outside of a town or city, but with all the growth you've seen in the Fort McMurrays and Grande Prairies and lots of smaller towns, that Crown land is now actually inside a city limit. It's lost its character of being undeveloped Crown land. Typically that's where most of it is sold.

There is still some Crown land conversion to agriculture in the far north, in – what would that area be? – the La Crête area. They're created in the MD of Mackenzie. There are basically some settler-like communities up there. We're allowing some sale of Crown land there for clearing and forestry, but I would point out that it's less than 10,000 acres a year. There are a hundred million acres of public land in Alberta. At the current rate if we sold that much for each of the next hundred years, we will have sold 1 per cent of Crown land over the next hundred years. So it's minuscule.

There are conditions on that land. It is not sold if it's environmentally sensitive or needed for programs like conservation and wildlife. [Dr. Morton's speaking time expired] I guess that ends our conversation.

**The Chair:** I recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On page 267 of the ministry's business plans the minister talks about managing growth pressures. It goes on to say:

Resource development will continue to be a vital part of the Alberta economy. To support their economic viability and growth, many industries (oil and gas, forestry, agriculture, tourism) require increasing and secure access to public land and its associated natural resources. This means that large numbers of land disposition applications will need to be processed.

It goes on further to say:

Meanwhile, more Albertans are requiring more access to public land for a wide spectrum of recreation activities (e.g., hunting, fishing, nature appreciation, and off-road vehicle use). More disposition approvals and more public access increase the complexity of integrating all activities on the land, which increases the need for planning and consultation. The challenge will be to implement the Land-use Framework in a way that balances economic growth and access to natural resources with the social and environmental expectations that contribute to Albertans' overall quality of life.

I believe there were two attempts made before at a land-use framework, and they both failed. What were the reasons for the failures before? How will you succeed this time?

5:20

**Dr. Morton:** Could I ask the hon. member to restate the question once more, a bit more succinctly?

**Mr. Kang:** There were two attempts made before at a land-use framework, and they both failed. What were the reasons for the failure before? You're attempting a third time, I believe. How are you going to succeed this time?

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was scratching my head earlier when the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View was talking about two previous failures. I'm not aware of what those previous failures are. Maybe it predates my election in 2004. I was elected in November of 2004; the land-use framework process began that spring. My predecessor, the hon. Dave Coumts, took it through its first year or so of consultation and development, and that's what I inherited when I became the minister in December of 2006.

As I've indicated earlier, in terms of the resources that our government has already committed to developing the framework, in terms of time and personnel, from the amount of money that you see budgeted – \$7 million this year, \$15 million next year, \$25 million for the year after that – I think you can see that we have every intention of succeeding and no intention of failing. This is a central part of our Premier's commitment to manage growth pressures and address quality of life issues for Albertans. So hold on to your seats.

I think we're out of time.

**Mr. Kang:** The response of the Auditor General on sole-source contracts. The Auditor General's 2006-2007 report noted that a series of 11 contracts, totalling \$769,743, were sole-sourced to the same consultant. Can the minister explain what has been done to address this concern, and why were no other contractors given contracts? Were any others consulted?

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We've had conversations with the Auditor General on that. It dealt with continuity in an area of information gathering and electronic storage. We thought there were certain economies of scale to be gained from continuing to deal with the same provider. But I'll give you a more complete written answer in due course.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Since there are no other members who wish to speak, I will now invite the officials to leave the Assembly so that the committee may rise and report progress.

Hon. members, please get back to your own seats.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the committee rise and report the estimates of SRD and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Dr. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions for the Department of Sustainable Resource Development relating to the 2008-2009 government estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009, reports progress, and requests leave to sit again.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Having heard the report, does the Assembly agree?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 20.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Have a good long weekend with your families and constituents.

[Motion carried; at 5:26 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

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

**Activity to May 15, 2008**

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

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

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

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

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

Second Reading -- 47-48 (Apr. 16 eve.), 203-08 (Apr. 23 eve.), 464 (May 5 eve.), 517-18 (May 6 eve.), 572-73 (May 7 eve.), 653-54 (May 12 eve.), 702-03 (May 13 eve., adjourned)

### **2 Travel Alberta Act (Ady)**

First Reading -- 215 (Apr. 24 aft.)

Second Reading -- 464-65 (May 5 eve.), 518-19 (May 6 eve.), 703 (May 13 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 754 (May 14 eve., passed)

### **3 Fiscal Responsibility Amendment Act, 2008 (Snelgrove)**

First Reading -- 216 (Apr. 24 aft.)

Second Reading -- 654 (May 12 eve.), 703-06 (May 13 eve.), 755 (May 14 eve., adjourned)

### **4 Alberta Enterprise Corporation Act (Horner)**

First Reading -- 224 (Apr. 24 aft.)

Second Reading -- 654 (May 12 eve., adjourned)

### **5 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2008 (\$) (Snelgrove)**

First Reading -- 125 (Apr. 21 eve.)

Second Reading -- 143 (Apr. 22 eve.), 158-60 (Apr. 22 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 208-10 (Apr. 23 eve., passed)

Third Reading -- 386-87 (Apr. 30 eve., passed)

Royal Assent -- (May 15 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 15, 2008; SA 2008 c2]

### **6 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2008 (\$) (Snelgrove)**

First Reading -- 165-66 (Apr. 23 aft.)

Second Reading -- 387 (Apr. 30 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 463 (May 5 eve., passed)

Third Reading -- 516 (May 6 eve., passed)

Royal Assent -- (May 15 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 15, 2008; SA 2008 c1]

### **7 Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2008 (Bhullar)**

First Reading -- 348 (Apr. 30 aft.)

### **8 Climate Change and Emissions Management Amendment Act, 2008 (Renner)**

First Reading -- 348 (Apr. 30 aft.)

### **9 Land Agents Licensing Amendment Act, 2008 (Mitzel)**

First Reading -- 479 (May 6 aft.)

### **10 Security Services and Investigators Act (Anderson)**

First Reading -- 586-87 (May 8 aft.)

- 11 Insurance Amendment Act, 2008 (Evans)**  
First Reading -- 348 (Apr. 30 aft.)
- 12 Teachers' Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2008 (Evans)**  
First Reading -- 348 (Apr. 30 aft.)
- 13 Financial Institutions Statutes Amendment Act, 2008 (Fawcett)**  
First Reading -- 533 (May 7 aft.)
- 14 Court of Queen's Bench Amendment Act, 2008 (Redford)**  
First Reading -- 770 (May 15 aft.)
- 15 Family Law Amendment Act, 2008 (Redford)**  
First Reading -- 770 (May 15 aft.)
- 201 Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act (Mitzel)**  
First Reading -- 59 (Apr. 17 aft.)  
Second Reading -- 89-102 (Apr. 21 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 430-43 (May 5 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 625-31 (May 12 aft., passed)  
Royal Assent -- (May 15 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 15, 2008; SA 2008 cH-15.5]
- 202 Alberta Volunteer Service Medal Act (Cao)**  
First Reading -- 59 (Apr. 17 aft.)  
Second Reading -- 102-07 (Apr. 21 aft.), 258-64 (Apr. 28 aft., six-month hoist amendment agreed to)
- 203 Election Statutes (Fixed Election Dates) Amendment Act, 2008 (Allred)**  
First Reading -- 224 (Apr. 24 aft.)  
Second Reading -- 265-74 (Apr. 28 aft.), 443-44 (May 5 aft.), 631-34 (May 12 aft., six-month hoist amendment agreed to)
- 204 Traffic Safety (Hand-Held Communication Devices) Amendment Act, 2008 (Johnston)**  
First Reading -- 224 (Apr. 24 aft.)
- 205 Traffic Safety (Used Vehicle Inspection) Amendment Act, 2008 (Bhardwaj)**  
First Reading -- 401 (May 1 aft.)
- 206 Alberta Personal Income Tax (Physical Activity Credit) Amendment Act, 2008 (Rodney)**  
First Reading -- 587 (May 8 aft.)
- Pr1 Young Men's Christian Association of Edmonton Statutes Amendment Act, 2008 (Lukaszuk)**  
First Reading -- 719 (May 14 aft.)





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