



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

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

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Lindsay, Calgary-North West (PC), Minister of Culture and Community Spirit</p> <p>Blakeman, Laurie, Edmonton-Centre (L), Official Opposition House Leader</p> <p>Boutilier, Guy C., Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (PC)</p> <p>Brown, Dr. Neil, QC, Calgary-Nose Hill (PC)</p> <p>Calahasen, Pearl, Lesser Slave Lake (PC)</p> <p>Campbell, Robin, West Yellowhead (PC), Deputy Government Whip</p> <p>Chase, Harry B., Calgary-Varsity (L), Official Opposition Whip</p> <p>Dallas, Cal, Red Deer-South (PC)</p> <p>Danyluk, Hon. Ray, Lac La Biche-St. Paul (PC), Minister of Municipal Affairs</p> <p>DeLong, Alana, Calgary-Bow (PC)</p> <p>Denis, Jonathan, Calgary-Egmont (PC)</p> <p>Doerksen, Arno, Strathmore-Brooks (PC)</p> <p>Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC)</p> <p>Elniski, Doug, Edmonton-Calder (PC)</p> <p>Evans, Hon. Iris, Sherwood Park (PC), Minister of Finance and Enterprise</p> <p>Fawcett, Kyle, Calgary-North Hill (PC)</p> <p>Forsyth, Heather, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)</p> <p>Fritz, Hon. 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Mary Anne, Red Deer-North (PC), Minister of Seniors and Community Supports</p> <p>Jacobs, Broyce, Cardston-Taber-Warner (PC)</p> <p>Johnson, Jeff, Athabasca-Redwater (PC)</p> <p>Johnston, Art, Calgary-Hays (PC)</p> <p>Kang, Darshan S., Calgary-McCall (L)</p> <p>Klimchuk, Hon. Heather, Edmonton-Glenora (PC), Minister of Service Alberta</p> <p>Knight, Hon. Mel, Grande Prairie-Smoky (PC), Minister of Energy</p> <p>Leskiw, Genia, Bonnyville-Cold Lake (PC)</p>	<p>Liepert, Hon. Ron, Calgary-West (PC), Minister of Health and Wellness</p> <p>Lindsay, Hon. 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Ron, QC, Calgary-Glenmore (PC), Deputy Premier, Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations</p> <p>Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (L)</p> <p>Taft, Dr. Kevin, Edmonton-Riverview (L), Leader of the Official Opposition</p> <p>Tarchuk, Hon. Janis, Banff-Cochrane (PC), Minister of Children and Youth Services</p> <p>Taylor, Dave, Calgary-Currie (L), Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition</p> <p>VanderBurg, George, Whitecourt-St. Anne (PC)</p> <p>Vandermeer, Tony, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (PC)</p> <p>Weadick, Greg, Lethbridge-West (PC)</p> <p>Webber, Len, Calgary-Foothills (PC), Parliamentary Assistant, Energy</p> <p>Woo-Paw, Teresa, Calgary-Mackay (PC)</p> <p>Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC), Parliamentary Assistant, Employment and Immigration</p> <p>Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene, Edmonton-Mill Creek (PC), Minister of Aboriginal Relations, Deputy Government House Leader</p>
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[Errata, if any, appear inside back cover]

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 28, 2008

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Let us pray. Renew us with Your strength. Focus us in our deliberations. Challenge us in our service to the people of this great province. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development.

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to introduce to you and the Assembly the grade 6 class from Turner Valley elementary school in my constituency. We have 27 students visiting us here today accompanied by seven chaperones, including the principal, Rob Bennington, teacher Melanie Jones, and five parents: Val Bruce, Ranju Bains, Stan Welsh, Marlene Whiteside, Sam Johnson. They're here this afternoon to take part in a tour of the Assembly and sit in the gallery and also to participate in the mock Legislature. I would ask them to rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On your behalf I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 15 grade 6 students from St. Mary school, which is located in Westlock. They are accompanied this afternoon by their teacher, Anita Flese, by teacher assistant Virginia Sjoström, and by parent helpers Rose Bain, Tammy Smith, Kim Andronyk, and Patti McKeever. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly members of the Westend Seniors Activity Centre, which is in my constituency. My young friends are the past, present, and future of this province. They represent the generations of Albertans who sacrificed a lifetime to give us the good life many of us enjoy today. They are living examples of the values required to live a healthy life: hard work, an active body and mind, and healthy living.

The Westend Seniors Activity Centre provides programs and support to over 1,200 seniors registered there, and it is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. Today the group is accompanied by their program co-ordinator, Hayley Weedon. The group just finished a tour of the Legislature, and I was able to meet them on the front steps. We will take a photo later on today before the session ends. I'm honoured to represent them as their MLA and delighted that they could be here today. I would ask that my guests, seated in the gallery behind me, please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Renner:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 19 members of the very talented and dedicated public service that comprises Alberta Environment. Joining us today are some folks who have come over to this Legislature Building to, I guess you might say, find out where all those memos and briefing notes and letters that end up being addressed to the minister actually come to be dealt with and to see the minister in action. I would ask them to rise as I introduce them. Once all have risen, I would ask members to give the traditional warm welcome to these outstanding individuals. Joining us today are Mohanath Acharya, Sarah Tredger, Vivian So, Mary-Jo Gurba-Flanagan, Bryan Hamman, Zeinab Sulieman, Naba Adhikari, Winnie Chan, Chris Spytz, Tahniat Iqbal, Ken Bullis, Sunita Kaul, Melissa Styba, Marcie Moline, Dinesh Ejner, Meghan Schmidt, Leanne Paulsen, Rhonda Heft, and Georgina Schurman. They're seated, I believe, in the public gallery. I'd ask all members to give them the traditional welcome.

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

**Mr. Lindsay:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two guests that are seated in the members' gallery. With us today are Mrs. Lorna Wolodko and her daughter Ms Reed Wolodko. Lorna has been my constituency manager for four years, and I am very fortunate to have her. She does just a great job in the constituency. Reed, her daughter, has also been very active in the constituency association. They are here today to observe democracy in action. I'd ask Reed and Lorna to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Xiao:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. It is a great pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to the House the family of one of our current pages, Anthony Combden. They are here in your gallery to observe Anthony in his role as a page during his last session with the Legislative Assembly. Anthony is graduating from Jasper Place high school tomorrow evening. In the gallery is his father, Michael Combden, and his mother, Shirley Combden, and two of his aunts, Angela Heath and Theresa Heath. I'd like to ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you two very important people that are part of my office, my constituency assistant and my STEP student, who have travelled up here today to take in the proceedings of the House. Kathy Holdaway, who is my constituency assistant, has tremendous experience and was the assistant to former member and former minister Harvey Cenaiko. As a new member I was extremely grateful to be able to get this person with tremendous experience to help me get through some of the challenges of being a first-term member.

Robert Jones, who we've hired as our STEP student, is a fourth-year policy studies student at Mount Royal College. He was born and raised in Calgary, like myself, and is a constituent of mine, residing in the community of Cambrian Heights. He's 23 years old and is in a band, where he plays the drums.

If I could get Kathy and Robert to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

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

**Mr. Benito:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly four special guests from the Rising Stars Association. With us today is Mr. Zafar Khan, president of the association; Mr. Bo Sandhu, vice-president; Mr. Partha Ayyanger, secretary; Mr. Affaq Ullah, a member of the association. The Rising Stars Association is a socially active, diversified, nonprofit, equal-opportunity organization with a mission aimed towards the development of youth in the community of Edmonton. It is truly an honour to have these gentlemen with us today. They are seated in the members' gallery. I would ask now that they stand to receive the traditional welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the dedicated board members and staff of the Northern Alberta Development Council. The council is meeting in Edmonton today and had breakfast this morning with a number of our northern MLAs and ministers.

Joining us in the Speaker's gallery are council members Brian Allen from Dunvegan-Central Peace, Sharon Anderson from Lesser Slave Lake, Andy Neigel from Athabasca-Redwater, Pat O'Neill from Lac La Biche-St. Paul, Michael Ouellette from Grande Prairie-Wapiti, Iris Callioux from Peace River, David Kirschner from Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, Joseph Layton from Bonnyville-Cold Lake, Williard Strebchuck from Whitecourt-St. Anne. They're accompanied by staff members Dan Dibbelt, Jan Mazurik, Jennifer Bisley, and Karilee Wadman.

These individuals are to be commended for their dedication to the advancement of northern development through regional initiatives and partnerships with the private sector and community-based organizations. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

1:40

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with pleasure that I introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a number of individuals who had a vision to create one of Alberta's great treasures, AlbertaSource.ca, the Alberta Online Encyclopedia: Dr. Adriana Davies, editor-in-chief and founding executive director of the foundation; Satya Das, vice-chair and vice-president; Jerry Gunn, trustee; Catherine Twinn, trustee; David Mantello, senior researcher. Brad Young, a volunteer, was unable to join us as well as the chair, Morris Flewwelling, who's also the mayor of the city of Red Deer. AlbertaSource is an online encyclopedia highlighting Alberta's heritage. These dedicated individuals are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise and introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Sylvia Hoffman. Sylvia is the mother of our director of research, Sarah Hoffman. Sylvia was raised in Legal, Alberta, and completed high school in Lamont, where she later returned to begin her teaching

career. She taught in four different school districts, all in Alberta, retiring in 2001 from Kinuso school. After retirement Sylvia and her husband, Bruce, moved to Edmonton, where she continued to be an active community member, volunteering as an in-school mentor at Eastwood school as well as volunteering at the General hospital, St. Basil's Ukrainian Catholic church, and St. Joseph's Basilica.

In August of last year Sylvia's husband, Bruce, was diagnosed with cancer. Evidence abounds of Sylvia's nurturing spirit. She supported and cared for her husband in the comfort of their home with the help and encouragement of a palliative home care doctor, the northeast home care staff, and their daughter Sarah. Bruce has always been a strong supporter of our public health care system and was grateful to be at home thanks to Sylvia. I ask Sylvia to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly staff, friends, and fans of the Boyle Street community centre but, more particularly, fans of Hope Hunter. I'm doing a private member's statement later this afternoon. In the meantime, I would ask these people to please rise when I call your name: David Berger, Jennifer Hunter, Christine Tremblay, Stephanie Burlie, Vincent Dow, Bobby-Jo Halton, Jane Slesser, Ashley Moore, John Gee, Fred Wellar – God bless you, Fred – Matthew Boucher, and, of course, Hope Hunter and anyone else that came down to witness. Please welcome them to the Assembly.

Thank you.

### Members' Statements

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

#### Alberta Online Encyclopedia

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm delighted to share with the House a few words about the Alberta Online Encyclopedia, AlbertaSource.ca, its value, accomplishments, and achievements in promoting Alberta's heritage to our province's children, youth, the general public, and Alberta internationally.

Mr. Speaker, AlbertaSource.ca, the Alberta Online Encyclopedia, is the brainchild of the Heritage Community Foundation and was established with the help of a \$1 million Alberta centennial legacy grant. It is an Alberta treasure that resides in cyberspace. This grant, matched 4 to 1 by the Heritage Community Foundation, produced 32 new websites in the last two years, increasing the total websites to 73, the value a whopping \$43 million in intellectual property.

What makes AlbertaSource.ca so remarkable is that 1.5 million visitors came to its websites last year, and this year they are returning three times. If we can imagine a building in Alberta accommodating one-half of our province's population and then three times over, that is what AlbertaSource is. It's a building in cyberspace, a technological wonder, and an information bulwark that resides right here on Alberta's SuperNet and is accessed world-wide.

"A Google search for Gretzky's record breaking 1,851st point may land you on to the Oilers Heritage site so you can view the video, but what you may not realize is that you are at AlbertaSource.ca," reports Greg Gazin from Troy Media in Vancouver. Here is what a parent from a small town in Alberta had to say: our son is autistic and lives on the websites of AlbertaSource.ca; thank you for developing these educational and informative sites.

AlbertaSource.ca, the Alberta Online Encyclopedia, is a sterling example of the government of Alberta working together with educational and charitable institutions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Hope Hunter

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At the end of June central Edmonton will see one of its champions retire. Hope Hunter, the long-time executive director of the Boyle Street Co-op, now known as Boyle Street Community Services, is moving on. I met Hope in 1993 when we both worked on Alice Hanson's successful campaign as the MLA for Edmonton Highlands-Beverly.

Mr. Speaker, you've got to be pretty good to impress me, and Hope Hunter impresses me mightily. She is tenacious, treats everyone with dignity, and values every life. She ran an inner-city nonprofit in Alberta for almost 20 years. That in itself qualifies her for sainthood if not as a miracle worker. For those 20 years and more she has defended the civil rights of the homeless, given countless citizens shelter, fed the hungry, inspired the disadvantaged, and reminded the rest of us of our duty to help our neighbours in need. All the while she has mentored the people around her with wisdom, pragmatism, and humour.

Hope has also served on the National Council of Welfare, providing priceless insight and experience as concerned Canadians fight to narrow the growing gap between rich and poor. She is a woman of vision, literally being granted that honour in 1997 by Global Television. She is a world traveller with otherworldly wisdom.

I ask that my fellow MLAs join me in giving profound thanks to Hope Hunter for so many years of service to Edmontonians and to Albertans and wishing her many more and varied travels on the road of life. Thank you so much, Hope Hunter.

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

### 24th Annual World Partnership Walk

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I rise today to acknowledge the World Partnership Walk organized by the Aga Khan Foundation Canada, Edmonton chapter. The walk, which intends to address the root cause of poverty, occurred on Sunday, May 25, and started at the Legislature Grounds.

Aga Khan Foundation Canada is a nonprofit organization that supports social development programs in Asia and Africa. The Aga Khan Foundation's programs focus on four key areas: health, education, rural development, and strengthening community organizations. The walk specifically works on addressing the root cause of poverty. Gender equality and environmental protection are also integrated into every program of the foundation.

The World Partnership Walk began in 1985 and has continued for the past 24 years, during which the foundation has raised \$40 million for developing communities in Asia and Africa to become self-sufficient. The World Partnership Walk is Canada's largest annual event dedicated to increasing awareness and raising funds to fight global poverty.

One of the amazing success stories of the foundation is Hunza, in northern Pakistan. In 10 years the literacy rate among women rose from 4 per cent to 84 per cent, and today more women do business in Hunza than men.

This year, Mr. Speaker, the World Partnership Walk occurred in nine cities across Canada, including Calgary and Edmonton. Thousands of Albertans participated in this event. Team Impact,

based out of Edmonton, raised \$65,000 as a group. This ranks them as the second-largest community team donor in all of Canada.

Today I would like to recognize the work of our citizens who participated in the partnership walk as well as everyone who has donated their time and resources to this important cause. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

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

### Contamination by Oil Sands Tailings Pond

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we tabled in the Assembly an independent scientific report on water contamination and seepage from oil sands tailings ponds. I'm going to assume that the Minister of Environment is familiar with this report. My first question is to him. Can the minister confirm from this report that two litres of toxic tailings leak into the Athabasca River every second from the foundation of the Tar Island pond and that a further 65 litres per second leak from the dike construction? Can the minister confirm that information?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, I will not confirm that information. I explained yesterday that this is a pond that was constructed in 1967. Seepage was noticed in the '70s. We talked about that yesterday. We talked about the arithmetic calculations. Increased monitoring was put in place in the '70s, and a seepage control system – the straws that I talked about yesterday – was put in place in 1976. Since 1976 there has been no further leakage from this pond. There is, however, water beneath the pond that leaked from '67.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Then following up, to the same minister: if the minister does not accept this report, which is done by independent scientists and was commissioned by one of the major oil sands companies, can he table to this Assembly so that all Albertans can see the evidence he's got that there has been no seepage?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, I will be more than happy to table information that would apply to this circumstance.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you. We'll look forward to that in the next day or two, I guess.

Finally, to the same minister: given that it's crucial to know exactly where underground aquifers run and where they connect to surface water, can the minister tell us if his department has ever fully mapped the groundwater connections in the Athabasca River basin, especially around the tailings ponds?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that mapping is under way as we speak. It is a commitment that we've made, to engage in groundwater mapping not only in the oil sands but throughout Alberta. It takes some time, but it will be available in due course.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that there has not been groundwater mapping done around the tailings

ponds areas, how can the minister be so confident that the groundwater hasn't been contaminated when independent scientists commissioned by industry itself suggest it has been contaminated?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I was answering the question earlier. Clearly, there is some contamination in groundwater. That is not in dispute. The water was seeping from the pond between 1967 and 1976. Then the reclamation system was put in place that allowed for the seepage to be returned into the pond itself. There is residual water that is in the groundwater that was beneath the pond from '67 to '76. There is ongoing monitoring of the Athabasca River, and there is no indication, no evidence whatsoever that that groundwater has gone beyond.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the same report indicates that this government grandfathered – that's the term in the report – the Tar Island tailings ponds, does this mean that despite the minister's repeated claim that there is no leakage, this government has consciously and deliberately allowed this situation to continue for several decades?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, clearly, the situation was dealt with in 1976. There has been ongoing monitoring since then. Yesterday I also pointed out to the House that as of today – as of several years ago, actually, this pond is in the process of being decommissioned. There are no tailings that are going into this pond. In fact, water is being pumped out of this pond into some of the new technology ponds. This will be the first pond that is subject to reclamation.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you. My last question to the same minister: can the minister give us an exact and clear time frame for when the Tar Island tailings pond will be fully decommissioned?

**Mr. Renner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it is decommissioned as we speak. There is a process now to remove the balance of the water from the pond, and it is being moved into new technology ponds. At the same time there is sand that is being pumped into this pond, so at some point in time it will be filled back in. Then the reclamation begins, so we start to put some topsoil and some plants and some trees. That's what reclamation is all about.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The report entitled Attenuation of Contaminants in Groundwater Impacted by Surface Mining of Oil Sands, Alberta, Canada, was done by independent experts: Gartner Lee Ltd., geologists, biologists, and engineers; Woley Parsons Komex, recognized leaders in high-quality project services and hydrocarbons; Stantec; and the University of Waterloo. The report was done by scientists. To the Minister of Environment: does the minister deny the credentials or the results from this 2007 report?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, we're talking about the same thing. There is no conflict. I've just spent the last three questions answering the Leader of the Opposition and explaining to him that this incident happened prior to 1976. Yes, there is some contamination that's in the groundwater. It is being monitored. It is not expanding. It is not growing.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, Mr. Speaker, Dr. Timoney last month reported in another report along with eminent scientists including Dr. David Schindler that there were, in fact, increasing sedimentary levels of polyaromatic hydrocarbons, arsenic, and mercury. Does the minister deny those results as well?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, the issue is to determine what are naturally occurring substances in the system and what impact industrial activity may have had. I have the same report that the member is referring to here, and I read on page – well, the pages aren't numbered, unfortunately. Seepage from Tar Island Dyke is the title of the page, and one of the bullets says, "No impacts to the aquatic ecosystem have been found." So his scientists agree with my scientists.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, that's a distortion, Mr. Speaker.

Again to the minister: what independent studies has your department done to identify what kind of groundwater seepage is occurring in the vast array of other tailings ponds, or are you leaving it to industry to monitor itself?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, there is ongoing monitoring of all tailings ponds. Since this issue was discovered back in 1976, these seepage systems have been put in place to return seepage into the ponds. There is ongoing monitoring to ensure that these seepage capture systems are effective, and I can assure the member that there is no evidence to indicate otherwise.

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

#### Natural Gas Prices

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Consumers learned yesterday that natural gas rates would be going up by as much as 100 per cent over current rates, almost triple what the rates were in September. Now, we know that the Liberals want to scrap the natural gas rebate program, but the Conservative government has not said where it stands. We don't know whether they will extend the program beyond next year or not. My question is to the Premier. Given that the rebate program only assists families when they're being gouged in the winter, not in the summer or in the fall, will the Premier offer any relief to families on high gas bills between April and September, or are consumers again left to the mercy of sky-high natural gas prices?

2:00

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, we remain committed to the parameters of the program that this House agreed to. The major costs to consumers, obviously, are during the winter months, when we're heating our homes and businesses. It's an important program, but there is no planned change for the summer months.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, that's unfortunate.

Given that the Premier and the government have only committed to extending this program for one more year, will the Premier now commit to extend it beyond that time?

**Mr. Stelmach:** I'm sure that as the next budgets roll out in subsequent years, the natural gas rebate program will be debated in the House, and the House will make the decision.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That may be cold comfort to people paying sky-high gas bills.

While homeowners use less natural gas in summer, small businesses and farms are gouged year-round. Why won't the Premier offer any relief to those consumers for the six months they are left to pay sky-high natural gas bills?

**Mr. Stelmach:** I would advise the hon. member to sit down with the program people because, actually, what he's raising is offered today. Farmers do have an opportunity to select the months on the rebate program. I would advise that he gets together, and we'll extend the information to his caucus.

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

#### Western Provincial Co-operation

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The phrase "the new west" has been referred to in the recent past by our hon. Premier and by his newly elected hon. counterpart in Saskatchewan, amongst others. My first question is to the Premier. We've heard other references like TILMA and others lately, but is the new west more of a PR buzzword, or are there actual policies and processes that will provide substance to this term?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, now more than ever in recent Canadian history the Canadian west has an opportunity to grow both economically and as a larger economic market force not only in Canada but around the world. We have Premiers that are aligned in terms of dealing with some of the issues tied to cost competitiveness, transportation, greenhouse gas emissions, and we're going to seize this opportunity. Together B.C., Alberta, and Saskatchewan have a population of 8 million people, which will have a direct influence on the decision-making in Ottawa.

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

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My only supplemental is to the Premier again. Many of our constituents across the province are well aware that environmental issues are on the agenda at the Western Premiers' Conference this week. Can the Premier please tell the Assembly what he will be doing to reassure his counterparts that Alberta is indeed serious about tackling greenhouse gas emissions?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, once again, we'll communicate with our provincial counterparts in terms of what we've accomplished in Alberta, a significant actual reduction: 2.6 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. That's like taking 550,000 cars off Alberta roads. That is an accomplishment. We want to share that. We want to share how we got to that particular statistic.

The other, most importantly, is that there will be differences of opinion on how we reach a common goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but there isn't a one-size-fits-all. Various provinces will bring to the table their plans, and collectively we'll bring that forward to the federal government to make sure that we have harmonization of regulations across this country.

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

#### Health Workforce Shortages

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The shortage of front-line medical workers is causing the quality of health care in Alberta to deteriorate. For instance, the amount of overtime put in by nurses would equal the average workload of 2,000 full-time positions, and as we know, nurses have now started refusing extra shifts out of fear for patient safety. Nurses and front-line workers can only bear the burden of this government's mistakes for so long before they're crushed under the pressure. To the health minister: how does the minister plan to deal with the fact that one-quarter of, or 6,400, nurses will be leaving nursing within five years because they are burning out over their exhausting work conditions?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there were so many allegations in that preamble that I don't think it even deserves an answer. However, let me tell you this: our health care system is among the best in the world.

I'm reading from the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View in debate on a bill last night, who said, "I would call it a crisis headed for a catastrophe . . . All it would take is a major disaster . . . [and] we would see serious loss of life in some of our major centres." What does that say about our health care system? All they're interested in is spreading fear.

**Mr. Taylor:** Allegations on this side, accusations on that side: God, we need a shovel, Mr. Speaker.

Given that nurses are more likely to consider increasing their hours if they could get better nurse-to-patient ratios, given that Alberta has the lowest rate of full-time nursing in Canada and that we know more nurses working full-time means less of a nursing shortage, what is the minister doing to encourage more nurses into full-time positions? If he could answer this question, Mr. Speaker, this time, it would be refreshing.

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I'd be happy to answer that question because it was actually a decent question for a change.

Mr. Speaker, one of the issues we have in Alberta is not necessarily a shortage of nurses; we have a shortage of nurses working full-time. We tabled some documents as an answer to a written question that the member asked. In the Calgary health region 25 per cent of nurses work full-time, 55 per cent are working part-time, and 20-some per cent are working casual. If we could get those numbers to reverse, we would not have a shortage of nurses.

**Mr. Taylor:** Now that, Mr. Speaker, was refreshing information even though I think he got his roles reversed and he was the critic there for a second.

How will the move to create a single health board improve conditions for front-line workers who are so overworked that they're concerned about the level of care and patient safety?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, the move to one single health region is going to streamline the system and ensure that where we need services, we can get services regardless of where you live in the province. Will it directly impact what the hon. member is asking? Probably not, but it's one of the initiatives that we need to take in reforming health care to ensure that we have accessible health care for Albertans when they need it, where they need.

#### Health Care Not-for-profit Fundraising

**Mrs. Sarich:** Mr. Speaker, the recent changes to the governance model in Alberta's health system have raised a number of critical

questions from individuals and groups relating to not-for-profit health foundations that are set up specifically to raise funds for health facilities. My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. What is the status of these foundations in light of the new governance changes, and are they legally still able to fund raise and accept donations?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, that's an excellent question because it's one that I have heard asked. I think it needs to be stated that nothing has changed relative to the legal entities of our nine health regions. There are still nine health regions out there. There is still the Alberta Cancer Board. What has changed is that now we have one board that is a board for all 12 entities. So if there is a trust that is attached to Cancer or attached to a particular health region, that foundation's work will not change going forward.

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

**Mrs. Sarich:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is also to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Given that there is now a provincial Health Services Board, could the minister please explain why Albertans should consider and/or continue to donate money to foundations and their related health facilities?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, let's be clear that the foundations serve a very important part in our health care system. We have probably the most generous contributors to health care anywhere in the world in this province, so we want to ensure that we do everything to continue those philanthropic initiatives that Albertans have been so much a part of over the last number of years. I would like to assure the hon. member that nothing changes. These foundations will continue to exist as they have in the past.

**Mrs. Sarich:** Mr. Speaker, my final question is again to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Could the minister clarify as to where the money that Albertans donate or have already donated for health facilities will be allocated; for example, to local facilities or to general province-wide revenue?

**Mr. Liepert:** There is no movement for the monies to be pooled, if you might. If it is a foundation that is designated for – let's assume it's a children's health foundation – those funds will continue to go to fund projects, equipment, whatever it might be designed for, for whatever children's hospital that is designated.

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

#### 2:10 Policing Needs in Calgary

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday's double stabbing in Calgary's inner city indicates that violence is on the rise. As I often frequent a pizzeria in the neighbourhood to pick up a slice, this is very concerning to both me and my constituents. As a result, I have an appetite to ask the Solicitor General about public safety. The province has announced funding for an additional 41 officers in Calgary. When will downtown Calgary see these new recruits on the street?

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

**Mr. Lindsay:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's an excellent question. I want to reassure the hon. member that we expect to have the 41 new members on the street before the end of this fiscal year.

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

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Can the Solicitor General reveal whether his department has collected any information regarding the policing needs of Calgary's downtown core and if the budgeted allotment of 300 new officers spread across the province during the next three years will be sufficient to meet these needs?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Well, Mr. Speaker, in regard to the 300 officers, we certainly expect that there will be more than that on the street. Those are 300 officers that this government is prepared to fund. On top of that there are a number of officers, probably 40 or 50 this year, who will be part of the provincial policing agreement, which is outside of the 300. Plus, policing is a municipal responsibility, and I would expect both Edmonton and Calgary to also increase their numbers.

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

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last answer has encouraged me to try and take another bite out of crime here. To the same minister. City council and the chief of police in Calgary have expressed concern that not enough resources have been made available to meet this government's commitment to safe communities. Are these concerns valid?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, I'm confident that after the results of the safe communities task force and the 31 recommendations that this government has implemented, yes, communities are going to be a lot safer and we are going to get a good handle on criminal activity in this province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

#### Property Taxes

**Mr. Vandermeer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I have been receiving calls from constituents about the high increase in residential property taxes, some as high as 25 per cent. What can residents do to avoid this increase that they simply can't afford?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the Municipal Government Act gives municipalities the responsibility and the ability to set mill rates. In essence, it gives them the ability to tax at the rate that they feel is necessary to operate their municipality. It also gives municipalities the autonomy, the choice of what that mill rate should be. In other words, when you look at a flexible mill rate, it gives the opportunity for a municipality to look at the assessment and lower or raise their mill rate accordingly, so if you do have a raised assessment you could have a lower mill rate.

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

**Mr. Vandermeer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some advice from the city to my constituent was to pay a \$30 fee and take a day off work in order to appeal this increase. To the same minister: can't there be a less expensive way to appeal this increase?



**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I need to say that municipalities, larger municipalities, through consultation with this government a number of years ago asked for the market value assessment to be implemented. That's what they asked for, that's what we gave, and that's where we are right now.

**Mr. Vandermeer:** With due respect, Mr. Speaker, my question was: isn't there a simpler way to appeal this process when taxes are too high?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the appeal process goes through the municipality because it's the municipality that sets the rates. The municipality sets the mill rate, what they feel is adequate. They can appeal the assessment, and municipalities will look at that. If they disagree, then they can also appeal it to the provincial board.

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

#### Aboriginal Children in Care

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two years ago the ministry of children's services business plan showed that in '05-06 the percentage of aboriginal children who suffered injuries that resulted in hospitalization or death while in foster care is double that of nonaboriginal children in care. To the Minister of Children and Youth Services: given that the percentage of aboriginal children in foster care has increased by 5 per cent over the last five years, why is not more being done to improve the situation of Alberta's aboriginal children in care?

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

**Ms Tarchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate this question because I share the same concern that the member has. Even though aboriginal children make up 9 per cent of Alberta's child population, they are 59 per cent of the children in care, and we all agree that that is way too high. That is one of the reasons why our historic agreement last year with INAC and First Nations in Alberta is so important. A highlight of that agreement is that we will get money onto reserves for preventative services to reach families before they reach crisis.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you. I'm, I guess, referring to those that are off reserve as well. Young children who are abused and traumatized develop learning problems, and they are less likely to succeed and finish grade 12. In fact, aboriginals have a high school dropout rate above the average. How can the minister assure Albertans that the situation for aboriginal children in foster care, particularly the young ones, is improving?

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

**Ms Tarchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can assure the House that we're also trying to make a positive difference for aboriginal children and families off reserve, and a number of ways that we approach it indicate that. We have very positive partnerships with our delegated First Nation agencies that are responsible for decisions. We have a Métis settlement CFSA. As well, all of our regional boards have an aboriginal co-chair. I'd also like to point out that we have aboriginal women's shelters, many early interven-

tion programs, as well as child care subsidies and aboriginal youth suicide prevention, just to give a few examples.

**Ms Pastoor:** The ministry's most recent business plan has no statistics or targets on injuries to aboriginal children in foster care. Can the minister share with the House and table any relevant reports and documents regarding the most recent statistics and what targets and plans are in place to address those statistics?

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

**Ms Tarchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will endeavour to do that and get back to the member.

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

#### Police Workforce Shortages

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the Edmonton Police Service issued a warning after three separate home invasions and sexual assaults occurred in the Garneau area of my riding. Women now describe being afraid to be alone in their homes even with the doors locked. Sadly, Alberta's violent crime rate is well above the national average, yet Alberta has the lowest number of police officers per capita of any province in Canada and was the only province to see a decrease in that rate over the last year. To the Solicitor General: instead of the half measures announced in this last budget, why won't the government commit to putting 942 officers on the street and bringing Alberta up to the national average?

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

**Mr. Lindsay:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly take exception to the comments by the member opposite about half measures. As I reiterated earlier, policing is a municipal responsibility. Our province is stepping up to the plate to put 300 officers on the street within three years. We believe that's very progressive and very responsible.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That gets us about a third of the way there in about three years. Given that the NDP warned that the government has needed to hire more officers as early as 2004, why did the government wait until the need almost doubled and Alberta was in the middle of a labour shortage before it agreed to hire a fraction of the officers needed?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind the member opposite that the numbers of police officers in this province have increased by 600 over the last four years, but as she mentioned, coupled with that is the increase in our population of 100,000 a couple of years ago and 80,000 last year. Nobody could predict that, and there are job shortages right across the province. Policing is no different than any other job.

2:20

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the homicide rate in Alberta is 64 per cent higher than the national average and as recently as a couple of years ago Edmonton had the highest homi-

cide rate of Canadian cities, will the minister now assure the House that the new officers hired, limited numbers that they may be, will be put on the street and not relegated to desk work?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, the whole initiative regarding the 300 police officers also includes a plan from the policing agencies to do exactly what she's asking: make sure that those officers are on the street and not behind a desk somewhere. That's part of the requirements before they get the 300 officers.

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

#### Long-term Care Funding

**Mr. Elniski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the government handed out an additional \$55 million in funding to Alberta long-term care organizations. My first question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Why did the government step in now when we've known for quite some time about the financial pressures faced by the people responsible for our elderly and most vulnerable?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there is no question that the long-term care operators in this province have been under incredible pressure relative to wage increases and staffing. What we did today was a 6 per cent increase in funding across the province to long-term care operators. I would say that it's a good start. There's more that we need to do.

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

**Mr. Elniski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question is to the same minister. Fifty-five million dollars is a good start, I would agree, but it will only cover the increase in operating costs. When will this minister provide increased funding direct and specific to patient care?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's part of our health action plan. We said that we would be bringing forth a strategy on long-term care within a six-month time frame, and we'll be doing that working with the long-term care operators. It's not simply a matter of funding. I think it's also a matter of determining whether or not the patients are in the right facilities. That's some of the work that's going to have to happen with our new Health Services Board.

**Mr. Elniski:** Finally, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: is this interim funding a recognition that each health region was allocating funds differently to long-term care?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, there is some of that, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that was raised with me was the fact that under the previous arrangements with regional health authorities, in fact as of this fiscal year, there are some long-term operators operating in some of the health regions who were told they were going to get a zero per cent increase this year. We believe that if you're an operator, you should be compensated equally around the province. That's what we did today.

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

#### Crown Prosecutors

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Justice, like many other employers in Alberta, is struggling to

recruit and retain talented young professionals. Employees of Alberta's Crown prosecutors' office face low benefits as compared with lawyers employed elsewhere. A 2004 study done by the Law Society of Alberta revealed that young lawyers increasingly raised quality of life issues, such as better parental leave benefits, as a reason to seek employment elsewhere. My question is to the Attorney General. What is the minister doing to retain our Crown prosecutors?

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

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's a very good question. It's such a good question, in fact, that our department addressed this very issue a year ago. We knew that there were problems with respect to terms of employment for Crown prosecutors. We knew that there were a lot of Crown prosecutors that needed to have more than just their jobs respected; they needed to be well compensated. We went through a period of over a year where we worked with Crown prosecutors, and we increased their wages. In fact, in our last round of hiring for 20 positions we had 100 people apply. We're quite pleased with where our Crown prosecutors are, and so are they.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. Well, I have another area for you to look at. I'm wondering why this government makes our Crown prosecutors queue up for EI benefits at a loss of more than half of their normal take-home pay when their federal counterparts are getting 93 per cent of their salaries for an entire year of parental leave? It's about maternity benefits. What are you doing?

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

**Ms Redford:** Thank you. Yes, I understand the question was pointed towards maternity benefits. I think that if we look at the entire package the Crown prosecutors have, they are satisfied with where we are. We have a policy in place across the provincial government that deals with maternity and parental leave, not just maternity leave, and if there are ways that the government can improve that, then I'm sure that they'll look at it. But this is part of an entire hiring policy, an employment standards policy for public servants in this government, and public servants are satisfied at the moment.

**Ms Blakeman:** To the same minister. We're dealing here with lawyers who are dealing with a much different pay scale and benefit scale in the private sector, and if we're trying to get good Crown prosecutors, which we want, we're going to have to step up to the plate on maternity and parental leave benefits. Will the minister look at this as part of this review?

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

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly hope that the hon. member opposite isn't suggesting that our Crown prosecutors are any worse off or less qualified than lawyers in the private sector. We at the moment have a very aggressive hiring policy. We have strong Crown prosecutors. They are happy with their employment standards. They want to come and work for this government. They are seasoned lawyers, and they've made a choice to make a commitment to the public service. That's a choice we can make in life. We're very grateful that they have. They are well compensated, and they are happy.

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

#### Wind Power Generation

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As much as I love all the talk about lawyers here, my question today is for the Minister of Energy. Albertans are concerned about climate change. As this province grows, so does our energy demand, to the tune of about 250 megawatts per year. Wind power generation offers a green alternative. To the Minister of Energy: how much wind generation in addition to what we have is currently being proposed?

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

**Mr. Knight:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we all know that wind power is a renewable source of energy important to Alberta. Currently we have a capacity to generate about 500 megawatts installed, which is about 4 per cent of the capacity of the province. By the way, I'd like to point out that that's more than anywhere else in the country. Right now the AESO, the electric system operator for the province, has somewhere in the neighbourhood of 74 applications from wind developers. That would represent roughly 11,000 megawatts if it was all installed.

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

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you. "If it was all installed": some of the opposition has suggested that this is simply bureaucratic red tape and hot air. Why are these projects not going ahead, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, Mr. Speaker, again, you know, if you want to talk about hot air and the possibility of tapping some of it for wind generation, of course, he was speaking of the opposition, and there may be an opportunity.

The reality of this thing is that we removed the cap on wind generation some time ago, and we think that that has sparked a tremendous interest. About 135 megawatts of new wind generation has been added to the system since that cap was lifted.

**Mr. Denis:** Finally, to the same minister, Mr. Speaker: what's being done to accommodate more wind generation in the future? I do not mean more opposition.

**Mr. Knight:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what's being done to accommodate it, of course, is the opportunity for us to build out the transmission system in the province of Alberta, to reach into the areas where wind generation is currently being proposed and certainly into areas where wind generation will be the object of attention in the future.

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

#### Land-use Management of Gravel Pits

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A gravel pit operating in the northwest region of Leduc county on the banks of the North Saskatchewan River has expanded to nearly four times its size after years of operation without a permit or a penalty. The county has not taken action against this. My questions are for the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Given that this pit is also located in a protected wildlife area, designated such, what steps has the minister taken or will he commit to ensure the protection of the environment?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, if someone develops a gravel pit either on public or private land, there's a whole series of procedures both municipal and provincial that are required for the approval of that and the expansion of that. If the hon. member wants to give me the details of this allegedly unlicensed gravel pit, we'll look into it and make sure that the appropriate authorities know.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since there is currently a proposal in place, as I indicated to the office of the minister earlier, to double the size of this pit, will the minister assure residents that proper land stewardship principles will be applied?

2:30

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, I'll assure residents that the proper land considerations will be considered and followed because the processes that are in place now ensure that.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, that is the concern, that the process hasn't been followed, Mr. Speaker.

A separate gravel permit has been issued recently in Smoky Lake county, raising local concerns and further concerns that there will be a flood of development applications before the land-use framework is in place. What measures is the minister prepared to take in the interim to make sure that there is responsible land-use management?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, there are hundreds of land-use decisions made across this province every day. They were made before the land-use framework was announced, they're going to be made now, and they're going to be made once the land-use is in place. The purpose of the land-use framework is not to create a heavy-handed, centralized bureaucracy that micromanages this province. We're going to set up a land-use framework that sets in place certain parameters, provincial priorities, but responsibility for administering that will remain with local governments, which is part of the tradition of Alberta democracy.

#### Mountain Pine Beetle

**Mr. Drysdale:** Mr. Speaker, recent media reports have highlighted the survey work under way in Alberta to assess the population trends for the mountain pine beetle. My question is for the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. How does this work help manage beetle infestations in Alberta's forests?

**Dr. Morton:** I'm going to have to hear the question again. I apologize.

**The Speaker:** That was the answer. Second question from the hon. member.

**Mr. Drysdale:** My first supplemental to the same minister: how much progress is Alberta making in the fight against mountain pine beetle?

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, all is not quiet on the western front. In the past the greatest threat coming out of British Columbia tended to be defeated left-wing politicians and their failed policy ideas, but recently the greatest threat has become the mountain pine beetle. Our crews are busy at this time of year

surveying the extent of new damage and the winterkill that occurs during the colder months.

**Mr. Drysdale:** My second supplemental is to the same minister. What is the focus of this year's program to fight the mountain pine beetle?

**Dr. Morton:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd have to say that the pine beetle survived the winter better than the opposition parties did. Numbers remain high in the north, but they're declining steeply. As a result of the cold snaps and also our vigilant action numbers in the north are declining. The numbers in the south are much smaller, but they actually are increasing. We're increasing our vigilance in the southern areas to make sure that what happened in British Columbia, where they're losing 50 to 80 per cent of their forests – our policies will not allow that to happen in the province of Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

### High School Completion

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Commission on Learning recommended in 2003 that the province develop a strategy to ensure that 90 per cent of students complete grade 12 within four years of starting high school. The government accepted this recommendation; however, its targets are for only 80 per cent of students to complete high school within five years of starting. My questions are to the Minister of Education. Can the minister explain why the government is so far behind on these recommendations and when the commission's recommendation is expected to be met?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's nothing more important, in my view, than making sure that we have an education system which encourages and inspires our students to finish high school and be ready for some form of postsecondary. Eighty per cent of the new jobs in the province that are going to be created will require some form of postsecondary.

I had the privilege of just coming back from the WorldSkills Canada competition today, where some of the best and brightest were competing in Olympic-style events to demonstrate their capacities. It's those types of programs and more robust programs in the schools which provide an opportunity for every child to find their passion and succeed which will help us to reach those targets as soon as possible.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As rural dropout rates are twice that of urban rates, with a large portion of this being males, why is more not being done to address this discrepancy?

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, in fact, Mr. Speaker, there is a lot being done. Our rates are trending up rather nicely, but we still do have a long way to go. We're working on the issues around how we help students transition through school, how we start early to make sure that children have a good start at school, how we make sure that there's a role model and mentoring because we know that successful students can identify that they had someone that was a role model or a mentor for them. There are lots of things happening to ensure that students do have the best opportunity to finish school. Of course,

there's more to be done, and we have to put a very high priority on it.

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

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister again: given that aboriginal students have a much lower high school completion rate, what specific action is the minister taking to ensure that aboriginal students are given the same opportunities as other students?

**Mr. Hancock:** A very important question, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we know that we have higher unemployment rates among the aboriginal population. We do have as a goal of government that aboriginal people will have the same socioeconomic status as other Albertans. Education is the root of that. As the hon. member will know, the Alberta Commission on Learning had a significant number of recommendations relative to how we provide better opportunities for education for aboriginal students. We're in the process of reviewing to see how well we've implemented those recommendations and what progress we're making and what more can be done.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

### Lodge Assistance Program

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Municipal reeves and mayors in my constituency are discussing with me that they are bearing the brunt of rising costs in seniors' lodges. Costs for lodge operators continue to rise, while the funding available through the lodge assistance program remains unchanged. These municipalities have told me that they have a responsibility to cover budget deficits of the lodges to keep costs reasonable for seniors. They also have mentioned that the LAP grants have not risen in the last few years. My question is to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. Are there any funding increases in the works for the lodge assistance program, and can you give some history of any grant increases in the last few years?

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the lodge assistance program, or LAP, provides grants to lodge operators to help them with their operating costs and to help keep costs down for their contributing municipalities. LAP has increased by 56 per cent since '03 and currently pays \$7.50 per day for eligible residents. The rate has remained constant since '06. However, the special services grant introduced in '05 has gone up by \$2.00 and now provides \$3.50 per day.

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I only have one supplemental question for the same minister. There seems to be some confusion with regard to eligible residents. Can the minister please explain to us and all Albertans what constitutes an eligible resident?

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you. The LAP grant is targeted to lodges that house lower income residents. In '08-09 eligible residents are

defined as those with incomes of \$27,650 or less. Eligible residents make up about 87 per cent of the lodge population, 7,700 out of 8,900 lodge residents, and 51 per cent of those LAP grant-eligible residents also receive the special services funding of \$3.50 per day.

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

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, followed by the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

### Collaborative Family Law

**Mr. Weadick:** Mr. Speaker, it is an unfortunate reality in Alberta and, in fact, across North America that an estimated 1 out of every 2 marriages end in divorce. The personal cost of family breakdown is immeasurable, and the financial cost can be devastating as well. The rising number of family law disputes is also contributing to congestion in the courts. These disputes are very expensive and devastating to families. A group of lawyers in Lethbridge have spoken to me about collaborative law legislation, which could reduce costs and delays in these critical cases. My question is to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General. Can the minister speak to the status of a new way of addressing family law matters called collaborative law, that is gaining recognition?

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

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that if we look at collaborative law, it's a very important part of how we deal with family issues in the courts. Very often we go to litigation before we've had a chance to try to resolve issues in ways that don't destroy families any further and that don't adversely impact children. It's something that Alberta Justice is very supportive of, and I am very pleased that lawyers in the city of Lethbridge and the bar in the city of Lethbridge have been leaders in collaborative law in North America.

2:40

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is to the same minister. Does the minister see this method of litigation as a viable method of dealing with family law, particularly divorce, and will the minister consider legislative changes with respect to collaborative law?

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

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We see in Justice that collaborative law is a very important part of dealing with family matters. In fact, the family justice services program that is operated in the Alberta courts has been very supportive of those processes. We have over a period of time developed a very sophisticated set of *Rules of Court* and directives, practice notes that allow for family justice services to do a lot of work in support of collaborative law.

**Mr. Weadick:** Mr. Speaker, to the same minister. The association of collaborative lawyers was unsuccessful in receiving funding from the Law Foundation this year. What can this minister do to raise the profile of collaborative law as an option for Albertans?

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

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The association does very

good work. I've been fortunate to attend meetings which they've organized which have involved celebrating their achievements as settlement teams. I'd be very happy to take this under advisement and will continue to work with them in the future.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that was 110 questions and responses today.

We'll continue the Routine momentarily, but in the interim might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

(continued)

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. It is a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you Nazim Merali, the convenor of the World Partnership Walk, which took place on May 25, beginning at the Legislature Grounds. The World Partnership Walk is sponsored by the Aga Khan Foundation Canada, and a hundred per cent of the money raised goes towards awareness of global poverty. So far the Edmonton chapter of the World Partnership Walk has raised just under half a million dollars toward the global cause, and they are still counting the donations.

My second introduction, Mr. Speaker. At the World Partnership Walk Team Impact was able to raise \$65,000. This amount ranks them as the second-largest community team donor in Canada. Joining us today we have a team of five ladies. They are Arzina Merali, Parviz Somji, Khairun Kanji, Filoza Bandali, and Salma Lakhani.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** In 30 seconds from now I'll introduce the first of three members' statements.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

### Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May is Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month. During this month the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation makes a special effort to raise awareness of cystic fibrosis, or CF, as it is the most common fatal genetic disease affecting young Canadians. Cystic fibrosis is a hereditary disease that attacks primarily the lungs and digestive system. There is currently no cure for cystic fibrosis. In Canada cystic fibrosis is diagnosed in approximately 1 in 3,600 births. Last year in Alberta there were 566 individuals who had been diagnosed. Thanks to advances in research and treatment young persons with CF are living longer and healthier lives.

Alberta Health and Wellness plays an important role in screening for cystic fibrosis. Since April 2007 the province has been testing newborns for cystic fibrosis through a newborn metabolic screening program using immunoreactive trypsinogen testing. Newborns who screen positive for cystic fibrosis are sent to specialty clinics to confirm the diagnosis. Between April 2007 and March 2008 15 individuals were referred for further testing. This is approximately 1 in 3,500 births, similar to the national average. On Sunday, May 25, Canadians marked the end of Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month

with the Great Strides walk in more than 40 locations throughout Canada. Within Alberta the Great Strides walk took place in Calgary, Red Deer, and Edmonton.

Please join me in congratulating the members and leaders of the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation and in extending to them our very best wishes from all the members of this Assembly for a highly successful Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Ian Bazalgette Junior High School**

**Mr. Cao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday Ian Bazalgette junior high school in my constituency had the official opening of its major expansion. I want to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-East for attending on my behalf.

Ian Bazalgette junior high school first opened its doors in 1960 in the community of Dover. The school was named after war hero Ian Bazalgette, the bomber pilot in World War II who received a Victoria Cross, Canada's highest decoration for valor, for attempting to save the lives of his crew members when their plane was shot down over France. He died in that attempt.

The school teams are called the Ian Baz Bombers, and the school motto is We Lead, Others Follow.

The renovations recently completed include two new computer labs, a construction shop, a food and fashion lab, a music room, a library, two art rooms, a drama performing centre, a cafeteria, a lunchroom, and a gymnasium.

I'm proud of Ian Bazalgette school, and I'm very thankful to the school leadership, the teachers, and the support staff, who are committed to bringing students growing through their challenging years into capable, confident, and respectful individuals. I have watched as this school has undergone a magnificent transformation over the past few years, and the end result of the modernization of the school is fantastic.

Ian Bazalgette school is a great example of how our government is working with communities to enable every student to discover their passion and to succeed in learning. The government of Alberta works in partnership with school boards to provide essential elements to encourage exploration, curiosity, problem solving, ingenuity, and critical thinking. When the Alberta government provides funding for modernization and building schools, the students' success is always the ultimate goal.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Fallen Four Memorials**

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Fallen Four Memorial Society in Mayerthorpe has volunteered thousands of hours since March 3, 2005, when our four young RCMP officers, Constable Leo Johnston, Peter Schiemann, Anthony Gordon, and Brock Myrol, were shot and killed. Society members refused to be defined by the shooting but instead chose to bring beauty, hope, and faith in the future back to all people across Canada who grieved so deeply together. Through fundraisers, donations, a CAMRIF grant, and lottery grants volunteers have brought to life a national memorial park on six acres in Mayerthorpe.

On July 4, 2008, four bronze statues will be unveiled to honour our brave officers. A major outdoor centrepiece will be unveiled to honour all peace officers killed in the line of duty in Canada. A peace officers' parade will take place at 10:30 a.m., and the

ceremony starts at 11 a.m. On behalf of the society and as MLA for Whitecourt-St. Anne I extend an open invitation to all Albertans to share this moment with us on the path from grief to beauty.

I would also like to congratulate all the volunteers that have spent a major amount of time and effort to make this park and this day a reality. As well, a special thank you goes to all those who have so generously supported this project through donations of cash and goods in kind.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **Presenting Petitions**

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three petitions today. The first is my petition. It's signed by individuals living in St. Albert, Fort Saskatchewan, Edmonton, Calgary. All of them are asking for the government to commission an inquiry around the local authorities pension plan, the public service pension plan, and the Alberta teachers' retirement fund.

I have a second petition that I'd like to present on behalf of my colleague the Leader of the Official Opposition, the MLA for Edmonton-Riverview. This one is signed by a number of individuals from Calgary, Edmonton, St. Albert, Perryvale, Spruce Grove. It is the same petition, asking for an inquiry regarding various pension plans.

Finally, I'm presenting a petition on behalf of my colleague for Calgary-McCall. It's signed by individuals from Lindale, Edmonton, Calgary, and St. Albert. As well, it is asking for the government to commission an inquiry into the LAPP, the public service pension plan, and the Alberta teachers' retirement fund.

Thank you.

2:50

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens of Edson, Hinton, Millarville, Calgary, Edmonton, Spruce Grove, and Stony Plain, among other places, again asking for the government to commission an independent and public inquiry into the government's administration of or involvement with the LAPP, the public service pension plan, and the teachers' retirement fund.

Thank you.

#### **Tabling Returns and Reports**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to table responses to questions raised during Committee of Supply on May 5, 2008, for Service Alberta.

Thank you very much.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter that is raising citizens' concerns around Alberta labour laws. They're requesting changes in first contract arbitration, bargaining rights, one labour law, certification of workplaces, and banning the use of replacement workers. These letters are signed by Barbara Bruce, Eric Bruce, Sherry Holtet, Dahlia Holtet, Allison Plishka, Almaz Teffere, Al Kerr, Ronald Dawson, Kevin Meyer, and Dwayne Davies.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, please.

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am tabling the required five copies of my letter and receipt dated January 15, '08, regarding my donation to the Lethbridge Salvation Army Food Bank as per my pledge of April '07 that half of my MLA indexed pay raise would be donated monthly to a food bank until AISH is similarly indexed. The Salvation Army has served 382 families and 38 single households in which 775 were teens and 629 were adults.

### 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. Liepert, Minister of Health and Wellness, response to Written Question 2, asked for by Ms Pastoor, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, and to Written Question 6, asked for by Mr. Hehr, the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, on May 12, 2008.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Horner, Minister of Advanced Education and Technology, responses to questions raised by Mr. Taylor, the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, and Mr. MacDonald, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, on May 8, 2008, the Department of Advanced Education and Technology 2008-09 main estimates debate.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Stevens, Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations, responses to questions raised by Mr. Hehr, the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, and Ms Pastoor, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, on May 12, 2008, the Department of International and Intergovernmental Relations 2008-09 main estimates debate.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Ouellette, Minister of Transportation, responses to questions raised by Mr. Kang, the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall; Mr. Taylor, the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie; Mr. Lund, the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House; and Ms Blakeman, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, on May 14, 2008, the Department of Transportation 2008-09 main estimates debate.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders

##### Third Reading

##### Bill 1

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

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I rise on behalf of the hon. the Premier and the hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations to request leave to move third reading of Bill 1, the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement Implementation Statutes Amendment Act, 2008.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 1 is critical to ensuring a smooth delivery of TILMA, otherwise known as the trade, investment, and labour mobility agreement. The TILMA is a groundbreaking new agreement that we have forged with British Columbia which will bolster our economy now and into the future. Simply put, TILMA will build our economy by removing barriers to trade, investment, and labour mobility. It will create Canada's second-largest market, with

more than 7.7 million people and a combined GDP of more than \$400 billion. But TILMA cannot move forward without some legislative changes, and Bill 1 incorporates those changes and provides the mechanics needed to take us from our current transition period to full implementation of TILMA by April of 2009.

The bill, Mr. Speaker, focuses on three main areas. First, it reconciles corporate registration, which will help businesses, especially small business, by eliminating the need to register in both provinces. It focuses on providing the authority for Alberta to waive certain corporate presence requirements when energy regulators in both provinces agree to equivalent high standards. Third, it amends the Government Organization Act by consolidating the provisions of the TILMA in one place, which will allow the agreement to operate smoothly.

Mr. Speaker, throughout the process to pass Bill 1, I believe we've adequately addressed the questions raised by some hon. members and cleared up some of the misunderstandings about the TILMA. However, it would be important to state again for the record that Alberta is committed to maintaining high standards for the environment, for health and safety, and for certified workers. We are not open to lowering standards. That's not part of the deal.

Let me make something else clear because it seems to keep coming up. TILMA will not stop local governments from making laws for their communities. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to reassure the hon. members that we'll continue to work closely with Alberta's municipalities as well as with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, and we'll do this to address the interests and issues of municipalities before municipalities are covered by TILMA in April 2009.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to April of next year, when TILMA will finally be in place because when it is, it will indeed help to grow our economy and make life easier for Albertans. The TILMA is just a great thing for Alberta, and Bill 1 contains the nuts and bolts needed to implement it.

I had the honour and privilege some years ago to be minister of intergovernmental and aboriginal affairs and to be the incoming chair for the trade agreement across the country. That trade agreement across the country, the internal trade agreement and the Internal Trade Secretariat, was supposed to make a free market within Canada, the ability for people and goods and services to move across the country without barriers to success. Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, that agreement, although it's been in place for a very long period of time, has not had the success that we needed.

TILMA is a great process between two provincial governments as a start to say: "We can do this. We can remove the barriers to trade. We can remove the unnecessary regulations, particularly the different regulations between provinces, which make it difficult for Canadians to do business in Canada, for Canadians to travel freely in Canada, and for Canadians to have economic success in Canada." So I would ask the House, Mr. Speaker, to recognize the excellent work which was started by our Premier when he served in the position of minister of intergovernmental affairs and which he has now continued as our Premier, leading the way for the rest of the country to understand what true free trade is.

I would recommend Bill 1 to the House and ask for its support in third reading.

**The Speaker:** Before I call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, might we revert briefly to the introduction of guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

## Introduction of Guests

(*reversion*)

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly six members from the Council of Canadians, a nation-wide citizens group with over 5,000 members in Alberta alone. They're here out of their concern with Bill 1 and call attention to the trade, investment, and labour mobility agreement as an unconstitutional agreement. They're concerned with the behind-closed-doors process by which TILMA was arrived at and with the possible effects of the bill on the public interest. I would now ask Mike Grochowalski, Marcus Coldeway, Aaron Skaley, Ryan McGinn, Alison Jones, and Sheila Muxlow to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

## Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

### Bill 1

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

(*continued*)

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

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak in third reading to TILMA. Essentially, in third reading we're examining the anticipated effect of the bill when it is passed and implemented, and I see a couple of effects here. I'm very concerned about the skirting or, even more strongly put, the mockery of the democratic process in the way this agreement was arrived at by having two cabinets go off, meet, decide on something, sign it between themselves, and only bring it before their respective Assemblies when the deal was long done. That is very troubling to me. I think it is a very poor indicator of support and understanding of democracy and of our parliamentary process.

What we're in effect seeing in the Alberta Legislature is a series of bills that are implementation bills for TILMA but nothing, no opportunity, to actually talk about the agreement because the agreement has been signed already. It was signed behind closed doors more than a year ago, and I still find that very problematic. I think the effect of that will be felt much further on and in a lot of other ways because it may well be an indicator of the way this government prefers to do business. In fact, I think it is an indicator of the way this government prefers to do business, which is out of the light, out of the sight of the public and of other Legislatures who may wish to have input or to hold the government accountable.

3:00

Again, what we had here, Mr. Speaker, was a buy-in only from Alberta and B.C. Any of the other provinces that have been approached to participate in this have either been highly skeptical or hostile to what is being put forward here. So this is a very tidy little agreement between just two provinces, but other provinces that have been asked to consider it, with a great deal of literature, have been quite clear that they do not see this as a good idea and would not participate in it.

I think for me and with the feedback that I've had from my constituents in Edmonton-Centre, our largest concern is around the chill on the ability of governments to create and implement public policy for their citizens, on behalf of their citizens. Despite what the Government House Leader has said and his assurances that that, in fact, won't happen, we know that we really don't know what the effect of TILMA will be.

What bothers me about this is the way this agreement is set up, in that it says that anything we haven't specifically included on an exclusion list is automatically covered by TILMA and subject to TILMA, including things not yet thought of that they're going to include and have TILMA apply to. We really don't know what the long-term effects will be on public policy-making, on our ability to do a good job on behalf of our citizens because now we have to take into consideration not only the citizens of Edmonton-Centre, for example, and all of Alberta, which I always try to do, but now also the citizens of British Columbia. And they live in a different climate. They live in a different geographic area. They have a body of water that they contend with that we don't. They have different geological phenomena that affect their choices of a number of things. They have different priorities in the way the money comes into their economy than we do.

I now have to balance all of that with what we're trying to do here in Alberta according to what is set out in that agreement, and I find that problematic, Mr. Speaker. I think I'm elected to represent the people that live in Edmonton-Centre. I think that's my priority. I don't want to have to balance the interests of my citizens against somebody that lives in central B.C. or in the Sechelt islands or anywhere else. I don't think they should be equal to or perhaps even more important than my constituents that are telling me what is the best thing for them.

I would argue that there will likely be a chill and that, of course, the level of government that will be most affected by this is going to be the municipal governments or localized decision-making. When I try to do readings on how this is going to affect municipal governments, what I find is that, as I've said before, TILMA covers everything that local governments do unless it is specifically exempted under part 5. A number of local government objectives are defined by TILMA as legitimate under part 6, so you have everything in and not a lot of leeway, not a big door that's opening for municipalities to be able to achieve their objectives. For things like negative impact on neighbourhoods, for things like, you know, specialized housing, or possibly the planning functions in some municipalities, specialized housing there, the whole idea of ethical purchasing, which I know my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View is very interested in: there's no place for that under this agreement.

What about heritage properties? Are we allowed to do that? We may not be able to, especially as we go forward, because there may be a commercial aspect to that that we cannot fulfill, so we stand to lose our heritage properties. They're not specifically included on that exclusion list, Mr. Speaker. Therefore, they're fair game; they're up for play.

The objectives that could be used to defend local government bylaws or subsidies appear to violate the agreement under article 6.

The last piece of this that I find very problematic is that the way the dispute resolution is set up, if local government policies are challenged before the trade tribunal that is appointed under this act, only the provincial parties are allowed to go forward and defend a decision under TILMA. All of those local authorities, municipalities will have to depend on the provincial government to defend them, and they have no way of getting access to that panel to defend or talk about the choices that they made. They have to go to the govern-



ment and say: please, government, could you go forward and defend us for the decisions we've made here in our towns? Athabasca or Camrose or Peace River or Fox Creek or Fort Macleod or any of those municipalities will not get an opportunity if they're hauled up before this tribunal for somehow having breached TILMA to defend themselves. They have to go to the government and say: please defend us. How likely do we think that might be, Mr. Speaker?

This is the government that signed that agreement in which these things were not included on that exclusion list. How likely is it that this provincial government is going to be willing to go forward and defend the choices that Camrose or Fox Creek or Fort Macleod or Peace River made? I worry that they wouldn't, that the government would not step up to defend them. Then what really happens truly is chilling because, as many have talked about already, we end up with a situation where if a municipality is found in breach of the agreement, and they are subject to the fine, they're subject to the fine for each and every time that they may have made that choice. It's up to \$5 million a pop. That could be the end of some of our municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to be saying that the sky is falling here. I think there are some deep, serious concerns about the choices this government has made in getting into an agreement with another province that has such far-reaching and potentially chilling effects on our ability to do good for our citizens, because that's why we're legislators or public school board trustees or municipal councillors. That's why we do this. We're trying to make our home, our community a better place. The courts will tell us whether this was the right thing to do or where the problems are as they come along, but – you know what? – the taxpayer ultimately will pay that price because they will end up having to pay to fight this through the courts on both sides of this question. They may well be the people that have to pay the fines that come out of this as well.

I'm not in favour of TILMA. I'm not in favour of the implementation aspects covered in this bill. I will be speaking against any other attempt. I think this was a flawed process, and I disagree with how it was achieved. I disagree with the way this agreement is set up. I think it will be very problematic for us, but at this point in time the government has enough of a majority to vote this through, and they will, no doubt. We will have to see what happens, and I dearly hope that we don't have to pay the consequences.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak against Bill 1, the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement Implementation Statutes Amendment Act, 2008. I would urge all of my colleagues to please rethink this. I think it will have a profound effect on our province.

Thank you.

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

3:10

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before we move forward today, I think it's important that we look at what's happening in other provinces with respect to TILMA legislation. Now, the provincial government of Alberta, the Conservative government, and the Liberal government of British Columbia have been shopping this agreement around across the country as a model, in their view, for interprovincial economic relationships.

In 2007 TILMA was rejected by a first ministers' meeting held in Moncton, New Brunswick. Manitoba has gone on record in opposition, saying that international trade had removed challenges to internal trade barriers between the provinces. In Saskatchewan the premier, Mr. Brad Wall, a Conservative [interjection] – wait for it, hon. member; wait for it – said that because of major issues

regarding the impact on certain tax incentives and on Crown corporation subsidiaries, he was not in favour of joining TILMA. The other western Premiers have told him that TILMA is a take-it-or-leave-it agreement, but Mr. Wall acknowledges that TILMA as a whole requires amendment before it could be in the interests of the people of Saskatchewan. He's not the only one offering a critique in Saskatchewan's Conservative government.

Last year their government relations minister publicly stated that after careful study the government has concluded that TILMA is not for Saskatchewan. The Ministry of Transportation said: trade is currently fairly open between the provinces, and I'm not sure that there would be significant gains from a further reduction in barriers. That same ministry in Saskatchewan went on to identify a need for different regulations in different provinces dependent on geography, climate, and safety in each region.

If Saskatchewan's Tory leaders believe that trade is unrestricted, and our Premier is talking about greater fluidity in the west, then what does he see standing in the way that Saskatchewan does not? Let's explore that a bit more later and look at the approach that British Columbia and its Liberal government took next. They have similar legislation to this bill, which they had two hours of second reading on and are now pushing through under the rule of closure in their Legislature just today. This is a testament to secrecy and the frustration of British Columbians with regard to the bill and their government's decided commitment to bring it through, disregarding the concerns of citizens and other bodies such as the B.C. School Trustees Association, which urged the government of British Columbia to hold public hearings and exempt school districts completely from the agreement. Again, the two Premiers onboard – that is, the Premier of Alberta and the Premier of British Columbia – have identified it as a take-it-or-leave-it agreement.

Now, given the overt bullying to pass this bill in British Columbia and the fact that our representatives signed it without consultation with Albertans in or outside the House, there is no wonder that various groups are crying foul and working to identify the true intent of this bill and TILMA in general.

On Monday a trade law expert with Sack Goldblatt Mitchell, Steven Shrybman, outlined the constitutional implications of TILMA, and specifically Bill 1, saying they "directly confront basic constitutional norms, including the rule of law and democracy." It's unconstitutional to move powers that belong to the sitting Legislature and also impose these powers or lack of on future governments. If governments make decisions that will be in conflict with TILMA, then governments can be taken to court by businesses affected by future law.

Representatives from the Council of Canadians, unions, trade lawyers, and municipalities have expressed concern that this agreement undermines local decision-making powers and entrenches the rights of corporations to challenge public protection or public laws that promote local benefits in opposition to corporate ones.

D'Arcy Lanovaz, the CUPE Alberta president, has expressed concern regarding the requirements of governing public bodies to compensate businesses if they pass a law that restricts profitability. What could this mean for provincial governments? Businesses could take corporate action against the government of Alberta for legislating a living wage or increasing the minimum wage should it cut into their profit margins.

Environmental organizations have addressed five environmental areas that could result in legal action. These are urban land-use planning, creation of agricultural land reserves, mandatory ecolabelling, soil contamination, and limitations on the use of Crown land. When this government should be acting to protect agriculture for current and future generations, reduce urban sprawl, it is instead

entering into an agreement that is in conflict with the mandate given to them by Albertans: to use the government's phrase, to green our growth. I'm pretty sure that Albertans thought this government was talking about green in terms of environmental responsibility and not green in terms of corporate profits.

If you want to talk about finances, then maybe we should listen to what the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants said to a Senate committee:

In our striving for the ideal of a domestic free market open to unrestricted competition, it is critically important to remember that not all standards and regulations are inherently bad, nor are they necessarily anticompetitive, particularly where the standards and regulations are present for the specific purpose of protecting the public.

Mr. Speaker, protecting the public is our job; it is not the job of corporations. Yes, you might remember that the chartered accountants harmonized our accreditation process to make working in various Canadian jurisdictions parallel.

In the same Senate committee they further went on to say:

Although we support the merits of trying to enhance labour mobility, we bring to your attention the important need to recognize that provisions such as article 13.1 of TILMA could lead inevitably to the risk that standards of qualifications for professionals are . . . reduced to the lowest level prevailing in the country.

Now, Mr. Speaker, perhaps that's the barrier: standards and qualifications that inspired this agreement.

On the flip side, we've heard concerns from many people about related red tape at various levels of government and how individual businesses will comply with regulations and taxation and that this could again impact profitability. Should school boards act in a way that impacts profit margins – for example, banning junk food or sugary beverages in their schools because they're trying to reduce consumption and improve the health of their students and staff – this could impact profitability for corporations and again result in action under TILMA.

Municipalities could be forced to allow out-of-community businesses to set up, taking support away from local businesses or active members of the community who pay local taxes and are committed to supporting local charitable organizations. TILMA is an agreement that has not been supported by provincial governments in this country other than British Columbia and Alberta, and each of those provinces' opposition to the agreement has been expressed; that is, each of Alberta and British Columbia. TILMA is unnecessary, and it removes local governments' right and responsibility to govern and moves this power to a three-person appointed and unelected panel.

In other jurisdictions where consultations have truly taken place, TILMA has been rejected. It's time that we did the same here in Alberta. The decision that is made here today will not just impact our democratic rights and responsibilities but will impact other forms of local government now and in years to come. Mr. Speaker, I call on members on both sides of this House to stand up, do the right thing, and vote against Bill 1.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Mr. Allred:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand up and do the right thing and urge members to vote for TILMA.

In 1989, 1990, somewhere in there, we passed the free trade agreement with the United States of America. A number of years later we adopted NAFTA. Both of those agreements have been very beneficial to Canada and especially to Alberta. Mr. Speaker, this is motherhood and apple pie. The biggest problem that we've had in

Canada after the adoption of NAFTA and the free trade agreement is interprovincial trade barriers. We have more freedom to trade internationally than we have across our own borders. TILMA is the first formal step in bringing down some of those interprovincial barriers. Alberta and British Columbia are leading the way. Saskatchewan has shown a lot of interest. The Atlantic provinces for a number of years have discussed and have implemented certain interprovincial pacts to reduce some of the trade barriers.

3:20

These moves, in my opinion, represent the way to the future. If we're going to move forward in the world, we must break down those artificial trade barriers that inhibit the economic development of all continents. It's no secret, Mr. Speaker, that one of the major factors inhibiting the development of many African nations is artificial tariffs imposed by developed countries, particularly in the agricultural area. We all need to work together to remove these trade barriers in the interest of freer and fairer trade for the benefit of everyone. Mr. Speaker, this small step locally is a good move to set an example within Canada.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in order to speak against this bill at third reading. A number of the points with respect to the concerns that we have in our caucus around this bill have been touched on, but I'd like to summarize a few of them.

You know, there has been talk about this need to enhance interprovincial trade, and sometimes there has been reference to some of the more benign elements of what this initiative would achieve. Then those are held up as the primary objective of what this initiative would achieve, the example, of course, being the professionals who move from province to province. But I think an overriding theme with respect to TILMA and this act to the extent that it implements TILMA is that the permission that this government is giving itself is much broader than the problem which they purport to be addressing. That is, I think, at the heart of many of our concerns around this legislation.

In its totality there is much with respect to this legislation and much with respect to the TILMA agreement that is unknown because it is written in an expansive way with expansive language that, frankly, far exceeds the terminology used, for instance, in even NAFTA, the agreement that the member on the government side was using as a reference. NAFTA does not use language as broad and as expansive and as impactful in many respects as what TILMA uses. That's, of course, assuming that one supports NAFTA, which, obviously, is a whole different debate. Needless to say, we don't believe it has brought about the kinds of positive benefits that the member opposite has referred to. In any event, the point is that TILMA takes a very, very broad stroke to what could otherwise be achieved through much more narrow efforts.

It has already been pointed out, of course, that other governments that have engaged in much more transparent and much more thorough consultations and study and analysis of the impact of TILMA have concluded that it is not in their best interest to enter into it. I think it's been mentioned. The first ministers in 2007 considered TILMA and collectively agreed that it was not an approach that they should pursue. Ontario has since refused to go any further with it. Manitoba has indicated an unwillingness to pursue TILMA, as has Saskatchewan most recently, that, of course, with the new Conservative government leading the way in that decision.

Nonetheless, all that aside, probably what's at the heart of this agreement which is so problematic is the authority that it gives to this three-person panel, which is not elected, which is not transparent, which is not accountable, to make huge decisions about very general and vague language, which could potentially have very narrow impact or, conversely, could have broad, profound impact today and tomorrow and for generations to come. We really don't know. We don't know, yet we're setting up a mechanism where we're simply expected to close our eyes and cross our fingers and hope that this very general language is implemented in a way that doesn't hurt the public interest.

For instance – and I go back to NAFTA – NAFTA very clearly set out the elements of government policy which were to be impacted by the agreement. It's a fairly standard legal principle, and of course I can't remember the exact name for it, but basically by setting out that which is to be included, you would essentially open up the door to everything else that's not mentioned. In NAFTA's case what they did was that they identified those elements of government policy that were to be impacted by NAFTA.

What TILMA does is the exact opposite, and this is one of the reasons why it's so problematic. TILMA sets out the things that will be exempted, and then everything else is to be subject to TILMA. Well, this is a problem because whether you're negotiating a business agreement, negotiating a lease, negotiating a collective agreement – who knows? – anybody that's ever sat down and negotiated realizes that the more you think about it, the more things you can add to your list. It is almost impossible to come up with an exhaustive list of all the things that you need to make sure are not impacted in a certain way. Yet that's what the authors of TILMA purported to do. They came up with a list, but the thing of it is that everything that's not on that list is covered. There are so many things that are not on that list which now could become subject to TILMA by virtue of their not being on that list.

The question of whether they're on the list or not on the list is not clear because the language used to identify what's on the list is itself very vague, very general, poorly defined. Who's going to make the decision about whether something is exempted or not exempted from TILMA? These three appointed people, the names of whom we don't know, who have no accountability, and who also, by virtue of the act that we're discussing today, will be subject to less judicial oversight than almost any adjudicative tribunal in existence currently in this province or in B.C.

What we're doing, then, is creating this whole level of uncertainty. Every time members from the opposite side tell us, "Oh, don't worry your pretty little head. It's exempted. It's not going to be covered" – there is no way for them to say that because the language is vague and the list is short and they don't know who's going to be making the decisions and they don't know how they're going to make those decisions, and if they make those decisions, they don't have the authority to overturn those decisions; nor do the courts. As a result, any assurances we receive, I would say, are not well founded. They may be well intentioned, but I don't believe that they are well founded. As situations change, there may well be new elements that should be exempted from TILMA. We don't know what they are, but it doesn't matter because they can't be added to the list.

That's sort of a general and probably the most critical concern that we have. Here are some examples. Even today when I look at TILMA and I look at the act, I can't tell whether it's in or out. For instance, urban planning. It's not clear. Is it in? Is it out? Don't know. It's not the case here because I believe this government has refused to amend the Municipal Government Act to allow municipalities to compel developers to identify certain percentages of developments as social housing, but there is that ability in British Columbia. Certainly it's been a common, long-standing practice in

Vancouver, for instance, that developers must dedicate a certain amount of any new building to social housing and affordable housing. That's what exists in Vancouver. Now, the question is: is that included in the list of exemptions? It's really not clear from the language. Maybe it is. Maybe it's not.

My understanding of TILMA is basically this: if the parties to the agreement can come to agreement on which municipal regulations apply in any given situation, then those are the ones that will apply, but if they can't, an applicant under the agreement, a third party under the agreement can choose the one they wish to have apply. So we have the spectre of developers and businesses regulating shopping between jurisdictions, or alternatively we have the spectre of the race to the bottom in many cases. We've certainly seen no assurances nor are there any guarantees in the agreement that a race to the bottom would be prohibited through the agreement. There's a really concrete example of a problem that no lawyer could tell you right now is clearly exempted from the application of TILMA.

3:30

That's, I think, just an overview. We've had lots of examples already of the kinds of concerns and the kinds of areas that we believe might be impacted by this. All in all, what we are looking at is this Legislature delegating or, I would say, abandoning its obligation to govern in the public interest. It's abandoning it to a panel, again, the composition of which we have no ability to predict at this point, which they cannot then oversee in any effective way. That panel is directed to make its decisions not on the basis of the public interest but, rather, on the basis of enhancing trade and enhancing profitability. To me this is an incredibly irresponsible and short-sighted approach.

I believe that other governments, even governments as keenly committed to enhancing trade at the cost of all else as this government, have demonstrated a great deal of hesitation and concern and justified caution in terms of moving forward on an agreement that is structured the way TILMA is. I would urge members of this Assembly to exercise the same level of caution and oversight and sober second thought at this, the third reading, and not support any further progress with respect to this bill.

Thank you very much.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the hon. member has been so involved in child care, I wonder if TILMA has any implications for child care issues.

**Ms Notley:** Well, again, you know, I think that's a difficult question to answer because those areas which are exempted from the coverage are simply defined as social programs. Then there's a listing of what's included, and certainly child care is not included. While health and social services procurement is excluded, other elements of the introduction of multinational, for-profit, private-sector child care deliverers, like this ABC corp, sort of the Wal-Mart of child care – that sort of introduction into our community could easily be covered and is not exempted. Were decisions or regulations made with respect to them, they might be open to challenge. Were preferential treatment given by municipalities or school boards, for instance, in terms of providing space to nonprofit child care providers versus, you know, the private-sector, ABC, Child Care R Us type corporations, they might well have the ability to challenge it, particularly if they've already set up shop in B.C. and want to move into Alberta or vice versa.

We don't know, and nobody can tell us that that wouldn't be an outcome because the language in this agreement, to review, is simply not clear enough. We won't know until the unnamed panel of three sits down and makes a decision on the basis of what does or does not enhance profitability. So I would say that it's real concern.

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

Seeing none, I would now like to call on the hon. Government House Leader on behalf of the Premier to close debate.

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Notwithstanding what we've heard this afternoon from members of the opposition with respect to the doom and gloom scenarios, Bill 1 does actually provide some very good and strategic initiatives for Albertans.

Albertans have always prided themselves on being able to compete out into the world, and in fact that is our destiny. We've been fortunate to have a natural resource economy based on oil and gas and other resources – timber, our agricultural products – but we don't have a big enough population to eat them all ourselves or to use them all ourselves, in fact, to create that local economy. We trade out into the world. We trade out into the world from a very good base. We have, if I may say so myself, a strong education system to prepare our students to be competitive in that world economy and to be good global citizens.

But there are always barriers to trade. There are always those who want to build walls and be protective. Albertans have not been that way. Albertans have been prepared to be competitive, to build, and to trade out into the world, looking to remove barriers to that trade so that things which otherwise would get in the way of the free flow of people and goods can be moved out of the way and people can go about doing their business and doing their business strongly.

It doesn't take away from our sovereignty. It doesn't take away from our ability to make sure that our environment is protected and that our quality of life is protected, but it does make it possible for Albertans to do what they do best, and that is to be entrepreneurial and trade out into the world. I would ask that all members of the House support Bill 1 and a very historic agreement which is helping Albertans to move forward.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:36 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Ady	Fritz	Olson
Allred	Goudreau	Ouellette
Amery	Groeneveld	Prins
Benito	Hancock	Redford
Berger	Hayden	Rodny
Blackett	Horner	Sandhu
Brown	Johnson	Sarich
Campbell	Johnston	Sherman
Cao	Leskiw	VanderBurg
Danyluk	Lund	Woo-Paw
DeLong	Marz	Xiao
Doerksen	Mitzel	Zwozdesky
Fawcett		

Against the motion:

Blakeman	Notley	Swann
Mason	Pastoor	Taylor

Totals:	For – 37	Against – 6
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[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a third time]

### 3:50 Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Cao in the chair]

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

#### Bill 22 Appropriation Act, 2008

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm really grateful for the opportunity to be able to rise in Committee of the Whole on Bill 22 because there was a whole bunch of categories that I wasn't able to get to last night. I think all I could speak about generally with the appropriation bill in second was funding for libraries and the victims of crime fund.

Yes, members present will remember my anger at the stockpiling of \$42 million in the victims of crime fund when there were a lot of community groups that really needed that money. I was asking that the cap on the amounts of grants being allocated be raised to \$3,000, which matches the amount that's being given currently to police-affiliated victims of crime groups. The legislation does require that that money flows back out to associations providing assistance to victims of crime, and I would like to see the government not only follow the letter of the law but also the intent of it and quit stockpiling that money and have it flow through to the community groups which are actually offering the assistance.

One of the groups I wanted to talk about is a new group that is actually trying to start a centre in Edmonton. It is a coalition of groups that deal with violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, and victims of crime. A number of agencies have come together and are currently searching for some accommodation in downtown Edmonton because they would like to offer one-stop shopping. They are working with the city of Edmonton and anyone else – if the province is able to help, they will certainly take your assistance – to find accommodation for their centre. My memory is that they're looking for quite a bit of space. I don't think I have the exact numbers on that.

That's one of the groups that certainly should and could qualify for additional funding or even specialized funding. There's nothing to stop the Solicitor General from allocating money from that fund as a special grant to this group that wants to provide one-stop shopping for services around domestic violence, victims of crime, sexual assault, counselling services, et cetera. That's mostly what I was talking about last night.

Today there are a couple of cultural things that I just want to talk about. Two things have come to my attention recently around funding for cultural venues in Alberta. Both of them are around theatre space. The Speaker has heard me speak of the need for this in Edmonton on a number of occasions previously. Since the Jubilee

Auditorium had its renovations done a couple of years ago, we lost the Kaasa Theatre, which is a 350-seat theatre. That was a medium-sized theatre, and it was fully booked throughout the year. A number of different theatre companies shared that space together, and they organized themselves for best use of the time and all of that. It was a union house, so the technicians were well paid.

It was a beloved space, and frankly as a theatre goer it was a space that you knew you could wear a nice outfit to and not have to worry about wrecking it in some beloved but sort of pegged together theatre space, which is what a lot of the theatres have to deal with in Alberta. You know, they have to get the chairs as a surplus from the church basement and do the best they can in trying to splash some paint on the floor and on the walls, but it's not a place that's particularly attractive in a lot of cases, and you sure wouldn't want to go there in your most sparkly beaded gown because you would end up coming out of there in tatters just given the seats themselves. We really miss that space, and we need another one.

There are a couple of other things that are going on. We have a very well-used theatre. It's actually the second most booked theatre in Canada, I think, or maybe the most booked theatre in Canada. That's the Varcona co-op, which is located on 83rd Avenue between 104th and 103rd streets on the south side of Edmonton. That theatre space is home to a number of theatre companies, including Teatro la Quindicina, Shadow Theatre, and Rapid Fire, which does all of the youth-oriented improvisational performances like Chimprov and Theatresports, et cetera. That building was actually a fire hall, and it was renovated – oh, boy – back in the '80s. As I say, it's booked 350 nights a year now, so there are only a couple of nights when the theatre actually isn't in use.

It's not a theatre. We made it work that way, but it wasn't really a theatre. It has no lobby space to speak of, no rehearsal space, and no office space. So the companies have started a big campaign and have actually got an architect to do a redesign for them. They're going to need about \$4 million, and they're hoping that the province will be able to step up for a quarter of that. They will seek additional funding from the federal and municipal governments as well as their own fundraising efforts. I would know because I've already contributed to that a couple of times.

That's one of the things I wanted to raise for the minister because he and I had spoken a couple of times about the need to do an audit of artistic spaces, artistic venues in the community. Here's one that is a going concern. They've earned their stripes no matter how you want to look at it. They've taken the initiative to do what they need to do to keep that theatre space viable and operational, but they are going to need some help. I'd like the minister to look at any reserves or any unanticipated, unallocated surplus dollars that will be coming his way because they're going to need that money.

The second group that I'm aware of is Rapid Fire, which is one of the groups in the Varcona. They are looking to form a consortium with a number of the other youth-oriented theatres in the city. I believe that currently their plan is to bid on the armoury space that is located on 85th Avenue just between 103rd and 104th streets, actually just sort of across the street from the Yardbird Suite, which is our local jazz club. They're hoping to renovate that space for use by a number of the groups that cater to younger audiences.

So there are two pleas from this person that the minister take into consideration the desperate need we have for performance spaces in Edmonton. I've also talked about the need for specific dance space and also live-work spaces.

**4:00**

Of course, I can't ever talk about arts funding without talking about the need to actually double – I would advise tripling – the

budget allocation to the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. There was additional money that went into the budget this year. The \$12 million that went in doesn't all go to the AFA, and they needed that and more. I hope I can convince the minister to continue to look at increasing the budget there for some time.

Another issue that I would like to talk to the health minister about is something that I actually think has hit the news just recently. It was brought to my attention when I met with a constituent on January 23. This constituent is an LPN, and she had a number of really innovative ideas on how to help our health care system and make it more efficient. A big part of what she was trying to say is, you know, to be flexible, to use some common sense here. In many cases we've got a lot of rules, but nobody can quite remember why they came into play. There was some question about how the rigidity of them was making it very hard to work with limited resources and get the job done.

But I think one of the things she said that struck me the most was that there are a number of programs right now to recruit nurses from other countries, to bring them in, then give them access to funding or assistance and support for them to be able to move from an LPN status or a foreign-trained status to an RN status. I agree with this woman. Why are we not offering that same program to our own LPNs and allowing them to take that upgrading if they would like to do so? You know, that opens up some more space so that we could get some others that maybe were entering or wanted to work at a different level to pick up those positions and fill them in the LPN strata. Those who were interested in continuing training – and, I mean, for any of you that have ever done this, going back to school when you're a mature student and trying to upgrade is not easy. We get out of the habit of studying and coping with everything else that goes on in your life. It can be a very hard go. I admire greatly anybody that's willing to take that one on as a mature student.

Here we certainly have some LPNs who are interested in getting their degree as a registered nurse, taking that additional training on their own time. I think they have a right to be a little miffed when programs are offered to people coming from somewhere else that aren't offered to our homegrown LPNs that want to move into a different area. On behalf of my constituents I'm glad I was able to raise that. I think it's actually called advanced practice, but her suggestion was that advanced practice licensed practical nurses initially could apply to the LPNs enrolled in a bachelor of science in nursing or a bachelor of nursing program because that's a bridging program from LPN to RN that Athabasca University provides.

She's also saying that it could apply to LPNs who have experience initiating IVs and administering IVs such as that gained from the northern nursing experience. She was able to talk to me about an LPN that she knew that had been working in the north and who in fact was allowed and even encouraged to do a number of procedures that she was then prohibited from doing when she was practising as an LPN here in Edmonton. She had a lot of suggestions about being proactive in the long run, and that opportunity to train was a really big one. She felt it would promote staff retention and stability, so I will add that to the mix.

I have spoken before, but I just want to underline, because it was really brought home to me in this budget debate, how confusing the housing programs, the assistance programs, the building new housing accommodation is with this government. It's under Housing and Urban Affairs. It's under Seniors and Community Supports. It's under EII. It's under Municipal Affairs. That's four different departments that are dealing with this. It is very confusing as we try and wade through and try and match up our constituents with the right program and the right department.

I really do ask the government to re-examine what they're doing

right now because, certainly, to our eye, it just looks like we're enabling what the landlords are doing. They can charge just about any price they want and the government is going to pick up the slack on that one. That money, if directed towards creating new housing, for example, actually could create new units that we could be moving people into on a permanent basis. Instead, what we're doing is subsidizing landlords that are charging a lot of money for people that continue to rent.

In my constituency rental accommodations continue to be the number one concern. We've had rents go so high that I just could not believe it. When I was door-knocking during the campaign, I had people weeping at their door because they were so frustrated and they were so frightened about what was going to happen to them and the choices they would have to make, things they would have to give up in order to be able to afford rent. We have a lot of people earning a certain level of money. All of a sudden the rents have shot up, and their savings and their earnings have not kept pace with that. They were looking at having to move to some pretty rough areas of town. These were not people that came from that background or would be particularly successful coping in those surroundings. Particularly, the women were very frightened about what was going to happen to them, given where they felt they were going to have to move to be able to afford the rent. So this continues to be an ongoing issue. The temporary support, rent supplement, housing and eviction prevention funds are useful, but I think we haven't approached that one in a very straightforward way. There's a lot of work that needs to be done there.

My colleague had spoken yesterday about the lodge assistance program. She must have struck a nerve because I noticed there was a question asked by one of the government backbenchers to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports today. That's always an indication that the opposition has hit a bull's eye. This was a letter from the Greater Edmonton Foundation seeking an increase in the lodge assistance program. They were specifically asking for a dollar per day per resident, and I thought: oh, Lordy, that's not very much money, a dollar per day. But they seem to feel that was going to make quite a bit of difference in what they were doing. And their point is well taken. They're there to provide affordable housing or assisted rent subsidy to a number of seniors.

I'm very grateful for the Greater Edmonton Foundation. They provide a lot of housing to seniors in my constituency. I think I have eight buildings in my riding. They're all, you know, purposely designed for seniors living in their own small apartments. Then they share a common area and common activity areas and, in many cases, a dining room where food is offered, but the seniors are paying 30 per cent of their income. It is evaluated every year.

Not that long ago I had a group of seniors in here from St. Joachim's, who had worked very hard to get a petition together, saying this was a hardship for them and could we not go back and drop that rate from 30 per cent back down to 25 per cent and consider including telephone as part of what was included in their rent. Others have asked that the rate for cable also be included because that's a lifeline for people who can't get out very much. It keeps them connected to the world.

The telephone, of course, is absolutely a must if you have one of those medic alert warning systems because they operate through the telephone lines. To be able to call relatives, to be able to call for prescriptions, to get groceries brought in, to call for medical attention, police, or whatever, you need a phone. Even with a very basic phone with no voice mail on it, you're still looking at a significant amount of money every month. For a senior who's looking at an income of \$1,200 or \$1,500 a month, having a \$40 or \$50 phone bill: that's a chunk of change. It makes a difference to them.

In particular here, the Greater Edmonton Foundation was asking for assistance with the lodge assistance program. I have subsidized seniors' housing. Sorry, I wasn't very clear on that. The lodges are sort of the first level in the care structure that people generally get into, because they do have their own room, and they can come and go as they wish, for example. We have a number of people that are in lodge programs currently that probably should be in a higher level of care, but there simply isn't room to move them into that, so I do support that request for additional funding.

4:10

Lastly, Mr. Chairman, I'm going back to rents here. This is an interesting one. With the rent situation we're starting to see something happen where management companies have already raised the rent once. Now they're looking at other ways of sort of augmenting their income, and there has been some discussion – and maybe some of you have heard this as well – around heat metering in apartment buildings. This is very interesting because in the older buildings I don't know how they can distinguish the usage of one unit from another because it's a contiguous hot water heating line that runs through all of them.

I suspect my time is coming close to running out. We are in Committee of the Whole, so I will take advantage of another opportunity to get up and speak once my colleagues have been able to put some of their concerns and questions on the record. I will make a note to the Speaker to please add me to the list, and I appreciate the opportunity to raise the issues that I have been able to do thus far on the Appropriation Act, 2008, Bill 22, in Committee of the Whole.

Thank you.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 22, Alberta Investment Management Corporation Act, in committee. It's an important initiative, and I can't say that I have any great resistance to the idea of a corporation managing our money. If these are men and women who know the industry, know the investment portfolios, are concerned with the future of Alberta and with ethical investing, are conscious of our responsibility to move towards a green renewable economy, a more energy efficient economy, and respect some of the key values of Albertans, then I think this is an important step that I could support.

I've long held that living as we do on nonrenewable resources and dependent as we are on nonrenewable resources, we need to set aside much more substantially in savings and investment of these resources. I would love to see a larger portion of this going into this kind of a vehicle, one that is indeed moving us towards living off the interest rather than the capital coming out of the ground, as Norway has done so effectively in the last 15 years, beginning with their carbon tax in 1991 and moving towards a carbon-neutral status by 2030. They will be exporting all their fossil fuels by 2030 – that's their hope – living entirely off a renewable energy economy and energy efficiency. That's a real inspiration, and that's real leadership. I hope that this government is watching what's happening there and learning from it and helping us to move in that direction also.

This investment management corporation could indeed help us in that respect if their priorities are such that they see the writing on the wall and help us to move away from fossil fuels towards exporting and selling our fossil fuels abroad rather than burning them here where we could be developing solar, wind, geothermal, and other innovative technologies.

The balance, of course, that this government is trying to reach and we are trying to push towards is a recognition that the greatest investment that we can make in this province is in people and in the environment. At the present time, I understand, our assets include 39 per cent in pension plans, 33 per cent in government investments, 24 per cent in the heritage savings trust fund, and a small group of other investments at about 4 per cent.

I think one of the important elements here is the commitment to not only ethical investing but to increased management accountability, reduced appearance of political interference, and increasing returns on investment. Those are reasonable goals.

Given what we went through last year with the Alberta Securities Commission, I think Albertans want to have more confidence that the governance of this body is independent from government, isn't influenced by partisan issues, and has an ethical standard and practice that is not going to get them onto the front page. I would, I guess, want to know that those kinds of considerations are foremost in choosing the makeup of this corporation.

This corporation will be acting as an investment manager for three basic elements: investment products, pension plans, and endowment funds. As the clients of the funds Albertans have a responsibility and a right to ensure that those kinds of selections of individuals will be objective and fair and based on the criteria that Albertans share in terms of our investment portfolio.

Fair trade is another element in this ethical investment portfolio that more and more people are raising with me as constituents and asking what the government is doing in terms of its purchasing policies relating to fair trade products, whether it's coffee and tea and chocolate or whether it's furniture and other basics. This investment portfolio surely has to include that in its considerations if it's going to meet those kinds of criteria that Albertans wish.

Some of the concerns that have been raised in my caucus have to do with limited consultation in the set-up of this investment vehicle. I guess it would be good to see that there have been some other consultations, besides the single consultation that we're aware of, around the formation of this new entity.

I guess another logical question is: if this is a better way to invest, why is it that we're in 2008 only considering this as another way of investing? What has given rise to the awareness that we could do better?

Is it possible to see the memorandum of understanding between the corporation and the government? Could we make this public and allow everyone, including the opposition, to see the criteria under which this new relationship is going to be functioning?

Can the Minister of Finance elaborate a little bit on how Bill 22 would diversify our economy? As I say, there are a lot of Albertans concerned that we're not moving quickly enough in areas of environmental sustainability and, indeed, the new opportunities that climate change has presented to us like agricultural offsets for new technologies for energy efficiency that we have to start moving much more quickly on.

I wonder if it's possible to be much more clear about conflicts of interest when pension plan investors are also directors of this corporation. How will that kind of issue be dealt with?

What about potential lawsuits in the future if Albertans feel that this corporation has violated the trust and the commitments that they felt had been given to some of those directions for the new corporation?

One of the issues that has come to my attention – and it isn't directly related to this particular bill but has to do with spending and investment and leadership – is the market value assessment and how we as a government can be more clear with the many who are on fixed income and struggling with this market value assessment and

property tax issue in municipalities. Isn't it time for the government to sit down with municipalities and make it very clear what the options are and make sure that we move to a more equitable and limited market value assessment? We're going to put a number of people out of their homes. We're going to put more stress on an already difficult system for affordable housing. It's an opportunity, again, to look at this as a pressing issue as a government, and I'd like to see that kind of leadership in relation to the market value assessment.

4:20

The ambiguity, the conflict between provincial and municipal regulations: it seems to be a blame game because municipalities are blaming the provincial government, and the government is blaming the municipalities since they've been given the power. We need to find a constructive solution to this and not continue in this manner.

I'm optimistic about Bill 22. I think it's moving us in the right direction given those provisos, that we are moving towards a broader portfolio of energy and environmental and ethical investing, and I will be cautiously supporting this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. My pleasure to rise and join the debate on Bill 22, the Appropriation Act, 2008, in committee stage. Much to talk about, as always. We've been through department by department the estimates debates, of course, and even at two and a half, three hours a pop for those debates, there isn't always the opportunity to bring up everything that you would like. Even if it has been brought up before, I think this presents an opportunity to put additional stress on some points that we consider important. So I'm going to talk about a few things here, and if I may, I'll just take a moment to note the time so that I know what time I started and what time to try and wrap up my rant here if I can.

Housing and Urban Affairs. I'd like to say a few things about that, first of all. Now, I made the point briefly, actually under Standing Order 29(2)(a) in second reading debate last night when my colleague from Edmonton-Centre asked me, after I'd run out of time, just to talk a little bit more about this, so I will go back over this point again if I might, Mr. Chair. It's simply this: the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs is a new government department. One begins from the assumption that a Premier does not create new portfolios, new government departments, lightly since all ministries cost a fair amount of money to set up and operate but that a Premier does so because he is convinced that that new ministry has a serious and important issue to deal with. I don't think there's anybody in this House who would disagree. Although we may very fundamentally disagree, some of us, on our approaches to solving the problem, I don't think that there's anyone in this House who would disagree that housing is a very real issue and an issue that needs to be given a very high priority.

Part of the response to that on the part of this government has been to set up a dedicated Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, and I don't have a problem with that. As I said last night, actually, I'm not the sort of person who normally favours creating additional ministries if you can in fact collapse a few portfolios into a few fewer, and I'm a little bit distressed by the growth that's taken place in this Executive Council from, I think, 18 ministries before the election.

**Ms Blakeman:** Seventeen when I started.

**Mr. Taylor:** Seventeen, yeah. To 23 now.

I see, I think, the logic behind creating the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, so in this specific instance I'll support that. However, if we're going to do that, we shouldn't do it by half measure, so I'm going to again encourage the government to bring all the issues and tasks and projects and responsibilities related to the provision of affordable housing and the solving of homelessness together under this department.

We talked in our estimates debate for Housing and Urban Affairs about a number of initiatives that were spread around, where Housing and Urban Affairs might have, for instance, the responsibility to fund something like the homeless and eviction prevention fund, yet the responsibility for delivery of that falls to the Department of Employment and Immigration. The minister, to her credit, gave I think a very straightforward explanation of why that was so and why that continues to be so, the basic central notion being that Employment and Immigration has offices all over the province, so therefore is set up, hopefully efficiently in any event, to deliver the money under the homeless and eviction prevention fund. All well and good in the early days, but we're getting beyond early days now in the establishment of this ministry, and I would urge the government to bring delivery of that fund and other responsibilities that have to do with housing under the one umbrella of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

I made the argument – gosh, it goes back, I guess, about a year and a half now to when I introduced our own affordable housing policy – that housing, which then was the responsibility of seniors and community services, should be moved out of that department. I recommended at the time that it be moved into Municipal Affairs, which it was, preferring not to recommend the establishment of a separate ministry. The rationale I gave for that is that a Minister of Seniors and Community Supports has enough of a constellation of very, very important issues to deal with in serving the seniors of Alberta that she cannot be reasonably expected to be responsible for and do a good job of the provision of affordable housing to people across all demographic lines in the province. Once again – and despite the bluster that sometimes comes from the other side, I find that this happens on a fairly regular basis – the members opposite, or at least the government members opposite, actually took this member's advice. That happened again on that occasion, which is good.

The basic notion here, Mr. Chair, is that housing and the provision of affordable housing is a very, very vital issue because everybody needs a home. Ending homelessness and supporting the initiatives of individual communities and municipalities to end homelessness in their own backyards is going to be a very vital issue, as well, which I think will fall, at least in terms of lead role, under this Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. I think it's high time, if we're going to be truly serious about this, that we consolidate all those responsibilities and the delivery of those programs under this one ministry.

I do want to talk a little bit about ending homelessness, which we didn't discuss to any great extent, as I recall. I'd have to go back and consult the *Hansard* for that night to be absolutely sure of this, but I do not recall that we spent a lot of time talking about ending homelessness in the estimates debate for Housing and Urban Affairs. It is important. I will note that the government yesterday announced substantial funding for the creation of affordable housing, funding, of course, included under the provision of this year's budget for Housing and Urban Affairs.

A reporter called me yesterday and asked me what I thought about that, and I said: you know, I think it's pretty good. She was terribly disappointed because she wanted me to pooh-pooh the whole thing, but I couldn't pooh-pooh the whole thing, because it is good. "Well,

what about the fact that they've cut back on the amount of money to the cities?" Well, yeah, they've cut back on the amount of money to the cities relative to last year in that specific chunk of money set aside, but they've also opened up another avenue, in which the cities, granted, are in competition with everybody from, you know, private contractors – I mean housing developers – to Habitat for Humanity now for bidding on those projects. But, in fact, it offers more funding to create affordable housing across the board this year than last. Municipalities are not the only organizations that can be expected to provide affordable housing. They do a good job of it. So do all kinds of nonprofit agencies. So do all kinds of faith groups. So do some private contractors. Why not open it up? I support what's been done there.

4:30

I see that the mayors of Calgary and Edmonton are fairly supportive of that as well. However, one alderman in Calgary has noted that it would take another \$50 million this year just in the city of Calgary to make the kind of progress that the Committee to End Homelessness is advocating to make in its 10-year plan to end homelessness in Calgary. From Alderman Joe Ceci's point of view, as I understand it, we're \$50 million short of what's needed in Calgary.

This is a good opportunity to put this on the record although it's obviously not something that really can be incorporated into this year's budget, but I hope that the minister is working on this already for next year's budget. Even though, God forbid, I'm finding myself in a situation where I'm kind of doing a quasi-backdoor endorsement of off-budget spending of unanticipated surpluses that anybody, you know, could reasonably be expected to anticipate but these guys over here never do, if there's the opportunity to use some of that unbudgeted surplus to work on ending homelessness in Calgary, in Edmonton, in Fort McMurray, in Grande Prairie, in Red Deer, in Lethbridge, in any and all other communities that are experiencing a homelessness problem and/or are working on a plan to end homelessness, then I urge the minister to get going on that as quickly as possible because not only does everybody need a home, but we need to move beyond the shelter as quickly as we possibly can. The Housing First model has been proven at least in the early to mid-term going in many U.S. jurisdictions, where it's been under way now for a few years, to be quite promising, quite successful looking in terms of tackling the issue of homelessness. So that's that on Housing and Urban Affairs.

Well, sort of that's that because I also want to touch on student housing, which, again, when we were involved in debate on estimates for Advanced Education and Technology, we did touch on a bit. There are many good things to say in the Advanced Education and Technology budget, many good things to say, and many stakeholders have said good things. However, the provision of affordable student housing continues to be a challenge, continues to be an issue.

I see the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is working on a little construction project of his own right now even as I speak. He must be planning on getting up to join the debate here pretty soon. He's getting his microphone to work.

Affordable student housing needs to be a priority. We have a dire shortage of on-campus student housing at the University of Calgary. We have a significant shortage of student housing on campus at many colleges and universities across the province. I know the minister expressed an unwillingness to go down this road. I can only assume it's because of an ideological bent that I think I perceive on the part of government, that we certainly don't want to run the risk that we overbuild anything because we can't possibly figure out an alternate use for it if it's no longer needed for the purpose for which



it was intended. But I think when you're building housing, whether it's for students, whether it's for seniors, whether it's for families, whether it's for single-parent families, whether it's for newly single-parent families where the single parent and the children have escaped family violence, whether it's for people who moved here who cannot scrape together the money for the damage deposit and the first month's rent at today's rental rates, whatever it is, I don't think you can go wrong, really, in the provision of housing. If one group moves beyond the need for affordable housing, there will be somebody else to come along who can use that. So we do need to get going on affordable student housing.

I would note again, as I did in the estimates debate on Advanced Education and Technology, that in our sister province to whom we cuddled up earlier this afternoon with third reading approval of TILMA, Bill 1, the University of Victoria guarantees a place in residence to every first-year student coming to that institution directly out of high school, which is to say after summer vacation, and the University of British Columbia guarantees resident space to every first-year student regardless of whether they report the September after they graduate high school or take a gap year or whatever.

I picked those two institutions specifically because they happen to live in the two cities experiencing these days real estate that's as similar to what we go through in Calgary and Edmonton as you can find. I mean, there is only one city where the average real estate price is more expensive now than Calgary, and that's Vancouver. Victoria is right behind, and you know that Edmonton is right there in the ballpark as well. If those two cities can do it in the context of the housing environments that we find there, then I think that we can well afford to do it with our postsecondary institutions here in the province of Alberta. In fact, I would ask: can we afford not to do it? It sets a higher target in terms of percentages for numbers of students who can be housed on campus than we're used to setting in this province, but it's not out of whack with the national average. It's not out of whack with best practices. I would urge the minister and the government to go there and make more of an effort in that area.

Gosh, you know, I'm going to continue on the housing bent. Although we discussed Health and Wellness last night in second reading, I'm sure that that will come up again with others debating. I've touched on Advanced Education and Technology again. There are many, many, many other things that I could touch on, but then so could my colleagues in this House. But housing has become kind of a passion of mine. So the other thing that I would like to put on the table – and this will tie in with my colleague from Edmonton-Centre, who is passionate about arts and culture – is the need for affordable housing for our artists.

Now, I think that when we shoot the big-budget Hollywood pictures down in Calgary and we bring Arnold Schwarzenegger or whomever in from Hollywood, he can afford to stay at the Westin or, you know, the Palliser, whatever. I'm talking about the struggling artists, the arts and culture – big A, big C – artists, where although the cultural undertaking may not turn a profit in and of itself, it generates tremendous economic spinoff for the city, for the jurisdiction in which it takes place.

A very, very good example is Alberta Ballet and the ongoing problem they have in bringing in the dancers that they need to bring in for their seasons because those dancers need to be able to find accommodation of a semipermanent nature, of an ongoing nature for the life of the season. The ballet cannot afford to pay oil company wages to dancers, and oil company wages are what dancers and letter carriers and teachers and police officers and oil company people need to be able to afford to live in Calgary these days, to put

a roof over their heads in Calgary. The situation is darn close to identical here in the city of Edmonton as well.

There are other jurisdictions that get creative around this. There are good ideas on the table that the arts and culture communities have been putting forward themselves. If this government is serious about committing to arts and culture and committing to the development and the nourishment of arts and culture in the province of Alberta – and for heaven's sake, they should be, you know, when we have two cities of a million each now – then we need to develop some good policies and some good practices and a plan of action around housing our artists as well.

I think I've just about used up my time, for this chunk anyway, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much.

4:40

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. There were just a couple of other things that I had wanted to talk about while we were in committee.

I'll go short on my first topic, which is around transitional housing. That's, again, a very critical point for us. I'm mindful that in my constituency I have a number of group homes but also some second- or third-stage transitional housing for women leaving abusive domestic relationships. One of them is a wonderful organization called La Salle house, which was set up by an order of the Catholic nuns. They provide a number of apartments for up to a year to help women stabilize their lives and their children's lives, to get themselves into some kind of space where they're well enough physically and mentally to be able to re-engage in the world. They try to help them do that as much as possible.

They approached me almost a year ago – I think it was last summer or fall – and were really concerned because the rental prices were so high that the women were not able to find reasonable accommodation to move to and therefore were staying in the transitional, the third-stage housing that La Salle was providing. They couldn't take any new people in because they didn't have any room. There was nobody clearing out and moving on to other things.

Most of the women that do move on from that transitional housing move on usually to education. That's the point they've come to: they're going to start over; they're going to go back to school; they're going to retrain. But trying to do that on the learner's assistance that's available here in the province is pretty tough. Given the amount of money that's available on that budget for rental accommodations, if you're a single mom with a couple of kids, it's just not doable. Although these women were trying to turn their lives around, were trying to participate, and were trying to become contributing members of society, taxpaying members of society, they couldn't. They were thwarted because of the lack of reasonable rental accommodation for themselves and their children. We need more transitional housing.

I worked with them to try to figure out if there were any other spaces that we could get access to, even in the closed hospital, in the General, which isn't closed anymore. It's now filled with long-term care beds. So space is increasingly an issue, and if we're trying to help these people move along in their lives, which is what we're trying to do, we have to complete that picture.

I want to talk a little bit about the government's role in regional co-operation. I think we are moving in the right direction there. As a citizen of Edmonton and the surrounding area here I am very aware that there are a number of communities that are very close to the borders of this particular city. When we start to look at pretty

mundane but important things like waste management, like transit, like provision of emergency services, you do start to say: "Hmm. We could do this in a better way if we could co-ordinate it." So I appreciate that the government did step in under this current Premier and actually put a regional governance system in place.

My concern is around the funding that has to be there to back that up. In each case the municipalities are able to support or plan for their piece of that pie, but they can't do nor should they do the connecting piece. You usually end up with a little bit of no-person's-land in between the border of one and the border of the other. That's where we really need the province to be integrating in there, and that's going to mean providing funding for that.

Mr. Chairman, let me stop right here and say that this is not about more, more, more all the time. This is about reallocating. I'm one of those who believe that we're already spending an awful lot of money in Alberta. On a per capita basis we're outspending Ontario, which has significantly more people than we do. I'm quite alarmed by that, so I'm definitely not saying that there should be more money spent overall on our budget. I'm pretty amazed at how much this government has managed to spend as is. But I am talking about reallocation. I just want to be clear about that.

Part of that regional transportation piece is public transportation. I just want to talk about that briefly. I think that it's important here as a part of a larger, integrated picture around environmental concerns, around reducing consumption of nonrenewable resources, around a healthier society where people walk more that we support a public transit system. This is one of those cases where if you build it, they will come. I think there are a number of individuals here who would be willing to take a step to drive their car less per week, to walk more, and maybe drive their car halfway to work and take a bus or walk a certain distance, but that's made unattractive by a public transit system that, you know, doesn't run frequently enough, or the routes are a bit odd because they're trying to cope with low ridership or whatever. This is a case where if you invest in mass or public transit, people will come to it.

I'm one of those who have made a personal commitment. I don't usually talk about it because it's not something I did because I was a politician, but I decided that once I'd started walking, I was going to keep walking. I thought: well, let me see if I can just cut driving my car down from driving seven days a week to driving two days a week. I was able to do that. [some applause] Thank you for the support from the other side. It's actually been a great thing because it does allow me to walk a lot more, and that contributes to better health overall. And it saved the taxpayers money because I'm not billing for the mileage that I'm not driving in the vehicle, so the amount that I have charged back to the LAO budget and ultimately to the taxpayers of Alberta has significantly reduced because I've gone from driving about 1,100 or 1,200 kilometres a month to a couple of hundred. It's been quite substantial.

When you put yourself in that position, you do start to test what's available there, so in a number of cases I just walk if it's around downtown, but other times I need the transit. Edmonton is really trying hard. Actually, the CUTA conference is in Edmonton this year. It's being hosted because Edmonton Transit is celebrating their 100th anniversary of providing service. A little tip of the hat and a happy birthday song and a candle to our Edmonton Transit System. I think they do a good job. I think they're trying to do an even better job. But part of that is about funding from the provincial government in the allocations that flow through to the municipalities but also in special allocations that recognize transit and that recognize transportation – let me put it that way – which should also be recognizing transit, which I think is very important.

Support for the LRT, for example, is a huge leap that Edmonton

is taking now. Calgary is far ahead of us, and I both admire you and am quite jealous of what you've managed to achieve there. I'd like to see the same thing here in Edmonton. But, you know, that's going to require some additional support from both the federal and provincial governments, and I ask the government to consider that.

Also I'm looking at mass transit, public transit between cities. To me that's about a high-speed rail. We have talked about that quite a bit in the House, and I know there are beginning, baby steps being taken by the government to pursue that, and I encourage it to grow up and walk and then run as fast as you can to try and implement that.

The last thing I'd like to talk about is something that I'm noticing on a policy or a philosophical level from this government that does give me a bit of unease. That is a continuing drive towards making the public sector be the private sector. What do I mean by that? Well, we do have two different ways of getting things done in this province: one is an entrepreneurial, private-sector, corporate, if you want to call it that, profit-driven method of offering goods and services, and the second and often different way – you don't usually get them crossing over – is the public sector, in which there is not a profit motive, which doesn't mean that they don't look to balance their budgets or even to create a surplus, but any surplus they have is immediately invested back into the service that they're delivering.

4:50

For example, if a theatre company had, you know, great shows and they had better than budgeted box office and they ended up with a surplus at the end of the year, they don't divide that money up amongst their board of directors or their staff or their artists; they look at what they need to invest that money in, and it goes back into making the product better. Next year they can hire one more actor or sound designer, or perhaps they invest it in better seats – please, please, said Laurie – or they invest it in a new computer system for the office. But it's not about profit; it's about reinvesting it.

A friend of mine started to talk about public profit and private profit, which is an interesting way of looking at it, and that may well help us understand the difference. Increasingly what I see is requirements and a push from the government that the not-for-profit sector, the public sector, which is all of our charities, our churches, our schools, our hospitals, our recreational groups, our arts and cultural groups, our social service agencies, our faith communities – those are all in the public sector; those are the not-for-profits and charities and volunteer-driven organizations I'm talking about – operate more like a business. That's a common phrase or a mantra that you hear the government use. I would argue that in many cases that's inappropriate. If the government means, you know, "Don't run a deficit," okay. Fair enough. Then say: don't run a deficit. But to be requiring these groups to try and achieve an outcome that is not the purpose for which these organizations were established is I think both wrong and harmful.

A couple of years ago I was in Calgary and met with someone offering mental health services, actually the only agency in Calgary that did, and they described to me how the government was moving to a system of asking all of the not-for-profit groups that contracted with the government to deliver government services to engage in this RFP, or request for proposal. You would have to, you know, act like a business and justify this and do a business plan and all of this, blah, blah, blah. He said to me: "Well, you know, who am I competing against here? I'm the only organization that offers this service in Calgary. I'm now being asked to do an entirely additional series of bureaucratic steps here, and I'm still the only one that offers the services." So what's the point of all of this?

I have to admit that I don't understand why the government is

doing this except for that they come at everything with such a business-oriented point of view that business is all good and if it's not business, then it's not good. I'm trying to move the government away from thinking about that because that is the approach that has gotten our NGO volunteer charitable sector in such trouble here. The government has allowed itself to ignore the value that those groups bring to our society and the number of services that they perform, and thus we have the capacity problem that I've talked about a lot in this House where these organizations cannot keep up recruiting and retaining their staff. They're so pared down, they're operating so close to the bone, that if anything goes wrong – a flood in the basement, another staff person leaving, the electricity going off for a day – they're really in serious trouble because they just have no extra capacity to deal with anything in their organizations anymore. I believe that has come about because this government insisted on devaluing what that sector offers and also making them measure to a standard that is inappropriate for them.

I just wanted to put that on the record, and I'll continue to talk about it as the year goes on. But I think this government needs to understand that the capacity of that sector is strained, and they need to be taking some very concrete steps to address it.

Once again I'll put this in context for all of you. In the not-for-profit charitable volunteer sector 80 per cent – actually, they've moved that marker because it was a five-year rolling statistic, and we're now in year 4, I think, so it's actually closer to 82 or 83 per cent – of their CEOs will be leaving their organization in the next four years. If you want to bring that a little closer to home, just imagine the effect it would have on you, the government members, if 83 per cent of your deputy ministers were going to leave in the next four years. That would have a profound effect on all of you and on everybody in this House and indeed on everyone in Alberta. So you can imagine what's happening in that sector. That's just another little reminder to all of you of how incredibly valuable this is and what's going on there.

I appreciate the opportunity to put those things on the record in context of the government's budget and in context of Bill 22, the Appropriation Act, 2008. These are all intricately connected points around how we develop and deliver the services and goods that Albertans require us to do through the provincial budget. Thank you very much for that opportunity to raise these issues. I really appreciate that.

At this point, Mr. Chair, I would like to adjourn debate on Bill 22.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd move that the committee rise and report progress on Bill 22.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Dr. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 22.

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 7

#### Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2008

[Adjourned debate May 26: Mr. Renner]

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

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to join the debate on Bill 7, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2008, which is currently in second reading and which I think is going to need some work. Maybe not huge work. Well, that all depends, I guess, on how we all in this House judge the suggestions that we're going to be making. But I think it needs some work.

In broad general terms I'm fairly supportive of Bill 7. The bill will align postsecondary legislation with the recently approved roles and mandates policy framework. There is pretty substantial support among stakeholders in the postsecondary community for the roles and mandates policy framework.

5:00

The bill makes some changes to the Universities Co-ordinating Council regarding academic qualifications of professionals who are members of professional associations and some language changes and some updates, which, when you get down to that, really are housekeeping, and we're not going to have any kind of significant problem with that. But there are a couple of things which I think will come out in the course of my contribution to the second reading debate this afternoon.

The proposed amendments to the Post-secondary Learning Act are mainly designed to align the act with the roles and mandates policy framework, which in itself serves as the foundational policy to shape the future direction of Alberta's advanced education system. In so doing, it's supposed to meet the needs of the students, meet the needs of the taxpayers, meet the needs of Alberta society generally.

One of the key things that the roles and mandates framework does is identify six sector categories. The proposed legislative amendments in Bill 7 will enhance the implementation of the framework by enshrining in this act those very categories by establishing a Campus Alberta strategic directions committee and clarifying research capacity of postsecondary institutions. In other words, if you're in one category you can do, you know, research up to one level. If you're in another category you can do it up to another level, and so on and so forth. That is rather clearly defined in the roles and mandates framework.

Now, this is supposed to provide clarity around the program responsibility and, as I said, the research activity of our postsecondary educations. It's also supposed to make room – so it's not supposed to tie anybody's hands, at least not over the long term – for some evolutionary activity so that as the advanced education system moves into the future, we might find that we need a different mix of institutions than what we have today. Maybe we need more comprehensive academic and research institutions. Maybe we need fewer baccalaureate applied study institutions. Maybe we need more or fewer comprehensive community institutions, and so on and so forth. So there is some room in there and some mechanisms established for how the system might evolve over time.

The amendments also further the Campus Alberta concept, ensuring that Albertans have the opportunity to participate in learning opportunities throughout a co-ordinated and integrated system approach through the use of the Alberta access planning framework, which is supposed to articulate a more strategic, open, and transparent approach to system planning as well as to provide a

vehicle to communicate system priorities and direction. Here's where we start getting, the critic anyway, just a tiny little bit twitchy about things because we're dancing on the knife edge of good planning versus central planning, you know, and there is a difference.

We have talked many, many times on many, many occasions in many, many different debates on many, many different topics about the need to have a plan. But plans do need to be flexible. They do need to be nimble. Times change, circumstances change, and we don't want to get things too bogged down where our various institutions are kind of at the mercy of ministry officials who decide how many plumbers we need this year, how many engineers, how few liberal arts grads because that doesn't really generate much immediate economic activity. I'll come back to that point.

Roles and mandates framework. Just to get on the record the six categories. Comprehensive academic and research institutions. That would be the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge, and Athabasca University.

Baccalaureate and applied studies institutions. This is a new category. If you're familiar with the *Maclean's* Magazine annual rankings of postsecondary institutions in this country, comprehensive academic and research institutions are described as medical doctoral research institutions in the *Maclean's* rankings. It means the big, full meal deal universities that do graduate studies, that usually have medical schools on campus, that do a lot of research. They sometimes put a lot more activity and effort into their research than they do into actually teaching first-year students whatever it is that they need to learn in their particular programs.

Medical doctoral research institutes, comprehensive academic and research institutions can tend to be very heavy on the research and a little light on actually teaching the students, kind of like one of those real low-budget airlines, you know, for whom the passengers are just bums in the seats. It's almost the feeling you get sometimes as a student, an undergraduate student lost in these big institutions that have sexier things to do than teach 500 first-year psychology students psychology 101 or whatever.

Baccalaureate and applied studies institutions. Now, this is an interesting concept. This is a very interesting concept because looked at in one way, this is the primarily undergraduate university. This is the university that specializes in teaching undergraduates. Four years of quality teaching so that they come out with a baccalaureate degree and then either go on into the workforce, if they choose, or go on to graduate studies at these comprehensive academic and research institutions. There's significant evidence that in Ontario, for instance, where there are a number of primarily undergraduate universities now, the medical doctoral class at universities actually prefer the graduate students who got their baccalaureate degrees at the primarily undergraduate universities because they've been more excellently taught. They've been better taught because that's been the focus of the undergraduate institution: teach that student excellently so that in four years they come out with a BA, a BSc, whatever their degree is in, and they're very well grounded and very well prepared for graduate studies.

The thing, of course, that is missing from the roles and mandates framework in its reference to baccalaureate and applied studies institutions is the name these institutions should have, and that name is university. That name is not college. That name is not: let's drop the word and pretend we're actually just a guy's name or a community's name, and we're neither a college nor a university. It shouldn't just be Mount Royal. It should be Mount Royal university. The roles and mandates framework does not go far enough in that area.

Polytechnical institutions. That's the third category. This is SAIT and NAIT.

Comprehensive community institutions. I guess shorthand for that would be the understanding that we have of the traditional community college: a very, very vital role to play in the overall mix of postsecondary education.

Independent academic institutions. Small, publicly funded, private colleges and universities that provide primarily liberal arts, science, and education baccalaureate programs – they certainly have a place in the mix as well – and specialized arts and culture institutions, like Banff Centre and ACAD.

This bill outlines the need for an access plan to be provided by each board to the minister of advanced education every year. Each institution provides an access plan, and then there's an overarching access plan, the Alberta access plan, that comes out of that. My interpretation of this bill is that this gives the ministry – and this is not necessarily a bad thing, but it's not necessarily a good thing either; it's got to be properly managed – the right to say to any particular institution, "You know what? We don't think you should grow that program by as many students as you're proposing next year," or "We think you should grow it by more." So that's an interesting issue to tackle and grapple with.

#### 5:10

Changes are also made to various other pieces of legislation if you look at sections 22 to 26 in the bill, which remove Universities Co-ordinating Council authority and in some cases replace it with "registrar," which is a reference to professional associations. The Universities Co-ordinating Council consists of the president of each university and provides powers regarding the academic qualifications and professions. So that authority is being moved away, and now we're decentralizing, I think. That authority is being moved away from this centralized system, this Universities Co-ordinating Council, to the individual professional associations, which is not necessarily a bad thing, but again it's not necessarily a good thing either. We should debate that some more as we debate this bill.

There are changes in section 3 of the bill, I believe it is. Let me just check that. I believe it's section 3 that removes the dean from the role of the chief executive officer of a faculty, and I don't really know why. That kind of looks like an opportunity for the ministry to centralize more power under its own roof.

Section 12 removes the authority of the board of a university to provide remuneration and job descriptions of officers and employees. Boy, we're really centralizing the system now, you know, rubber-stamping it. Well, I don't know. Maybe it would finally take care of the age-old question: how come the president of the U of A gets paid more than the president of the U of C? I don't know.

**Ms Blakeman:** It makes up for the lack of money that Edmonton got for housing compared to Calgary.

**Mr. Taylor:** Now, Member for Edmonton-Centre, we're not in a Calgary versus Edmonton competition here. I merely used that as an example. Okay? I'm not suggesting that one is worth more or less than the other. Maybe they're worth exactly the same amount of money, but I suspect they're not because they're not exactly the same institutions.

If I understand the purpose of the roles and mandates framework, it's to co-ordinate yet at the same time differentiate postsecondary institutions in this province so that they're not all necessarily trying to compete for the same student base. So some questions, some concerns around how easily the institutions will be able to move from one sector to another.

I come back to the Mount Royal example because the foot-dragging over naming Mount Royal what it effectively is today,

which is an undergraduate university, is awesome in its spectacularity. You know, it's been going on now for four years. All the while Mount Royal has been moving in a determined and steady and well-thought-out fashion to become what it wants to be, which is the primarily undergraduate university for Calgary and southern Alberta. And Edmonton-Centre, please, I'm not trying to compete with your fabulous constituency again, but access is more of a problem in Calgary than it is in Edmonton. It is a big problem in Calgary.

When I see how difficult it has been for Mount Royal to get beyond being sort of a Rodney Dangerfield university and get the respect it deserves by being able to call itself a university, I wonder how easy it's actually going to be for institutions to move from one sector to another as the evolution of the system would require. Will institutions be able to switch sectors based on changes to their programming and status? Will this legislation ensure that that's possible? Will Mount Royal, if it is able to achieve university status, be able to move from the baccalaureate and applied studies institution sector to others?

I hasten to point out here that my understanding is that there's no desire today, none whatsoever, on the part of Mount Royal, today or tomorrow or the day after or any time within the foreseeable future, to move out of that baccalaureate and applied studies institution sector. But 15, 20 years from now – maybe only 10 years from now because it certainly didn't take any longer than a decade for applied degrees to become less attractive and less useful than they appeared to be in the beginning, and that's a broad generalization but not altogether inaccurate. Maybe Mount Royal should become a comprehensive academic and research institution or maybe Grant MacEwan should, you know. Or – who knows? – maybe Red Deer College could grow into that role. Will this actually be allowed to take place?

It seems that the government believes that we can't afford to have another graduate studies university in the province, but there is a significant shortage of graduate spaces in Alberta. Will the changes being made to the Post-secondary Learning Act ensure that there are enough graduate spaces throughout the province?

Regarding section 12, which removes the specifics of determining the remuneration and duties of the officers and employees of that institution in the hands of a board of a postsecondary institution, where will that power go? Has it been moved elsewhere?

In regard to section 3, which repeals the section of the act that states that a dean is the chief executive officer of the faculty, does this reduce the dean's authority in any way? If so, why? What's the rationale behind that? Is it transferred to someone else within the university, or does it go to the minister? Given the reduction in authority of the Universities Co-ordinating Council through various amendments to this act, what will be the main role of the Universities Co-ordinating Council if these changes are in fact made?

Section 10 says that "section 60(1)(b) is amended by adding 'for the economic prosperity of Alberta and' before 'for the educational'." You know, that raises an ongoing question, which is: where's the cut-off point between the learner being able to learn what he or she wishes to learn because that is their interest and the learner being cajoled, coerced, canoodled into a program of study that Big Brother Alberta has determined is what the economy needs? Not everybody wants to be an engineer. Not everybody needs to be an engineer.

I've seen too many kids of my kids' age and just slightly older who have gone into engineering, as an example, because they know they're going to incur a significant debt load as students and they've made the judgment that, "Well, if I become an engineer, there's lots of demand for engineers in Alberta, and it pays pretty well, so I'll be able to pay back my student loans," or something to that effect or

because there's been general societal pressure that that's a good program of study. They go through engineering, and they come out the other end going: God, I don't want to build bridges; I don't want to have anything to do with engineering. So – what? – we're left to pay the bill for educating them all over again in postsecondary in a field of study that they are interested in.

This is, I think, really key, Mr. Speaker. We need to find the balance, and it needs to be a good balance and a nimble and flexible balance between making sure that we have a co-ordinated, integrated postsecondary education system that runs from the comprehensive community institution through the polytechnical institutions, the baccalaureate institutions, the comprehensive academic and research institutions, that covers all the bases and provides the qualified employees for the jobs that employers tell us are needed in this province and also allows those very same students the latitude to study that which they are interested in.

You know, when it comes right down to it, a liberal arts degree, although it appears on the face of it to be good for nothing in terms of qualifying you to do something for a living other than driving a cab or something like that, provides the single most transferable skill that anyone will ever have throughout their career: the ability to think analytically and critically. It's not the only degree that does that, but it does do it very well, and that, Mr. Speaker, is worthy in and of itself.

Thank you.

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

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you. I'm honoured to rise today and speak to Bill 7, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2008. Mr. Speaker, as you know, in 2004 the government of Alberta introduced the Post-secondary Learning Act, which consolidated several pieces of legislation to more effectively govern the postsecondary education system.

5:20

In the fall of 2007 the government improved the roles and mandates policy framework, which is a new policy direction for the postsecondary system. This framework was developed to ensure that Alberta's postsecondary system aligns with the needs of students, taxpayers, and society. The new framework will enable sound decision-making to strategically and effectively invest public resources to address the critical skilled labour shortages while, at the same time, creating what we all want, which is a more educated society. It also fosters broader, increased co-operation to enhance learner pathways and transitions and to maximize opportunities for learners.

Now, the Post-secondary Learning Act is an enabling and flexible act and supports the implementation of the framework. However, to realize the Campus Alberta concept of ensuring that Albertans have the opportunity to participate in learning opportunities through a co-ordinated and integrated system approach, amendments have been proposed to the legislation. The amendments will enshrine in the act the six sector categories identified in the framework as well as establish the Campus Alberta strategic directions committee and clearly define research capacity at institutions. These amendments will provide clarity around program responsibility, research activity, and service regions of our institutions and help guide the evolution of the postsecondary system into the future.

The bill proposes several amendments to the act related to the new roles and mandates policy framework as well as a legal name change for the Banff Centre for Continuing Education and a number of

housekeeping amendments. I'd like to take a moment to briefly outline each one of these amendments related to the roles and mandates policy framework as well as touch on the amendments which are of a housekeeping nature.

Let's talk about the roles and mandates. Firstly, just general powers and duties. Under general powers and duties the act currently sets out that institutions must operate for the educational or cultural advancement of the people of Alberta. The proposed amendment will outline how institutions operate within the roles and mandates policy framework, which reflects the importance of meeting the needs of the students as well as the economy by creating a more educated society for Alberta's next generation economy. This amendment will ensure that institutions strive not only to meet the educational and cultural needs of individual Albertans but also to support our capacity to create Alberta's next-generation economy, which is a priority for this government. This is an important balance that institutions must achieve.

Secondly, let's talk about the business plans, Alberta's access planning framework. The amendments to the business plan will require that the board of an institution must also prepare an access plan and submit it to the minister. This will require public postsecondary institutions to prepare access plans to meet the needs of their region in compliance with the roles and mandates policy framework.

Campus Alberta vision. As indicated, one of the goals of Advanced Education and Technology is to further the vision of Campus Alberta. In order to solidify and provide a framework for institutions to operate within this vision, the following amendments are proposed. The six-sector model. Firstly, under the Campus Alberta section of the act we have added a provision that will identify and define the key program and research characteristics of the six sector categories establishing the roles and mandates policy framework. This will, in turn, more clearly define the roles and mandates of the institutions that will be operating within these categories. Institutions will need to ensure that their mandates align in accordance with the sector categories. Enshrining clear differentiation in legislation will provide the foundation to support the best program and institutional mix to meet the needs of the learners, the economy, and our society.

Now, let's talk about resident private colleges. In order to ensure that the entire publicly funded postsecondary system is recognized and operating under the Campus Alberta framework, we have added a definition that defines the publicly funded private colleges in Alberta who have approved programs of studies that are funded by the government. Currently there are six: Ambrose University College, Concordia University College, The King's University College, Canadian University College, St. Mary's University College, and Taylor University College. This section will also ensure that these institutions for those funded programs will operate in accordance with the established sector category of independent academic institutions.

I'd like to talk about Campus Alberta's strategic directions committee. We propose the establishment of a strategic high-level advisory committee. The Campus Alberta strategic directions committee will be comprised of members of the postsecondary system as appointed by the minister. They will provide the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology with advice on Campus Alberta activities. This committee is one of the key strategic planning mechanisms put in place as part of the framework.

I'd like to talk to you about regulatory powers. We have also added regulatory powers in order to provide additional detail on the aforementioned committee and six-sector model in the regulation,

should it be required. This regulation will include identifying which category an institution aligns with. Using a regulation to identify institutions in alignment with the sector categories will help clearly identify which category an institution is in.

Research. Currently the act allows universities to engage in pure and applied research, while colleges and technical institutes can only engage in applied research. The framework expands the research mandate for those institutions offering degrees to give them the flexibility to engage in scholarly research. Scholarly research is conducted in support of professional development by enhancing and supporting faculty in advancing their knowledge base to support instruction. This is another example where the framework coupled with this amendment will help ensure quality instruction at those institutions moving towards degree granting.

I'd like to talk to you about the deans. The university boards require additional flexibility to determine the types of work programs they need to offer to better align with economic and learner needs. The amendment to this section has removed the reference to a dean as a chief executive officer of the faculty. When comparing this clause with powers of other acts related to universities in other provinces, this power provided to deans is found to be unique in Alberta. Mr. Speaker, this is of historical nature, being carried over from the former University Act with no clear definition of a chief executive officer. While deans will continue to maintain authority over general supervision of academic work and instruction of faculty staff, the institution will be able to focus on meeting regional and provincial needs. Wards can delegate power to deans as required.

A proposed provision will allow for the development of ministerial regulations in support of the long-term outline of the planning cycle. The development of the Alberta access planning framework and the institutional access plan is a critical mechanism identified by the roles and mandates policy framework that will allow for more strategic use of information and enhance planning capabilities. The regulation will provide clarity and transparency around the planning processes.

Let's talk about the Banff Centre for Continuing Education. I'd like to move now to an amendment requested by the Banff Centre. They have requested a legal name change to more closely align with their current activities. We are supportive of this amendment and had indicated to them that when the act was opened, we would facilitate the name change to the Banff Centre in alignment with their activities. This legal name change also means consequential amendments to two other pieces of legislation that directly name the Banff Centre.

There are also three other housekeeping amendments. The Universities Co-ordinating Council. This act sets out the requirements for the UCC, which consists of the presidents of the four universities and includes a delegation role respecting professions and occupations, including a number of powers, duties, and functions. The intent has been to phase out this role and have the responsibilities assumed under the appropriate professions and occupations legislation. Universities have not been active in this role for many years. We consulted with the relevant ministries to ensure that all affected professions are accommodated within their own legislation and received approval to remove the UCC-related sections of the act.

Consequential amendments . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, Standing Order 4(3). It's 5:30. I hesitate to interrupt you, but the Assembly stands adjourned until 7:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:30 p.m.]









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