



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, May 29, 2008

Issue 27a

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

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

Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Clerk	W.J. David McNeil	Sessional Parliamentary Counsel:	Sarah Dafoe
Clerk Assistant/ Director of House Services	Louise J. Kamuchik	Sergeant-at-Arms	Brian G. Hodgson
Clerk of <i>Journals</i> /Table Research	Micheline S. Gravel	Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms	J. Ed Richard
Senior Parliamentary Counsel	Robert H. Reynolds, QC	Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms	William C. Semple
Senior Parliamentary Counsel	Shannon Dean	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>	Liz Sim

[Errata, if any, appear inside back cover]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 29, 2008

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. As we conclude for this week our work in this Assembly, we renew our energies with thanks so that we may continue our work with the people in the constituencies we represent. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. President of the Treasury Board.

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Viking has many things to be proud of, including a very glorious history and a wonderful new community centre, but probably one of the things that they would be most proud of is this group of grade 6 children that are here to visit us today. It's my tremendous privilege and pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the grade 6 class from the Viking school. They're here with their teachers, Mrs. Muriel Hill and Mrs. Debbie Snider, and some parent helpers: Mrs. Deb Russnak, Mrs. Kelly Christensen, and Mrs. Judy Andreson. We all know that in a small town the teachers are counted on to do so many, many things, and that is certainly not the exception in Viking. It is my privilege to ask this class and their teachers to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly two groups. For the first time in six years I have two groups from my constituency. The first group I get to introduce is from Coronation school in Coronation, my hometown. It's a great town to be from. They even gave me a pin that represents the town, and I'm very proud to wear it. There are 29 of them, and they are accompanied by their teachers and parent helpers, Mr. Dan Kinakin, Mrs. Fran Clark – who, I'd like to point out, taught me – Mrs. Marion Hassenstein, Mr. John Rush, Mrs. Hilda Gardiner, Mrs. Chris Smith, Mrs. Gail Dabbs, and Mr. George Nichols. I'd ask them to rise – they're seated in the members' gallery – and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the second group I have to introduce today are from Loughheed school in Loughheed, Alberta. They are a fantastic bunch of students who come from a school that's very similar in size to the one I taught in before I took on this job, and they have talent. I got to judge a talent show for these students, and they are an incredibly talented bunch of young people. There are 19 of them. They're accompanied by their teacher, Miss Kristen Kueber, and parent helpers Carol Armstrong, Theresa Armstrong, and Gail McClements. They're seated in the members' gallery, and I ask them to rise and please receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Aboriginal Relations.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed

a great, great pleasure today for me to introduce an international singing star who is visiting us today from British Columbia. Mr. Ed Evanko, Father Ed Evanko now, has over 40 years of experience on the stage, having performed in numerous Broadway shows as well as at the Stratford festival, the English opera, the Welsh National Opera, and with the BBC Singers, just to name a few. In 2005 he was ordained into the Ukrainian Catholic priesthood. He's accompanied today by some very dear Edmonton friends of ours, Michael and Luba Bell. I would ask the Assembly to greet them as they rise to be welcomed. Thank you for coming.

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

Mr. Vandermeer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly Cassandra Harper, who is the new STEP student in the Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview constituency office. Cassandra lives in the Clareview area of the constituency and has completed her second year at the University of Alberta, majoring in political science. During the summer she hopes to gain insight and experience on how our government works to help her decide her future political path. Cassandra is seated in the public gallery. I would ask her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Prins: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members on behalf of the hon. Member for Little Bow a group of students and adults from the Calvin Christian school in Monarch. There are 26 students and eight adults. I don't have all the names of the adults, but one of the leaders is Conrad Van Hierden. The students are from the constituencies of Little Bow, Livingstone-Macleod, and Lethbridge-West. They're seated in the public gallery. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. Minister of Education, do you have an introduction today?

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a very special group of people from Alberta's blind and visually impaired community. Today we're honoured to have with us Bill McKeown, Dale Richards, Cathy McFee, and Ellie Shuster from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. Dale Richards is chairman of the board; Bill McKeown is vice-president, government relations and business enterprise; and Cathy is the director of services and operations. Ellie Shuster is the director of business development nationally for the CNIB. Along with them we have Kelly Baldock, who is president of the Alberta Society for the Visually Impaired, and her daughter Briann, who's in grade 7 at St. Mark junior high school in Edmonton.

These representatives from the blind and visually impaired community are here today to witness and hear a statement that will be delivered by the member for Edmonton-Mill Woods regarding an announcement made earlier today with Bill and Kelly on the government's commitment to ensuring the best learning outcomes for blind and visually impaired students. Our guests are seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Members' Statements

Support for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Mr. Benito: Mr. Speaker, today is an exciting day for Alberta students who are blind or visually impaired. In November 2007 teachers, vision specialists, teacher assistants, and administrators gathered to share their frank thoughts and suggestions about how we can all work together to enhance services for Alberta's blind and visually impaired students. The input of the CNIB and Alberta Society for the Visually Impaired was particularly valuable. Such collaborations reinforce the great working relationships we have in our province and in our education system.

We listened and learned, and today the Minister of Education announced \$9 million in funding for supports for blind and visually impaired students. Through Alberta Education's Learning Resources Centre the new funding will support improving access to supports for students who are blind or visually impaired, especially those students in rural schools; providing sustainable funding to improve access to the special equipment loan service, including training; providing a vision specialist to support students with special test-writing needs to ensure equitable access to provincial examinations; improving students' timely access to learning resources in alternate format materials by increasing braille production; and establishing a provincial co-ordinator position to provide leadership to enhance services, address human resources shortages, and facilitate research on student success. This is remarkable news for Alberta's students and learning communities.

I would like to thank all our stakeholders, particularly those who joined us for today's announcement and those in the House today, for their work to develop these exciting policy initiatives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

1:40

World No Tobacco Day

Mrs. Sarich: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak about World No Tobacco Day. World No Tobacco Day is celebrated around the world every year on May 31. This annual celebration informs the public about the dangers of using tobacco and unites people around a common cause: to work toward a tobacco-free world today and for future generations.

AADAC is hosting its annual World No Tobacco Day provincial celebration today. This conference offers an opportunity to hear from leading tobacco reduction specialists and to share ideas and successes. This year's theme, Looking Towards Tomorrow, will focus on emerging trends in tobacco reduction. The Alberta government maintains its commitment to reducing tobacco use in our province. With the Tobacco Reduction Act Alberta has some of the strongest legislation controlling the use, display, and sale of tobacco products in Canada.

AADAC continues to develop and review programs and services to reduce the use of tobacco in Alberta, help those who want to quit, and prevent young people from starting to smoke, but the goal of achieving a tobacco-free Alberta is the responsibility of all of us. If you are a smoker, consider seeking help to quit. If you are a young person, please don't start smoking, and do all you can to discourage your friends from starting to smoke. It is my hope that one day we'll see a tobacco-free province and enjoy a healthy Alberta as a result.

Thank you.

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

Lethbridge High Level Bridge

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The year 2009 will mark the centennial of one of Canada's greatest engineering and construction marvels: the Lethbridge High Level Bridge. The Canadian Pacific Railway began construction of this massive viaduct to join the banks of the Oldman River in Lethbridge in August of 1908. On June 22, 1909, construction was completed, and on November 1 of that year the bridge was officially opened. One hundred years ago the cost of this 1,600 metres long and 96 metres high bridge was just over \$1.3 million. To this day the bridge is one of the largest trestle bridges in the world, and it's still used frequently.

Since construction ceased in 1909, the bridge has become a beautiful and reliable landmark for Lethbridge's residents and visitors. It has become more than a connection of the opposite banks of the Oldman; it has become a link to Lethbridge's rich and fascinating past. What was once a necessary albeit gruelling task to move coal and other freight more efficiently is now a symbol of southern Alberta.

In September '05 the government of Canada gave the building of the Lethbridge viaduct official designation as a national historic event. More recently the secretary of the Lethbridge Philatelic Society, Jonathen Dean, has taken it upon himself to have this landmark be nationally recognized again. The bridge, in the centennial of its construction, is currently involved in the application process to be celebrated on a 2009 Canada Post commemorative stamp. It's indeed worthwhile to recognize the dedication and bravery of the countless designers, engineers, and construction workers who created this marvel 100 years ago.

Residents and vacationers in Lethbridge know that there's nothing better than standing in Fort Whoop-Up in the evening and watching the CPR freight trains float high above the river towards the setting sun, the same way that it did in 1909.

Thank you.

Commercial Fishing Industry

Ms Calahasen: Commercial fishing in Alberta is a passion of mine, which I have and always will support because my family and culture have been integrally connected. My father was a commercial fisherman for many years until he fell ill, so my brother took up the cause until, like many small independent fishermen, he was bought out. However, I have lived with the values of being a fisherman, or, rather, a fisherwoman.

Although commercial fishing has a long history in Alberta and continues to be an important source of income and food for Albertans, there have been tenuous times for my fishermen. But they have persevered because commercial fishing is more than just an important industry in my riding. It is a part of our community, where we know our commercial fishermen by name. It is a lifestyle that is ingrained in all of us when we are born.

Alberta's commercial fishermen play an important role in the management and sustainable use of fish stocks in Alberta. Our province's commercial fishermen harvest lake whitefish, which is an underutilized fish, from a limited number of lakes throughout the province. These lakes have fish populations that can sustain a managed harvest.

Over the past few years the government of Alberta has invested in a commercial fishing compensation payout program, not without a lot of pain. This program reduced participation in my commercial fishing, eliminating, much to my chagrin, many of my small fishermen. But what it did was help to streamline the commercial fishing industry, which has benefited both domestic and sports

fisheries. The program is in response to the commercial fishing industry's request for greater consolidation to improve the industry's viability. It has been through the support of this Legislature that these important changes will help maximize the benefits Albertans receive from our commercial fisheries and help sustain the resource for future generations and help maintain the lifestyle some are born to. I ask all my colleagues to continue to support this very vital industry in Alberta.

Thank you.

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

E.R. Ward Neale

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to pay tribute to E.R. Ward Neale, an outstanding Calgarian and committed NDP member who passed away last week. Ward Neale was a prominent academic and leading scholar in the field of geology. Not content to hide away in the comfortable surroundings of a university life, Neale strived to communicate and educate the public about geology through television, radio, pamphlets, magazines, and the press.

Born in Beaconsfield, Quebec, Neale served in the navy during the Second World War, after which he began his studies at McGill and then Yale University. Neale returned to Canada, becoming professor and head of the geology department at Memorial University in Newfoundland, and later came to Calgary to serve as head of the geological information subdivision of the Institute of Sedimentary and Petroleum Geology as well as holding an adjunct position at the University of Calgary and serving on the university senate.

The list of positions and awards held and won by Ward Neale is too long to list in its entirety, so I will highlight just a few. They include president of the Geological Association of Canada and the Canadian Geoscience Council, chair of the Royal Society of Canada's Public Awareness of Science Committee, and founder of the Calgary Science Network. Neale was a recipient of the Bancroft award and the Queen Elizabeth II jubilee medal and was an officer in the Order of Canada. In 1994 Neale was honoured by the creation of the E.R. Ward Neale medal by the Geological Association of Canada, an award given to individuals for sustained and outstanding efforts in the sharing of earth sciences with the general public.

An avid athlete, Neale was a member of the Seniors, Skrastins, and Evergreen hiking and cross-country ski clubs. He regularly participated in the Birkebeiner ski race, and he was the oldest participant in last year's Lake Louise loppet.

Neale leaves behind his wife of 57 years, Trixie, as well as his two children and two grandchildren. Citizens like Ward Neale don't come around every day, and I am very proud that he was a member of our party. I would ask the House to join me in honouring the memory of this incredible Albertan and thanking him for his years of service to his country, his students, and his community.

Off-highway Vehicle Use

Dr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, I don't participate in off-road four-wheel driving, but I do believe that there should be opportunities in a land the size of Alberta for those who do. The damage incurred in the McLean Creek area over the Victoria Day weekend resulted in a hue and cry from many quarters, including some members of this House.

A *Calgary Herald* editorial entitled Wilderness Needs Protection referred to off-roading as a diverse and peculiar sport whose place "had better not be public lands and pristine wilderness, if the consequence is to be the Somme-like no-man's land that was

McLean Creek last weekend, reduced to churned wetland, and devastated vegetation in which no bird sang." It said that there was environmental damage which was comprehensive and widespread. Mr. Speaker, I visited the Somme in 2005, and I can assure everyone that the Somme is a verdant green area with many mature hardwood trees, full of pastures, fields, country lanes, and singing birds.

Almost any vehicle disturbs the vegetation over which they drive. When conditions are wet, there is naturally more disturbance, and care should be taken to ensure that ecologically sensitive natural areas are not destroyed. However, it should be pointed out that parts of the McLean Creek area have been specifically set aside since the 1970s for off-road activity. It is not intended to be pristine wilderness, and even though there are now strict limits on the areas where one can go, some temporary loss of vegetation should be expected and tolerated.

Mr. Speaker, environmental damage, if it can be called that, like that which occurred in the McLean Creek area cannot be remotely compared to the environmental damage caused by an oil spill, contamination of water or soil by toxic chemicals, or even to the benign neglect through which natural plant communities like those in Fish Creek park are allowed to be degraded by invasive species.

Mr. Speaker, my Alberta still has a place for mud boggers.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Oil Royalty Framework

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government will be implementing a new royalty system that economists are saying is out of date before it's enacted because it tops out oil prices at \$120 a barrel when prices, as we know, are already above this. Oil is worth more than the royalty framework can handle, and there are serious forecasts of oil prices going far higher. My question is to the Minister of Energy. How long will this government wait before making adjustments to its royalty regime to account for oil prices above \$120?

Mr. Knight: Mr. Speaker, first of all, it would not be correct to state that the royalty regime does not account for prices above \$120 a barrel. It does. The fact of the matter is that if we care to look today, I think oil is actually on the decrease. I think we're somewhere down around \$127 a barrel today. It's a volatile market, and we believe that on a go-forward the framework will suit Albertans very well.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: has this government done international comparisons of its royalties to see how Alberta's royalties compare to other jurisdictions when oil prices are above \$120 a barrel?

Mr. Knight: Mr. Speaker, as the member very well knows, there have been a number of comparisons made, and we continue in our department and certainly, I believe, also in the department of finance to make comparisons with Alberta and other jurisdictions. It's a thing that's done on an ongoing basis.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Then to the minister: for

the information of all Albertans, who, after all, own this resource, will this minister table in this Assembly next week the most current international comparisons he's gotten of Alberta's royalty system to other jurisdictions?

Mr. Knight: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can certainly do that, but I could tell you that the most recent comparisons that we have have likely already been made public a number of times.

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

Ground Ambulance Services

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The health minister has stated that with the transition of ambulance services from municipalities to the Alberta Health Authority, paramedics will become able to transport patients to medical facilities other than hospital emergency rooms. This move should reduce ER backlogs and improve wait times, but patients need to know that they're not going to be dropped off at a walk-in clinic or a physiotherapist's office by mistake, so details. To the health minister: how will the criteria under which a paramedic can make the decision to transfer a patient someplace other than the ER be determined?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, currently municipalities estimate that some 30 per cent of patients that are transported by EMS could very well be dealt with somewhere other than emergencies. However, the model that's in place today really doesn't allow transportation to anywhere other than an emergency ward at a hospital. Paramedics are professionals and have the ability to do minor diagnosis. If they determine that there's a better place to take a patient than to an emergency, they will have that option, but they will always err on the side of going to an emergency if necessary.

Mr. Taylor: If I understood the minister correctly, there's essentially a line, a bar beyond which they will not cross. If they don't feel comfortable with the diagnosis, they will take the patient to emergency as opposed to somewhere else. Is that the basic idea? Can the minister give me some sort of formal indication of how that's determined, how that bar is set?

Mr. Liepert: Well, let's use an example, Mr. Speaker. If an ambulance is called out and someone has maybe imbibed a little bit too much and fallen and maybe only needs to go to see a doctor at a clinic, they will now have the option of taking that patient to a clinic, but clearly if there's any doubt about the severity of the patient, they will be taken to emergency.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the decision is made to take the patient, for example, to a walk-in clinic, what will the process be for transferring that patient from the care of the paramedic, from the care of the ambulance crew, to the care of clinic personnel? Will it be to the doctor, to a nurse, to a receptionist?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would believe that the transfer will be from a health professional to another health professional. The difference could very well be that at a clinic environment you may have to wait 15 minutes to see a professional whereas in an emergency ward at a hospital you may very well have to wait several hours.

The other factor is proximity. In some cases ambulances are driving across the city to get to an emergency ward whereas there may have been a clinic very close to where the incident occurred.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Temporary Foreign Workers

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are two laws in Alberta that protect Alberta workers to ensure that they get their wages. One law is the Labour Relations Code, and the other is the Employment Standards Code. These laws also should protect temporary foreign workers, who enter this province on a temporary basis. My first question is to the minister of labour. How do temporary foreign workers get protection under the Employment Standards Code when the rules that set their employment conditions are outlined in the labour market agreement or the labour market opinion which they sign before they enter the country?

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, first, I want to say that we truly value the work and the support that we get from temporary foreign workers. We want to assure them that their rights are protected as well. We afford them the same rights as any other worker in the province of Alberta insofar as protecting them from whatever abuse there might be out there. We do provide the information, as I indicated, via having hotlines out there and our individual offices, that will provide that information to them.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you. Again to the same minister, Mr. Speaker: given that the Employment Standards Code protects the vast majority of Alberta workers, why are we now opening up the Labour Relations Code for amendments and not strengthening the Employment Standards Code, which protects over 70 per cent of Alberta workers from unfair conditions outlined by their employers?

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, we do protect our workers in the province of Alberta. Insofar as the Labour Relations Code, it's been identified as something that we will be spending some time discussing next week.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: what changes is the government contemplating making in these amendments that are being proposed to the Labour Relations Code?

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, you know, we can speculate all we want, but the bill will be introduced next week, and I urge the members to stay tuned to see what will be in there. We will provide ample time for debate at that particular moment.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Justice System

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. This government's insistence on revving up an already overheated economy is now hurting our justice system. Clogged courthouses and lack of judicial services to meet the demand means that criminal cases take longer

to be resolved in Alberta than in nearly every other province. Justice delayed is justice denied, and the longer the delay, the longer the wait for justice for both victims and the accused and the better the chance a case will be dismissed without trial. My question is to the Minister of Justice. How many criminals are walking the streets today because they were set free because this government did not have the court services to properly try their cases?

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

Ms Redford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll start with the short answer to that question, which is none. From that, I'd go on to say that if we look at the Statistics Canada report, it's quite interesting that Alberta is one of the only provinces where Statistics Canada looked at both Court of Queen's Bench cases and provincial court cases. Because of the nature of cases that appear at the Court of Queen's Bench, that really extends the average time that it takes for some cases to get to court and to be in court, and that's an important point. We're not talking only about when someone is charged and when it goes to court. This report also calculates how long it takes when it's started through the process.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, victims and family members are forced to wait nine months or more to see justice done. This is stressful for victims, leaves the community feeling vulnerable, accused have to wait for their day in court, and it further crowds our remand facilities. Can the minister tell those people why Alberta's justice system is so much worse than in other provinces?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Redford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll start again by saying that it's not worse than other provinces. But I will also say that as in many other policy areas that this government is working in, we do not find the status quo to be acceptable, and that is why in the past two years we've hired 62 new prosecutors and have already planned to hire another 28 in the next two years. We have 125 provincial court judges, and in the past two years have hired seven more and have already announced to the Association of Provincial Court Judges that we will be hiring three more. We have pilot projects with the federal government to reduce lead times that are developing very important results, and we also have new projects that are dealing with prosecutor file management, which allow prosecutors to have control of that file from the bail application through to conviction, and that's going to make the system work.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, this Justice minister has not answered the question. There are ongoing and serious problems with our justice system involving very significant delays because of this government's lack of planning. Why didn't the government take action when it needed to?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Redford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has done more in the past year than we've done for a very long time. We're proud of that. We are being proactive on this issue, we are making people feel safe in their communities, and as a government we are doing our job. We are finding people that need to be prosecuted, we are prosecuting them, and we are convicting them fairly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmor, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ground Ambulance Services

(continued)

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Effective April 1, 2009, the newly formed Alberta Health Services Board will assume responsibility from municipalities for ground ambulance services. My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Would the minister please explain the rationale behind this decision, and what evidence does the minister have that this change in governance is the right thing to do at this time?

Mr. Liepert: Well, that's a very tough question, Mr. Speaker, unlike the last one. We have found that over the years we have moved the ambulance system from being a transportation model to one with highly trained paramedics, and it is time that we moved ambulance delivery from the municipal environment to health care. We took that step today. It has been, from what I can understand, almost unanimously accepted. Groups like the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, mayors of the big cities have unanimously endorsed the move today.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what will this change mean for average Albertans, and is the province taking over complete funding, or will users still have to pay for the ambulance services?

Mr. Liepert: Well, the province will now fully fund ambulance services; however, the patient payment portion will remain the same. Municipalities will no longer be required to pay for any of the ambulance services. I think I'd like to give an example of a benefit that a patient may see. In the Palliser health region, which has had a pilot project, they actually have ambulances go to homes to deliver IV antibiotics. It is better for the patient, and it is less costly to the system. Now that ambulance services are part of the health care system, we can do those kinds of things and benefit Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister. As a rural MLA I'm certainly concerned about what this will mean to rural Alberta. I want to commend municipalities, who have been doing an excellent job running the service for years. My question is: what assurances can the minister give that services will not decline in rural Alberta?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, we will be setting standards for ambulance services across the province. There's no question that there are going to be different standards for different areas of the province, but they will be the highest quality standards that we can deliver. We have put April 1, 2009, as the implementation date. Over the next 10 months we will work through any of the issues that may arise that areas of the province feel that we need to adjust, and we will do that.

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

Rental Properties

Ms Blakeman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A recent scheme in rental apartments is for management companies to contract with heat cost allocation services like Stratacon to purportedly measure and bill

each tenant for their unit's heat usage. Now, cost allocation, if accurate and fair, can be a great way to encourage energy efficiency. My questions are to the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs. Has the province set any standards to protect consumers and verify the accuracy of this system of measuring heat usage or any system of measuring hot water heating in individual rental units, especially when hot water heating is contiguous and runs in loops for the whole building?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, that's an interesting question, Mr. Speaker, and I can tell you that I'll take it under advisement and look into it for you.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. Thanks very much. To the same minister. In the absence of regulation what incentives are there for building owners to make buildings more efficient rather than simply passing off to their tenants the cost of inefficient heating systems or leaky windows or poor insulation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's an assumption. I didn't say that there weren't any regulations. I said that I'd take it under advisement and look into that question for you.

Ms Blakeman: Okay. You can look into both of them, and here's the third. What is the minister doing to ensure that future changes by rental companies to augment their income do not lead to housing becoming even more inaccessible and unaffordable for individuals?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That as well I'll take under advisement. Thank you.

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

Ground Ambulance Services (continued)

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unions representing paramedics across Alberta are expressing concern over changes to the ground ambulance services in this province. They are concerned that ambulance services providing province-wide service in rural areas will be reduced to a lower standard, namely basic life support, rather than raising rural ambulance services to urban standards. My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Municipalities, Minister, have been running this service for years. Why not simply provide more money to rural municipalities to help them raise service standards to the level enjoyed in urban centres?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member may have some information that I don't have. I have not heard that there was resistance to this move by a particular union. The concern, though, is valid whether it came from a union or it didn't. I think the overriding factor that we have to take into account here is that municipalities wanted out of the ambulance business. They do not want to be in the ambulance business for the most part. There are some instances where municipalities provide ambulance services to a lesser degree and want to continue to do that, and we now have the ability to contract with them. But I did not get any resistance from municipalities to this move today.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, talking about municipalities. The municipalities have been contributing roughly \$40 million annually to support ambulance services. Will the municipalities be required to return that funding to the province?

Mr. Liepert: Well, no, because what we have done for the past three years is supplement to the tune of \$55 million ambulance services. Municipalities receive \$55 million. Now, there's no question municipalities felt that that wasn't sufficient, and this is probably one of the reasons why they are quite happy to have it moved from municipalities to the health system. There will not be any sort of clawback, if you will, of provincial funds, but what will happen after April 1 of next year is that the \$55 million will not go to municipalities because they will not be incurring any costs.

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the minister for that answer. A final question to the minister: could you please outline what changes Albertans can expect to see in their ambulance service as we transition to this new provincial delivery model?

Mr. Liepert: Well, I guess one of the examples I alluded to earlier was in the trial in the Palliser region. I think that's an indication of the improvement in the ability to be innovative. I would suggest that our health care system is very innovative. There will be a number of instances that will reflect what has been tried in Palliser, and I look forward to those benefits that will accrue.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Community Health Councils

Mr. Taylor: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. How the introduction of a single health board will impact local influence in the delivery of health care has yet to be clarified. Improving governance is important, but there is still a concern about how a central board will be able to address and understand local health care issues. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: what powers will the community health councils have to influence decisions made by the Health Services Board on local health care issues?

2:10

Mr. Liepert: Well, that's a very good question, Mr. Speaker, because one of the things we want to ensure with the move to a province-wide board is that local interests are recognized. We will be bringing forward an enhanced mandate on roles and responsibilities for the community health councils shortly. We currently have community health councils out there, but there's a whole variety in how they operate. They don't have any kinds of roles and responsibilities. We're going to lay that out clearly. I believe that combined with the members of this Legislature will have plenty of input on local issues.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Who will sit on these community health councils? They've been described – and I think the minister himself described them – as volunteer councils, yet the members are appointed to the councils, are they not?

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, we will be setting up a nomination review panel which will review names that have been submitted. I

would offer members of the opposition to submit names. I would ask that those names that are submitted are not people with an agenda. We want community input rather than agendas being advanced through this model.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you. What representation will rural Alberta have within the community health councils?

Mr. Liepert: Well, we will set up community health councils that will be reflective of all regions of this province. I can assure the hon. member that my colleagues from outside the cities of Calgary and Edmonton will certainly make sure that we have good representation.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ground Ambulance Services

(continued)

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was a significant announcement made today on the future of ambulance service in our province. My first question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Mr. Minister, many communities, including the city of Leduc, have services that combine fire and EMS in one role. How will these changes affect these communities?

Mr. Liepert: That's very true, Mr. Speaker. It will not directly impact what happens today. If you have combined fire-medics, I think they're called, you go to work, and you are either deemed for that shift of work to be on ambulance duty, or you're deemed to be on fire duty. I don't think that will change. What will change, though, is that going forward, those workers who are deemed to be on ambulance duty will now be classified as essential services. It will now level the playing field because fire and police and other health care workers are already essential services.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplementary is to the same minister. Mr. Minister, many communities, particularly in rural Alberta, rely on volunteers for delivery of this service. How will this new governance model affect the status of these volunteers?

Mr. Liepert: Well, that is a good question, Mr. Speaker, because that is the case in many of the smaller communities, and that was one of the issues that was certainly raised by members of our caucus. I would not anticipate that those communities that currently have volunteers would see any difference. Generally, they volunteer for a delivery model. That delivery model will now contract to the health region to provide services in that area. One of the things that needs to be stated is that we want to ensure that whatever is working today we're not going to mess with. We're going to try to encourage it to just get better, and if it involves volunteers, that's a bonus.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplemental to the minister: what will happen to capital assets, buildings, cost-share agreements with fire halls, and other municipal buildings related to shared services?

Mr. Liepert: That, Mr. Speaker, is one of the differences between what we're doing and what has been proposed in the past. There was an attempt in the past to say: okay, we'll take over the emergency services and move it all into health. We're proposing a very different model today, and it's one that has incredible flexibility. If the health authority negotiates with a provider in a particular municipality, they can do one of two things. They can either contract with the municipality to provide the services exactly the same way they're providing them today, or if the municipality wants to just get out of the business, they can arrange a sale. That's one of the reasons why we're proposing – it hasn't passed this House yet – to put in some extra \$27 million for our budget next year to cover those kinds of transition costs.

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

Oil Sands Tailings Ponds Impact on Groundwater

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Oil sands operations have been ongoing since the early '60s, yet still to this day we do not know what we need to know about the connection between groundwater and surface water. Albertans were less than pleased to hear the minister say yesterday in the House in relation to the Athabasca River that groundwater mapping "takes some time, but it will be available in due course." Groundwater mapping should have been completed in this critical area years ago. To the Minister of Environment: what do we know about the connection between the Athabasca River and the adjacent groundwater?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that there is a connection between groundwater and the Athabasca River. What we don't know is all of the specific details on how fast groundwater moves, what the specific aquifers are that connect with the Athabasca River. There are a myriad of things that we need more information on, and that's why it's so critical that we get on with this business of detailed groundwater mapping.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister again: thanking you in advance for your promise yesterday to table the information on the tailings pond seepage into groundwater on Tar Island pond 1, will you also table information on groundwater contamination from the 90 per cent of the rest of the tailings ponds?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, we do a significant amount of groundwater monitoring, and I don't see any reason why we shouldn't be able to make the pertinent information available to the member.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, and thank you to the minister. Water is the key concern for Alberta in the 21st century, including groundwater associated with SAGD, steam-assisted gravity drainage, operations. Is the minister aware of scientists' concerns about increased local release of arsenic in association with groundwater due to injected steam, and what is being done to prevent this?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, the issue of arsenic in conjunction with SAGD operations has come up from time to time. This is another one of those issues that's very difficult to deal with because there are naturally occurring sources of arsenic that are in conjunction with

the oil sands deposits. There was a study that was done by the Alberta Research Council that dealt with arsenic. It came to the conclusion that while there are issues related to arsenic levels, there does not appear to be a direct connection between SAGD and naturally occurring arsenic.

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

Special-needs Education Funding

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today this government is in search of accolades for their recently announced support of students with vision loss, yet this initiative is merely a drop in the bucket of what is needed. A child in Edmonton public school with a level 8 disability, including autism and severe multiple disabilities, some of which may include vision, receives about \$23,000 in funding, but the cost of a teaching assistant for that child runs as high as \$49,000. That doesn't include other costs, such as teachers, custodial services, and building costs. To the Minister of Education: why is this government underfunding the education of special-needs children?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, indeed today it was good news in terms of adding resources specifically for those visually impaired or blind students. That will go a long way to assist those students in getting an education. But the question that's raised by the hon. member is a very important one. We did a special-needs review last fall of all the special-needs students across the province. During the course of that review what was determined was that there were more files for special-needs students than those students that actually fit the profile. What that identified for us was that there needs to be a complete review of the policy framework. We're in the process of doing that, and we'll do that comprehensively.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the meantime things continue. The Learning Commission report, which I believe came out in 2004, was titled Every Child Learns; Every Child Succeeds. How does the minister expect learning and success to happen for children with severe special needs who need full-time assistance when they only get half-time support?

2:20

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, the school boards across the province are funded, and they're funded to assist all students to get the support that they need. We do have coded funding. We add supplementary funding for students with severe special needs. There is an argument to be made that if a student needs a full-time assistant, the specific per-student funding for that child wouldn't cover the whole costs, but school boards have a comprehensive set of funds and in many cases are able to fund quite appropriately for students to get the services that they need. What our special redo will do and what our consultation will do is make sure that our funding framework meets the profile of service need delivery.

Ms Notley: Well, unfortunately, in many cases what school boards are doing is cutting on photocopying and food and special programs for kids, and they're still not meeting the needs of these costs. According to a recent Stats Canada report about at least 20 per cent of Alberta's special-needs children are not receiving any extra support at all. Can the minister tell us why these children are falling through the cracks?

Mr. Hancock: I would find it very hard to believe, Mr. Speaker, that 20 per cent of special-needs students in this province are not receiving any services at all. I've been in schools across the province, and I'm sure the hon. member has been in schools across the province. We have wonderful teachers, wonderful schools. I can take her to schools in this city that do an excellent job for students with severe special needs. Yes, they struggle with the resources. You always struggle with resources. There's always more that can be done. Yes, we are working on the framework with teachers, students, and the school boards to make sure that we get the right funding framework so that we can make sure that every child can succeed.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Ground Ambulance Services (continued)

Mr. Fawcett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In announcing changes to the governance model for ground ambulance services in Alberta, the Minister of Health and Wellness said that there would be legislative changes made to enable ambulance workers to deliver patients to appropriate points of care other than emergency departments. My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. How will this new model create efficiencies to prevent lengthy waits for patients and EMS staff?

Mr. Liepert: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I goofed. We do not need to make legislative changes; it is simply a matter of protocol.

As I answered the Member for Calgary-Currie earlier, we now have highly trained professionals who are out in the field as EMS personnel. There are a number of situations where they are called out that very well can be diagnosed, and there may be a different treatment than transportation to an emergency room. We will be working through that over the next 10 months to ensure that we have a strong protocol in place. These emergency personnel also are in constant contact with physicians when they're out in the field, and that's also an important element.

Mr. Fawcett: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister. Under this new system a diagnosis would be required to determine appropriate care for a patient. This is very important to Albertans as this is sometimes their first contact in the medical system. What assurances can the minister provide Albertans that EMS staff are qualified to diagnose these patients?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we need to put this in perspective. This is not really anything different than what we have with Health Link today. You phone Health Link, you talk to a nurse, a nurse will determine whether or not she can help you at the end of the telephone line. If there is any doubt and she feels that you should be going further, going to emergency, you will be informed of that. The same thing will happen in the field with paramedics. They are in constant contact with physicians, and if there's any doubt that that particular patient needs to be taken to emergency, that will happen.

The Speaker: The hon. member?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Funding for Private Schools

Mr. Hehr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My father, a long-time public educator, has often said that there are two overused oxymorons in this province, and they are the term “Progressive Conservative” and the term “private schools.” The trouble is that private schools are anything but private. Leaked internal documents note that the government is interested in increasing funding for these so-called private schools from 60 to 70 per cent of the public rate. To the Minister of Education: can the minister confirm if and by how much funding to private schools will be increasing?

Mr. Hancock: By 4.53 per cent.

Mr. Hehr: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, given that the public system is facing significant strains – there are operating costs and maintenance backlogs – why is this proposal going forward for private schools when it could be better used in the public system?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, 4.53 per cent is exactly the same increase that we gave to the public system – it’s a fair process – to reflect the increased costs. It was tagged to the increase in average weekly earnings for the 70 per cent of staff that work. We assume that the private schools have the same ratio of 70 per cent of the staff, and that gives them a little bit of a leftover, as it does in the public system, to deal with the other increasing costs that they bear.

Mr. Hehr: For all intents and purposes, then, in the future will private schools just simply get the same amount of funding raises that public schools get, or is there some obligation on private schools to in fact be private?

Mr. Hancock: Well, private schools are in fact private. They have their own boards and their own governance structure. There was a review in 1998, headed by the now Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations, which pegged the support we pay for private schools at 60 per cent of the operating grant that we pay for public schools, and that’s where it remains at the moment. We don’t pay for transportation costs, we don’t pay for operation and maintenance, and we don’t fund their capital projects. Now, having said that, there’s always discussion, and there are always private schools particularly coming forward and saying that they have cost pressures and they have concerns and they would like to have that amount raised. As we go through the discussion over the course of this year about education in the province, I presume that that discussion will continue.

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

Workers’ Compensation Appeals

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta workers’ compensation administration is independent from government operations, but it is governed by the legislative responsibility of the Ministry of Employment and Immigration. My question today is to the hon. Minister of Employment and Immigration with regard to WCB matters raised by our constituents. Can the minister tell the Assembly the appeal process for the workers who have suffered from work-related injuries but were denied of their claims?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Goudreau: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I need to emphasize

first that very few claims for compensation by injured workers are denied. Only 1 per cent last year did not qualify for compensation. Workers, however, that are denied of their claim can contact the case manager or adjudicator and discuss their decisions. At that particular level many issues are resolved. Following this, if the workers are not satisfied, they can request a first level of appeal to be done internally. Again, if a worker still wishes to proceed further, they can do so with a formal appeal to the external Appeals Commission. All of that information is available on the web.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: can the hon. minister tell the Assembly what performance measures are used for the appeal process and how the work performance of an individual WCB appeal adviser is evaluated?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, thank you. We do report on the number of decisions appealed that are overturned by the Appeals Commission. These statistics are also available on the web. This helps us to ensure that workers get a fair hearing. Approximately a quarter of the decisions which go to the Appeals Commission are overturned. This tells us that for the most part we have the right balance and that appeals within the WCB are being considered fairly.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that a number of frustrated injured workers have to pay some advocate for the preparation and filing of their appeals out of the small compensation amount that they badly need for living after their life-changing injuries, what can your ministry do to help them in this area?

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, WCB offers a free appeals service through the office of the appeals adviser and has done so for many years. By policy the sole function of the office of the appeals adviser is to advance the interests of injured workers or their dependants. There’s no fee to file an appeal.

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

Justice System

(continued)

Mr. Hehr: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, well, well. The Minister of Justice yesterday was patting herself on the back for her efforts to support Crown prosecutors, and I see that has continued today. Needless to say, you know, in the papers we’re seeing her department come up more and more. My question: if things are so rosy, how did your department get to this state where we continue to see 270-day wait times for people to get to trial?

2:30

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

Ms Redford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said in my previous answer, this government doesn’t ever believe that the status quo is good enough. We think that there is an awful lot that can still be

done. Yesterday in discussion with the hon. member across the House one of the questions asked was: can we put more police on the streets; can we arrest more people? We're doing that. We're arresting more people. They're going to court. The courts are backing up. We're going to make sure that they get through the system.

Mr. Hehr: Well, I hear that, Mr. Speaker. But one of the troubles is that we've hired 24 more Crown prosecutors; however, six of them will be used for bail hearings, a bunch more for increased traffic prosecution. With the increased population how many more of these prosecutors will really solve this backlog?

Ms Redford: In fact, Mr. Speaker, the breakdown for the 26 Crown prosecutors that we've just hired is that seven will be in Calgary general prosecutions, one will be in Calgary special prosecutions, six will be in Edmonton general prosecutions, one will be in Edmonton special prosecutions, one will be in the Edmonton appeals branch, three will be on policy and staff development on pilot projects through the Safe Communities Secretariat, and there'll be seven new regional general prosecutors in Peace River, Fort Saskatchewan, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, St. Paul, and Wetaskiwin.

Mr. Hehr: Well, I realize that that all sounds great. But, again, how many of these will be dedicated to bail hearings, and how many will be just handling now the increase in traffic violations? Will this really be dealing with getting bottlenecks out of the system or actually dealing with what these new-found roles of the Crown prosecutors are?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Redford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Part of what they do will deal with traffic, but one of the reasons that we needed more prosecutors is because we want prosecutors to be doing bail applications. That will be part of their job. We are going to make sure that we continue to do a good job in that process and in other prosecutions, and this is going to allow us to do that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Fish Creek Provincial Park

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. For the second day in a row all this talk about lawyers warms my heart.

My question today is to the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. This week a number of provincial parks and recreation areas will be closed because of the heavy rains we've had. Many people in my constituency visit Fish Creek park in Calgary, and after the damage from the 2005 floods they're concerned about the park, particularly given that our tax dollars maintain it. What is being done to make sure that the park and the trails won't experience this severe damage again?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Ady: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question. I want the hon. member to know that this year the damage was not as bad. We only had two areas slightly damaged, and they should be open in a few days.

But he raises a good point. In 2005 a big flood went through Fish Creek park and caused severe damage. We spent \$7.5 million

repairing that damage. We tried to flood-proof it this time. We built bridges and pathways in that park that should be able to sustain high waters and floods. In fact, they tell me that if there's another major flood, the only thing left standing will be the bridges. I'm pleased to say that this last weekend they performed very well. We're very pleased. I want to commend the park for bringing this project in early and under budget.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. I'm sure she's well aware that weather in Calgary can change with five minutes' notice. Where can Albertans go to get up-to-date, timely information?

Mrs. Ady: Another good question, Mr. Speaker. We have a website called AlbertaParks.ca. We do have some park closures this weekend. If you wanted to find out whether you could visit your favourite park, you might want to go to that website. It's very user friendly. It now incorporates Google maps, and it allows you to search for information on activities like kayaking or fishing or where free firewood is. So go to AlbertaParks.ca to see if your favourite park is open this weekend.

Mr. Denis: Just a clarification. People don't check for a PC membership card in the park, do they?

Mrs. Ady: We welcome all Albertans, Mr. Speaker.

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

Radioimmunotherapy Drugs

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over a dozen letters have been sent to my constituency over the lack of provincial coverage for two radioimmunotherapy drugs, Zevalin and Bexxar, which were approved by Health Canada two years ago. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: given that Health Canada considers that the benefit-risk profile of both these drugs is favourable in the treatment of patients with the particular type of Hodgkin's lymphoma, why isn't the government covering this drug, which would reduce so much pain and mental stress for Albertans?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member makes a statement at the end of her question that I don't want to have the House assume is necessarily correct because I don't think she's a medical professional. What we have is a drug review at arm's length from government that reviews all of the new drugs, and if there is not in the judgment of the profession an improvement over what is currently covered under the plan, then it is not approved. If, in fact, it is deemed that it is better than what's on the market today, then it will be approved.

Ms Pastoor: For those people with relapsed lymphoma who have already been treated with Rituxan, the only treatment left without resorting to chemotherapy is radioimmunotherapy with one of either Bexxar or Zevalin. Why is the government allowing Albertans to be second-class citizens, compared to the other provinces, in their access to the coverage of these drugs? Why are Alberta's people making different decisions?

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, this member is not a professional

medical person. Neither am I. We trust the medical profession, an expert panel that reviews these drugs, to determine whether or not they should be covered. If the member is suggesting that I, someone who does not know one drug from the other, should be overruling this expert panel, then I disagree with her.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Well, thank you. I think that the profession of registered nurses would probably take a little bit of a look back for not calling me a health care professional.

With the new changes to health care how does the minister determine which drugs will be publicly covered? You've sort of answered the question. I'd like a little bit more: exactly how is this determined, and who are they accountable to?

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I apologize because she is a member of the profession.

What I was inferring was that it is a physician who makes those calls, and we simply adhere to what the expert panel determines is a drug. Now, if the hon. member would like to submit to me the details of what she is asking, I would be more than pleased to follow up on this issue.

Utilities Consumer Advocate

Mr. Quest: Mr. Speaker, the Utilities Consumer Advocate was created in 2003, nearly five years ago, to help Albertans with their utility bills and contracts and to speak for consumers at regulatory hearings. Recently I've heard comments from some consumer groups that they don't have confidence in the Utilities Consumer Advocate to speak on their behalf. My questions are for the Minister of Service Alberta. After being in place for nearly five years, what has the Utilities Consumer Advocate accomplished on behalf of consumers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the past five years the Utilities Consumer Advocate has done a great job helping consumers with their questions, concerns, and complaints on utilities issues. Staff mediate disputes efficiently and quickly. Since the UCA was created, staff have helped more than 8,600 Albertans get their concerns about utility issues resolved and have answered nearly 50,000 telephone inquiries from consumers. The UCA also has a terrific website in place for consumers and has had nearly 2 million visits this year.

Mr. Quest: Mr. Speaker, is there any hard data that shows the effectiveness of the Utilities Consumer Advocate in helping consumers?

Mrs. Klimchuk: Mr. Speaker, the Utilities Consumer Advocate does regular quarterly customer satisfaction surveys. In its most recent survey over 65 per cent of consumers who used the UCA's services said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the staff's ability to negotiate a resolution of their concerns and assist with them. Over 80 per cent said they would recommend the Utilities Consumer Advocate to others.

Mr. Quest: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: what role does the Utilities Consumer Advocate plan to play in the regulatory process now that the new Utilities Commission is in place?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Utilities Consumer Advocate will continue to play the same role it always has: speaking for consumer interests at rate hearings. It will not only be the voice for consumers; other consumer groups can apply for intervenor status at rate hearings as well, and the advocate's office will work closely with other consumer groups to co-ordinate efforts as much as possible.

A new advisory governance board is in place overseeing the Utilities Consumer Advocate, with representatives from several consumer groups as well as Calgary, Edmonton, and rural Alberta, ensuring a broad range of consumer input and direction.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that was 106 questions and responses today. In 30 seconds from now we'll continue our Routine.

2:40

Presenting Petitions

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two petitions this afternoon to present to the Legislative Assembly, please. The first one reads:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to introduce legislation or amend regulations to give consumers in Alberta access, even if limited or controlled, to raw (unpasteurized) dairy products, particularly for health or medical reasons.

The second petition that I have, Mr. Speaker, is regarding pension funds. It reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to commission an independent and public inquiry into the Alberta Government's administration of or involvement with the Local Authorities Pension Plan, the Public Service Pension Plan, and the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund.

This petition is signed by over 80 individuals from all over the province.

Thank you.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Two petitions today. The first is signed by a number of individuals from Sherwood Park, Edmonton, Coaldale, Raymond, Lethbridge, and Calgary, all urging the government to convene an independent public inquiry into the local authorities pension plan, the public service pension plan, and the Alberta teachers' retirement fund.

The second petition, which I am presenting on behalf of my colleague the Leader of the Official Opposition, the MLA for Edmonton-Riverview, is also a petition signed by individuals living in Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer, and St. Albert. They, as well, are urging the government to convene a public inquiry into the LAPP, the public service pension plan, and the Alberta teachers' retirement fund.

Thank you.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(3) to advise the House that the government will be accepting written questions 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, and 19.

I further give notice that on Monday, June 2, 2008, written questions 13, 15, and 16 and motions for returns 6 and 7 will be dealt with.

Tabling Returns and Reports

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the Member for Calgary-Currie asked me about a three-year efficiency review of the nine health regions. I would like to table today five copies of reviews that have been completed of the seven rural health regions. It's some 1,500 pages in length, and I hope that the hon. member has a good weekend reading it.

He also asked if I would release the findings of a second review of regionalization that took place last summer. We have no idea what the hon. member is referring to, so I can't table it. If he would provide more specific information, I will try and meet his request.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the answers to written questions 8, 9, and 10.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table on behalf of citizens from the constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar letters that they have written to our office. These letters indicate that "Alberta's labour laws require major changes to encourage fairness to all working people in Alberta." The first one is signed by Marcia O'Connor. The second one is signed by Beverly Woodford. The third one is signed by Rob Biglin. The fourth one is signed by Linda Franklyn. The fifth one is signed by Mr. Kevin Levy. Rose Rozak has signed the sixth one. As well, Ian Nielsen has signed a letter, Setimio Nielsen has signed a letter as well as Sarah Allen. To conclude, Ada Eady has also signed a letter asking that we be fair to all working people in Alberta.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, do you have a tabling today?

Ms Blakeman: I do, indeed, sir. Two today. The first is a letter on concerns around labour laws and asking the government for five changes: first contract arbitration, full legal recognition of bargaining rights, one labour law for all unionized workers, automatic certification of workplaces, and legislation outlawing replacement workers. These letters are signed by C. Gerald Sutton, Anita Jenzena, Janniche Ask, Gulelat Taye Hosahena, Emmanuel Abebe, Thomas Schleiter, Gilbert Bouchard, Denise Audet, Carol McEwen, and Danielle Borozan.

My second tabling is the appropriate number of copies of an examination called Zapping Tenants: A Critical Analysis of Sub-metering in the Residential Rental Sector, prepared for the Low-Income Energy Network by the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario.

Thank you very much.

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

Ms Notley: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a recent Stats Canada report referred to in my questions today, which shows that about 20 per cent of Alberta's special-needs children are not receiving any extra support.

The second thing I'd like to table is the appropriate number of copies of letters from six Albertans concerned about the recent deaths of ducks in tar sands tailings ponds and urging the govern-

ment to improve their reclamation process. The letters are from Michelle Morris, Dorothy McKenna, Elizabeth Patitsas, and Kara Fleming of Lethbridge, Susan Thompson of Peace River, and Nelda Hinds of Edmonton.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, tablings?

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. Yes, Mr. Speaker. I am tabling five copies of my letter and a cheque dated February 14, '08, to the Lethbridge Interfaith Food Bank. As per my pledge of April 2, '07, half of my indexed pay raise is donated monthly to a food bank until AISH is similarly indexed. This particular food bank last year supplied 5,354 hampers, and they looked after 7,258 adults and 6,114 children.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the chair is pleased to table with the Assembly the annual report of the Chief Electoral Officer for the calendar year 2006. This is pursuant to section 4(2) of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act. The report also includes the office's financial statements for the fiscal years ended March 31, 2006, and March 31, 2007.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Ms Evans, Minister of Finance and Enterprise, pursuant to the Northern Alberta Development Council Act the Northern Alberta Development Council annual report 2006-2007.

Projected Government Business

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. According to Standing Order 7(6) I would now request that the Government House Leader please share with us the projected government business for the week commencing June 2.

Thank you.

2:50

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's sort of like predicting the price of oil. I haven't been right so far, but here goes. The difference being that on the price of oil many prognosticators are consulted and they haven't been right either; in this case there are no prognosticators to consult.

On Monday, June 2, at 8:30 p.m. under Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole on bills 8, 9, 14, 15, 17, 20, and 21, second reading of bills 7, 16, 19, and as per the Order Paper.

On Tuesday, June 3, in the afternoon under Government Bills and Orders, depending on progress, of course, second reading on bills 16, 19, 25, and 26, third reading on bills 9, 14, 15, 17, 20, 21, and as per the Order Paper. In the evening the same list of bills depending on progress in the afternoon.

On Wednesday, June 4, in the afternoon under Government Bills and Orders third reading for Bill 8, Committee of the Whole on bills 16, 19, 25, second reading on Bill 26, and as per the Order Paper. In the evening the same lineup depending on progress.

On Thursday, June 5, in the afternoon under Government Bills and Orders third reading on bills 16, 19, and 25 and Committee of the Whole on Bill 26, depending on progress, and as per the Order Paper.

**Orders of the Day
Government Motions**

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Committee Membership Changes

16. Mr. Hancock moved:
Be it resolved that the following changes to
- (a) the Standing Committee on Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund be approved: that Mrs. Forsyth replace Mr. Rogers as chair, that Mr. Denis replace Mr. Amery, that Mr. Johnston replace Mrs. McQueen;
 - (b) the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices be approved: that Mr. Mitzel replace Mr. Prins as chair, that Mr. Lund replace Mr. McFarland as deputy chair, that Mr. Bhullar replace Mr. Prins, that Mr. Lukaszuk replace Mr. McFarland;
 - (c) the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved: that Mr. Griffiths replace Mr. Lund as deputy chair, that Mr. Sandhu replace Mr. Lund;
 - (d) the Standing Committee on Private Bills be approved: that Mr. Dallas replace Mr. Campbell, that Mr. Xiao replace Mr. Elniski;
 - (e) the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing be approved: that Mr. Amery replace Mr. Boutilier, that Mr. Berger replace Mr. Weadick, that Ms DeLong replace Mr. Marz, that Mrs. Forsyth replace Mr. Mitzel, that Dr. Sherman replace Mr. Vandermeer, that Mr. McFarland replace Mr. Griffiths;
 - (f) the Select Special Ethics Commissioner Search Committee be approved: that Mr. Campbell replace Mr. Prins as chair, that Mr. Marz replace Mr. McFarland as deputy chair, that Mr. Webber replace Mr. McFarland, that Mr. Mitzel replace Mr. Horne, that Mr. Lukaszuk replace Mr. Prins.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The motion is fully printed in the Order Paper. I would not purport to read through it in detail. Suffice to say that the resolution proposes to make some changes to standing committees of the House. These are the Standing Committee on the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, the Standing Committee on Private Bills, the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing, and the Select Special Ethics Commissioner Search Committee.

The proposed changes are changes of members essentially from the government side. It just realigns some of the workload for private members in the House. I would indicate that I did approach members of the opposition, both parties in the opposition, as to whether they had any changes and was advised, I believe, that they did not. So it does just reflect changes from private members on the government side.

I would ask for the support of the House so that those committees could be repopulated and up and running.

The Speaker: Shall I call the question, or is there other participation?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Government Motion 16 carried]

**Government Bills and Orders
Third Reading**

**Bill 22
Appropriation Act, 2008**

The Speaker: The hon. President of the Treasury Board.

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to move third reading of Bill 22, the Appropriation Act, 2008.

Back on February 22 we started the deliberations on the budget, and we've since spent 60 hours reviewing and discussing it plus the time we've spent on supplementary and interim supply. Although it would be safe to say the budget is a very large document, I think it is also fair to say it has received a thorough vetting from our members, certainly, as well as the members of the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, the budget is a document that talks about money. Indeed, we need to keep in mind that we tax Albertans' money and not their morals. However, we hold the values that Albertans have and, indeed, their moral compass very clearly in front of the decisions we make when we talk about the pressures we face as a government. While we're not in a perfect world and it's probably not a perfect budget for all in the Assembly, I would like to assure the members of this Assembly and, indeed, all Albertans that this is a sound, fair, and solid budget, that will serve us well into the future.

I want to thank all the hon. members who chose to partake in the discussions of the budget, and I certainly look forward to third reading of the bill. Thank you.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It certainly is a pleasure to have the opportunity to participate this afternoon in the final debate on Bill 22. I listened with keen interest to the hon. President of the Treasury Board in his brief summation of Bill 22.

When we think that there are a little over 60 hours of public debate on a \$37 billion budget, I certainly would say that that is not adequate. We all know the size of government in Alberta now, how much we're spending per capita. This is a government that's spending significant amounts of the taxpayers' money. When we look historically at where the budget was 10 years ago or 11 years ago and the fact that it's more than doubled in that amount of time and we see the size of government – sometimes it shrinks, sometimes it expands – you have to wonder where the fiscal discipline is of this government.

When we talk about the budget and we look at all of the discussions that went on behind closed doors to determine the amount which each respective department is getting, we say to ourselves: now, that would be interesting, to have a look at the Treasury Board minutes, which would determine, for instance, how much the Health and Wellness budget was to receive. It would also let us decide how much advance warning there was of the major policy shift from nine health regions now down to one. And the absorption of the Cancer Board and other health boards into this superministry: how much discussion there was in advance of that.

The Treasury Board minutes are not public documents, Mr. Speaker, and I think they should be. I think the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre or the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood should be able to trot down to the library and have a look at those minutes for themselves and see what discussions went on behind closed doors to determine what amounts of money were to be spent where.

Mr. Snelgrove: If we did that before the budget, why would we have a budget debate?

Mr. MacDonald: Now, the hon. minister says that if they did that before the budget, what would be the reason for having a budget debate?

The Speaker: Actually, the hon. minister has not been recognized. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has been recognized. If he speaks through the chair and everybody else listens, we go on very quickly.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. You're absolutely right, Mr. Speaker. He's just distracting me. You're absolutely right.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the budget and we look at the 60 hours, it would be more than \$500 million every 30 minutes of public debate. It's not nearly adequate.

We look at the disclosure that is used by this government. If we look, Mr. Speaker, at the annual reports that are issued – and the annual reports will come out in September or October of this year – the financial disclosure of this government has to be improved. I asked questions in the budget process why in the budget estimates the actuals from the last fiscal year were different in some cases from what would appear as disclosure in the annual report. Essentially, the annual reports, the actual figures that were quoted there, are different from what is listed in the budget estimates for this year for the same fiscal year. I never did get an answer. I don't know why. In some cases it may have been as a result of a department being divided – in the cases of Infrastructure and Transportation that may have been the case – but there was no effort made to date to explain that. That was also applicable to Tourism, Parks and Recreation.

3:00

Mr. Speaker, you can see that there are questions. There are valid questions around the whole budget process. If we go back for a moment to the budget day and look at *The Right Plan for Today & Tomorrow*, as it was called, there was no mention that we would take the eraser to eight health boards and expand the size of the East Central health authority to essentially what are the boundaries of this province. There was no mention of that. There has been no mention since then of how much money we will save or how much time will be taken off the waiting times for citizens who are waiting for much-needed care.

There are no answers to the questions, which are: how will this anticipated change or planned change affect wait times? How will this reduce the cost of health care? There are no answers to that. We went through this 60-hour process for this 37 billion plus dollar tab, and when we started, there was no talk whatsoever of going from nine to one health authority, but now we have it. What went on behind closed doors? Who knew what, when? These are valid questions.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Now, if we look at the economic outlook, Mr. Speaker, things have changed. The price of natural gas has changed. The price of crude oil has changed. The price of bitumen has even bounced around a little bit. The value of the Canadian dollar has changed. A lot of things have changed but not this government's attitude.

I don't know which department we should use as an example, Mr. Speaker, but let's look at Employment and Immigration. If we are to have fair workplaces in this province, then if a deal is signed by

a worker, they need to know that every two weeks or every month they're going to get their fair wages. How is all this working? We seem to be interested in taking more and more temporary foreign workers into this country and into this province, but we are not giving them the protection that they deserve.

Now, we have the Employment Standards Code, Mr. Speaker. We have the Labour Relations Code. We had a discussion earlier on how we could improve the Employment Standards Code. There's no reason in the world why six months after there was a violation of the code, the employer cannot be charged. If there is a proven violation and it happened eight months ago, it's too late. That's why I think that when we look at the government's plans, we need to have a careful assessment of just exactly how much money we're dedicating to protecting the rights of workers. The majority of workers in this province, over 70 per cent, rely on the Employment Standards Code for basic protection and to ensure that the wages that they sign for and the wages that they earn are the wages that they get on their bimonthly or monthly paycheques.

Now, we're changing the Labour Relations Code, and we're leaving the Employment Standards Code alone. I don't understand why, particularly after we had this discussion earlier in budget debates about what should be done. The hon. minister was quite agreeable to the fact that perhaps we should look at this six-month limitation and put it to one year if not, perhaps, two years back. If the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre was not receiving her fair and just wages, why should she only be allowed to go back and ask for that to be corrected for the past six months and not the whole thing? That's just wrong. It's totally wrong. That's why it puzzles me why we would be contemplating opening up the Labour Relations Code.

The government will say themselves in the budget documents, Mr. Speaker, that we have very stable labour relations in this province. If you compare us to the rest of the country, we have the least number of days lost to job action in the entire country, I believe. There could be one jurisdiction that's a little lower than us – I'm not quite sure – but we have very stable labour relations for those employees who are working in a unionized environment. Now, there are those that would say: well, there are restrictions and limitations put on them, so many that they can't even enjoy the democratic rights that other Canadians have in the unionized workplaces.

When we look at the majority of Albertans who rely on the Employment Standards Code, this budget certainly does not address their needs. When we look at the Employment Standards Code and we look at the labour market opinions which are used to attract large numbers of temporary foreign workers into this country, we would have to wonder why a temporary foreign worker is told, with the labour market opinion, that after 40 hours they will receive overtime for any hours they work, that they're entitled to X amount of dollars per hour, that there's going to be no piecework, that there's going to be no contract work, that there's going to be an hourly wage paid. When that temporary foreign worker arrives here and gets to work and gets their first paycheque, suddenly they realize that it's not 40 hours and then overtime; it's 44. Or in some cases there's some sort of other deal struck or there's an interpretation that there was a deal struck. This is wrong. It has to be corrected. If we sign a deal, we've got to stick to it. It's up to the government through the employment standards office to ensure that that is done.

Another issue that I have with employment standards is that when there is a complaint made to that office, in some cases it turns out after the employment standards office rules, "Well, the worker was not treated fairly. You did not give the wages or provide the benefits that were outlined in the labour market opinion," that regardless of that the employer with deep pockets launches a civil action, and the

temporary foreign worker, who came here penniless, who has very limited resources, has no way to defend himself. It's wrong, and I'm disappointed that it's going on. It's been proven to me time after time, unfortunately, that it's a practice here, and it's up to the employment standards office to ensure that this does not continue.

3:10

Now, if we have a quick look at the budget for the employment standards office, we will see that there has been a modest increase in resources allocated. But when we look at the total number of temporary foreign workers who are coming into this province – and the government has plans for more – it's obviously not working. I don't know whose interests are being served here, but it is not the interests of innocent people from abroad who are coming here with the hope of improving the financial situation of their family. Their interests are not being served here, and I'm disappointed.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I believe I will cede the floor. But when we look at Bill 22, and we look at the overall attitude that this government has, I think we need to have some consideration towards fiscal respect. We can't continue to spend the kind of money we are right now. We have to look after the interests of the citizens, and I'm talking about very modest amounts. It would take maybe in the order of \$500,000 to \$700,000 to tune up the employment standards office.

We look at some of the largesse that this government provides. Horse Racing Alberta is one example. We've got our priorities wrong, and even the high price that we're currently enjoying – and I use the word “enjoying” – for our conventional crude oil production and our natural gas production is not going to last. We need to be very cautious of where we're spending our money. We need to put the interests of the citizens first and foremost and get the maximum benefit for our budget that way because we certainly cannot afford to see these big Progressive Conservative budgets like we've seen in the last couple of years.

It wouldn't surprise me next year, Mr. Speaker, that there will be a significant reduction by this government in spending. That's the direction that I'm anticipating that we will go. I'm like the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. Predicting the price of oil and gas and which direction it's going to go in is a very risky business. I think we should budget more wisely, and we should save more prudently.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Subject to section 29(2)(a), I wonder if I might ask some questions of the hon. member?

The Deputy Speaker: No. That is after the first two speakers, 20 minutes, and then you can have that order.

Mr. Mason: Oh, I see. Okay.

Ms Blakeman: Section 29(2)(a) only applies to the third speaker and thereafter.

Mr. Mason: Okay. The third speaker. I guess that's me. Okay. Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

Well, it may come as a great shock to members opposite with respect to this bill that I will not be supporting the government's budget. I've given this very careful consideration. There are some good things in the budget to be sure. But in the end, Mr. Speaker, I can't escape the fact that this government is driving the province of

Alberta to ruin, and it's my responsibility as a member of the Legislature and as the leader of the NDP opposition to stand up against the direction of this government.

Mr. Speaker, back in 1993, when the Conservative government was re-elected under then Premier Klein, the big issue that the government wanted to address was the whole question of the debt, the deficit of the government, and the financial debt that they had incurred in this province. I want to say that that debt and those ongoing deficits were a creation of the same Conservative Party government under Premier Don Getty. The debt had accumulated and then created a great deal of concern, so the government of then Premier Klein took it upon itself to reinvent itself as a fiscally responsible government that was going to get Alberta back on track financially.

At the time the accumulated debt of the province of Alberta was \$22 billion or \$23 billion, Mr. Speaker, and the government set about dealing with this debt through a number of measures. They laid off health care workers. They closed hospitals. They restricted the ability of health care workers in laundry and so on to freely collectively bargain for their wages and working conditions through the means of privatization. They privatized services on a wholesale basis.

They privatized liquor stores. The Alberta Liquor Control Board at that time, Mr. Speaker, had made many investments in stores to provide the quality of services to Albertans that they'd come to expect, and these were sold off at a dollar for a thousand dollars' worth or ten thousand dollars' worth of profit. The government took enormous losses selling off assets of the Liquor Control Board and developing a privatized system of liquor.

They blew up the Calgary General hospital. They closed beds. They went at our health care system like a wrecking crew, Mr. Speaker, and they caused untold damage and untold suffering among Albertans as they tore through our health care system in a bid to cut costs. They eliminated full-day kindergarten. They tried to eliminate all kinds of other services in our health care system. Teachers lost their jobs. They required provincial employees to take a 5 per cent wage cut. When they were done, the outstanding public services that we had enjoyed in this province were devastated.

I think that there's a lot of research that's been done, Mr. Speaker, to show that much of that was unnecessary. In fact, the Getty government, which was also a Progressive Conservative government, had gone a long way to bringing costs under control. So the question then is: why was this done by the Klein regime? Well, what were the results? Once they got the deficits eliminated and were well on their way to paying off the financial debt of the province, they decided that they were going to deliver large-scale corporate tax cuts. Now, let's keep in mind, Mr. Speaker, that, in fact, it was the ordinary working people, the average families of this province, that had borne the burden of dealing with the debt. But when the government was well on its way to getting the debt reduced, did they return what the average families had lost in this province? No. They gave special compensation, I would call it, to the corporations.

3:20

I was just a newly elected MLA, and I went to an Edmonton Chamber of Commerce luncheon to hear then Treasurer Steve West speak. He talked about the tax changes that he wanted to bring about, and among them was a reduction of the corporate tax rate in this province from 15 per cent down to 8 per cent; in other words, cutting corporate taxes almost in half. How could he afford to do that? Well, the way he could afford to do that – and keep in mind that this was before the oil prices that we see today, Mr. Speaker –

was because they had cut health care. They had privatized a number of government services. They had cut education. They'd gutted social services in this province. So they'd saved themselves a great deal of money, and they wanted to pass those savings on to their corporate friends, the same corporations that support the Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta to the tune of millions of dollars every year.

I just wanted to mention while I'm at it, Mr. Speaker, if I can find the report of the electoral officer which we just received – here it is – that the political contributions received by the Alberta Progressive Conservative Party in 2006 amounted to \$1,911,000. But that's not the whole story. If you look to the page where it talks about the contributions received by PC constituency associations, there's another \$900,000 there. So the total contribution that has been received by the Progressive Conservative Association, you know, totals well over \$2 million in one year.

Now, if you break that down, Mr. Speaker, you'll find that the PC Association received in small contributions – that is, amounts of \$375 or less – \$180,000. If you compare that to the New Democratic Party, small contributions from individuals were \$280,000. It's interesting that the NDP got 50 per cent more in small contributions from individuals than the Progressive Conservative Party. But that's also not the total story because large contributions from corporations gave the PCs \$1,240,000, which is how they won the election.

But I want to get back to the symbiotic relationship between big corporations in this province and the Progressive Conservative Party because we've seen through the dealings with royalties, Mr. Speaker, that that relationship is highlighted even greater. This province has recently gone through a royalty review, as have many other jurisdictions in the world that have petroleum resources. With the advent of \$100 a barrel oil most jurisdictions in the world have reassessed their position with respect to royalties, and what they've done is very interesting.

Before the royalty review Alberta had almost the very lowest royalties of any jurisdiction in the world. After the review and with the new royalty regime that the Premier put in place, we are just slightly above the bottom, and in our collection of royalties we are below jurisdictions like Norway or Britain or Nigeria or Russia or Angola or many producing states in the United States, including, of course, Alaska. That means that as oil approaches \$130 a barrel or more – and there may be a correction; I don't know – Alberta retains far less of the value of the resources that belong to the people of this province than other jurisdictions in the world. Virtually all jurisdictions in the world get more revenue.

That means, Mr. Speaker, that as we go forward into the future, we are shortchanging Albertans and, more particularly, we are shortchanging future generations of Albertans because that money will leave this province. It'll go to Texas, it'll go to Ohio, it will go, you know, wherever, and it won't be available to make sure that future generations of Albertans have the same standard of living that we do.

The government, in three major areas, I think, has benefited their corporate sponsors at the expense of the people of Alberta. First of all, in the privatization of services, including P3s, I'm sure we're going to see a lot more privatized health care coming up. Things like licence registries, liquor stores – the list goes on and on – these have been transferred to their friends in business at the expense of the ordinary citizens and the taxpayers of this province. Secondly, there have been dramatic reductions in corporate income tax. Mr. Speaker, this takes place at a time when corporations in Alberta and elsewhere are earning record profits. They don't need tax cuts because they're making billions and billions of dollars in profits.

Thirdly, by having one of the most favourable royalty regimes anywhere in the world – and by that I mean favourable to the oil corporations that do not own the oil but profit greatly from it.

The second major point that I want to make, Mr. Speaker, has to do with the government's policy with respect to growth in this province. Now, I'm not one of those who believe that the government didn't have a plan. I knew all along that the government had a plan. They had a plan to go full speed ahead on developing Alberta's tar sands as a major source of petroleum for the world market and a major source of revenue for their corporate friends and as well, to be fair, to the government of Alberta.

Now, we saw a few years ago the virtual elimination of all environmental regulations around the tar sands area north of Fort McMurray. We've seen a consistent policy of the government to undermine legitimate unions operating in that area, including the building trades area. They are cosy with the Merit people, they're cosy with CLAC and have done whatever possible to place hurdles in the way of legitimate trade unions in this province. In terms of the environment they want a very low-cost environment for companies, with minimal environmental regulations. They want a low-cost regime when it comes to unionization. They have never followed their own rhetoric when it comes to workers' health and safety, so they place workers' lives in jeopardy because they don't ensure that there are safe workplaces, and then they bring in temporary foreign workers.

One of the first things that this Premier said after getting the leadership of the Conservative Party . . . [Mr. Mason's speaking time expired]

3:30

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, we have Standing Order 29(2)(a), which allows for five minutes of questions and comments.

First, I would like to recognize the hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member just made a comment, and I'd like to get some clarity. He said the reason that this side of the House is in power is because of the financial contributions made by everyday Albertans. You know, in my constituency I door-knocked for 28 days, and it didn't cost me any money. But the paper candidate that the NDs had didn't show up to one house, didn't put up one sign, and didn't come out to any forums, which didn't cost any money.

Mr. Griffiths: Same here.

Mr. VanderBurg: For Battle River-Wainwright, too. Hey. Paper candidates. I'm just wondering if that was the policy of the NDP across the way, that they paper candidates throughout rural Alberta that never showed up. You know, is it our blame or is it the blame of the party or is it your policy to run paper candidates?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, well, you know, I think the Conservative candidate in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood this time actually did make a little bit of an effort. In the previous election I don't think the Conservative candidate even set foot in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. He was, I understand, a businessman from Sherwood Park. So, you know, it's interesting that the Progressive Conservative Party has paper candidates, or parachute candidates, whatever you want to call them. It may surprise you, hon. member, but there are certain parts of this province where Progressive Conservative candidates don't do very well and aren't particularly welcome, and they have, in fact, very, very weak constituency associations with

very few members, and Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood happens to be one of those constituencies.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much. The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood was starting to comment in reaction to something that he'd been talking about the Premier having said or having laid out, and I'm wondering if I could hear the rest of that.

Mr. Mason: With great pleasure, hon. member. The Premier basically said: we're not going to put the foot on the brake of the economy of the province. The result is that we have an economy that's surging almost in an uncontrolled way, and the government has to increase its spending very dramatically in this budget in order to try and keep up, but in the long run I don't believe that this can be sustained. They've increased operating spending by 9.7 per cent. Health and Wellness has gone up 9.4 to \$11.9 billion, Education has gone up 4.3 per cent, including, you know, \$5.2 billion, and so on.

We saw it today in question period. The government is falling behind in police officers. The government is falling behind in its ability to provide court services to people. You know, people can't get health care in a timely fashion because of this misguided priority of the Conservative government of growth at all costs. We have to bring in temporary foreign workers because they insist on building nine or 10 of these giant projects at a time instead of doing the sensible thing as Peter Lougheed, I think the last good Conservative Premier, suggests, which is that there's no reason to build more than one at a time.

We should be measuring our growth in this province, hon. member, and pacing it to ensure full employment for Albertans. By all means we can welcome people from other countries as immigrants. We can welcome workers from other parts of the country, but the goal of the government should be guided by the principle of maintaining full employment in this province. That's a reasonable goal, but they've pushed way ahead past that. Why is that? Well, I think the main reason that they've done that is to facilitate the direction coming out of Washington to provide a secure energy source for the United States to replace the riskier ones that have been made even worse by the Bush administration's militaristic adventures in Iraq, and I think that means that Albertans pay a heavy price.

This rapid growth has created enormous shortages of housing. It has created an increase in homelessness. It has created an increase in this budget beyond what otherwise would have been necessary. The infrastructure gap is enormous in this province, Mr. Speaker, and what's going to happen in 10 years or 15 years, when the price of oil drops or we can't sell our oil anymore? That's the question.

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

Mr. Fawcett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since I was elected to this Assembly, I've done a lot of thinking, a lot of thinking about why there are so many Conservative members and so few opposition members. Well, this debate about the budget has given me a very clear answer. The budget brought forward by this government was visionary, and it was strategic. It invested in areas where, during the campaign, people from all across this province, and particularly people in my riding, said that we needed to invest. I don't know if the opposition members were not listening to these people, but it is obvious that they weren't because they got so few elected.

I want to commend the Minister of Finance and Enterprise and the hon. President of the Treasury Board for bringing forward a budget

that does reflect the vision articulated by this government and by this party through the election period. Obviously, it's a vision that was wholeheartedly endorsed by citizens right across this province.

There are a few areas. This is about fiscal responsibility. I'll tell you what fiscal responsibility is about. It's about investing strategically. Throughout all of the budget deliberations I've never heard one strategic direction for anything out of the opposition's mouth. It's always: not enough money here, not enough money there, but we're spending too much money. I don't get it, and I don't think Albertans got it either during the election. Okay?

It's about strategically investing. I have heard the comments about shifting money around. I haven't heard about where money is shifting around. To me this doesn't make sense, and that's why Albertans wholeheartedly endorsed a large mandate for this party.

Education. We had strategic investments in education. Just in the paper today, in the *Calgary Sun*, we had the chair of the Catholic school board comment that this budget was optimistic and that they're hiring 49 new teachers in that school jurisdiction. I don't know what's wrong with that because I think that's what people were calling for.

Health care. We've seen increases in health care, not substantial, huge amounts of increases but fiscally responsible increases along with systemic changes that are going to sustain our health care costs into the future. I think that's very, very important. I know that when I was going door to door, that was the number one priority of the majority of people that I talked to.

The environment. I think we're doing the right thing. We're investing strategically in environmental technologies. This isn't about trying to lay the blame on big oil companies or big corporations. This is about trying to make a difference in the world that we're in.

There's a story that I want to tell. When I was door-knocking, I was at the door of a woman, and she had the sign of an opposition party on her lawn. However, I still went to the door. I thought, you know, in fairness she deserves to ask me some questions. I went to her door, and we got into a good discussion. She certainly perpetuated the perceptions of the opposition parties as to: our environment is being wrecked by the big oil companies. I said: "You know what? I think it's a little bit more complex an issue than that." I said, "I think that the oil and gas companies are certainly only providing a service that people like yourself and myself are demanding on an increased basis." I said, "Gas prices are going up, and that doesn't seem to be stopping us from purchasing those resources." I turned around to her – there was a big Suburban out in front – and I said, "Is that your vehicle?" She said, "Yeah." I said, "Well, that's my point exactly."

3:40

This isn't about big oil and gas companies. This is about trying to systematically change the way that we're doing things now, and that takes time. If you want to talk about CO₂ emissions and greenhouse gas emissions, and global warming, well, this isn't something that happened overnight. If we want real solutions, we can't look for overnight solutions. This is something that this government is taking a realistic approach on, and I think we've seen that in the budget with the investment in green technologies.

The economy. We talk about sustaining this province and the opportunities for everybody. Well, the foundation of everything that we do, whether it's investing in health care, whether it's investing in more teachers, is about the economy. It's about making sure that people have opportunities to help themselves, first of all, and it's about making sure that the government has the revenue to provide those programs that Albertans expect. You cannot do that when your economy is not functioning at full capacity.

I think more than anything what Albertans want is an investment

in the people, and I want to commend this government for committing to getting rid of health care premiums in the new year, because that is going to help people. That's going to put money in the pockets of people and in the pockets of families so that they can go out and make decisions based on what's in their best interests. I don't think that it's the government's role to tell people how to spend their money.

The last thing is that because we have such a small opposition and because I am a new member, in doing this thinking about what the outcome of the election means, I really believe that it's my role as a private member in this Legislature to provide some sort of rational opposition because we're not getting it from the other parties. So I do want to make a couple of comments about areas I think we could improve upon.

One is that when it comes to seniors, I think we could do some new thinking about how we're supporting our seniors because this is a population that's going to grow over the next few decades. When I went door to door, talking to my constituents, a lot of the seniors in our area were saying: what can you do for us? As much as I like cutting health care premiums, for the most part that doesn't help our senior population. So if we can continue to look at better ways. I think some of the changes that we've made in our health care system will certainly support that as far as going to the one health region and making sure that that money gets from the provincial treasury to the long-term and continuing care organizations.

The second thing that I think we need to do is that we need to stop listening to the opposition as much because, obviously, part of their solution for everything is to spend more money. I think we have a tremendous opportunity in Alberta, and that opportunity is to really look at the way we do things, not how much money we spend on things. As a new member this is certainly one of my motivating factors here in putting my name forward to sit in this Legislature.

I think Alberta has the opportunity to be leaders in how we do things. That means in health care. That means on the environment. That means in education. These are all the areas that this government has strategically looked at and strategically delivered on in this budget. Mr. Speaker, that's why I want to commend this government for delivering this budget and why I think Albertans wholeheartedly endorsed this government just a few months ago.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) allows for five minutes.

Mr. Mason: Oh, yes. I'd be delighted to ask a question, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Mason: It was interesting to listen to the hon. member talk about how it's a good thing that he's there in order to provide rational opposition to the government since, obviously, the opposition parties were incapable of doing so. He chose the example of health care and seniors. Then his opposition, that he put forward as a shining example for all members of the House, was basically to say that the government was doing a good job by creating one super-ministry. I guess my question for the hon. member is: do you actually have something to say in opposition, given that that's your self-defined role?

Mr. Fawcett: Well, certainly, I know that when I went door to door, people in my riding wanted me to talk about the issues that mattered to them. The hon. member for the first 10 minutes talked about

campaign donations – I don't know how that relates to Bill 22, which has to do with the government budget – and then talked about stuff that a Premier did 15 years ago. I'll tell you what: I know that my constituents want me to address the real issues, not stuff that happened 15 years ago and not some irrelevant debate about campaign finances.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again to the hon. member. The hon. member talked about his experience door to door. He sort of went into a mini historical vignette with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. However, in the budget estimates that we just debated, on page 366 we see an item for the horse racing and breeding renewal program of \$48 million. If you add it up over a period of years, it's a very generous subsidy. Did the citizens in his community have any questions for him regarding the Progressive Conservative Party and why they are so generous to the horse-racing community and so mean to Alberta seniors?

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

Mr. Fawcett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, I did have one comment on the horse-racing industry, and that was: "This is an important part of Alberta's history, and we're glad that you're supporting it. This is why I'm voting for your party. The other parties don't seem to comprehend how important this is to the history of Alberta." Certainly, that was a positive comment. I did not hear any negative comments about that particular item that the hon. member is talking about.

As far as seniors: yeah, I listened to the seniors. That's why I'm bringing those issues forward instead of meaningless issues such as what happened 15 years ago and campaign financing and who's donating and who's not.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A comment and then a question, if I might. The comment is simply that this budget is largely focused on cleaning up the mess created by the Conservative government 15 years ago, and that's why it's relevant.

My question, though, is to follow up on my colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar's question about horse racing. Subsidies to the horse-racing industry over the past number of years have totalled over a hundred million dollars of direct subsidies to one particular industry. Does the hon. member not think that the government should get out of the business of being in business?

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

Mr. Fawcett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if the hon. member has the moral authority to be talking about government getting out of the business of business because it seems like all of their platform is based on that. However, I would say that if the last 15 years were such a shamble, I'm not sure that we would have gotten the result in this House that we did two months ago.

Mr. VanderBurg: Just a comment to the member. I wondered if he knew that actually the agreement between the province and Horse Racing Alberta was an agreement that if Horse Racing Alberta earned so much, the province would earn so much, too. They provide the venue; we get in the hundred million dollars as well. So we can distribute that over to seniors' facilities.

I was just wondering if the member knew that the Member from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood used to be on the Northlands board and knows this stuff very well.

The Deputy Speaker: We've just completed five minutes of questions and answers.

Does any other member wish to debate on Bill 22?

Ms Notley: I have just a few comments to add to the many interesting comments that we've heard so far this afternoon. The previous member that was speaking on main point for the government was talking about at one point sort of the strategy that is somehow embedded in this budget document.

3:50

An Hon. Member: And the moral authority.

Ms Notley: Yeah, there was discussion about moral authority as well, but he talked about the issue of strategy and that somehow this budget reflected some type of strategy. I would say that this government could probably acquire more strategy had it perhaps consulted with Custer for about five or 10 minutes before the beginning of that particular battle because there is no strategy in this document.

What this document is, what this budget is, is a chaotic, careening vehicle. I actually could imagine a vehicle careening down a highway full of potholes and barely staying on the highway, a vehicle that, of course, has to stop quite regularly for gas because the price of gas is so high, but then when you're in the gas station you can't actually drink the water because it's not drinkable. Nonetheless, you're drinking the water. You have to go back to find a bottle of water because you can't drink the water. You get back in your vehicle and you careen back down this road, barely on it because of the potholes, and that's kind of what this budget looks like.

The first concern that I have has already been discussed a number of times, and that relates to how it facilitates the ongoing pace of development that we are seeing in this province and how there is no willingness in this government to tap on the brakes at all, and then at the same time to re-examine its sources of revenue and to increase those sources of revenue where it has the opportunity.

Over the course of the last few weeks, you know, we've had conversations about housing. We've had conversations about rental accommodation shortages. We've had conversations about long-term care bed shortages. We've had conversations about the few hospital beds and the shortage of staff in the health care system. We've had conversations about the delays in the courts. We've had conversations about the lack of nurses. We've had conversations about the frequent and systematic abuse of temporary foreign workers.

In all of those conversations what we hear back is: "Well, you know, things are happening really fast in Alberta and we've got all of these new people coming to Alberta and you can't possibly expect us to keep up with the needs of Albertans. Of course there's going to be a shortage of housing and of course we're not going to have enough nurses and of course we're not going to have enough police officers because, you know, we've just got this pace of development. How can you possibly expect us to keep up?"

So, yeah, there's a lot of money in this budget, but it's money that's being frantically spent to keep up, not successfully, with the current demands on government services and to catch up with the many, many failed decisions and failed actions that we've had to suffer through over the last 15, 20 years. To anyone who suggests that it's not relevant to look back 15 years or 25 years or however long, I mean, there's the old adage, you know, that those who do not know their history are doomed to repeat its mistakes. Our view is

that the context is quite relevant to this discussion here. We've got this budget where we're just sort of frantically spending money left, right, and centre, but we're really not planning for the future, and we don't have a plan for when the economy takes a turn.

The other thing, of course, we're not doing in this budget is that we're not addressing the real costs around the development that we've got in our province, in particular with respect to the environment. We are daily creating a footprint on our province which will take generations and generations and generations, at least 10 generations if we were to stop right now, to clean up. We have no comprehensive plan in place to deal with that. We have no comprehensive plan to create a transition from this devastating-to-the-environment road that we are on in terms of our industrial development. We have no plans in place to comprehensively address that. We have no plans in place to protect the environment in a meaningful way. Globally this government's position on the environment and environmental standards makes the Conservative government look progressive, which truly is quite a remarkable feat.

Overall, all that being said, the other thing about this budget is that what it really does is kind of create a playground for international corporations and oil companies, and at the same time it sort of sporadically and chaotically buys off the people of Alberta for short periods of time without really planning for their future. It doesn't in the long term create any kind of comprehensive improvement in the quality of life of Albertans. It doesn't address the really fundamental affordability needs that most Albertans are struggling with right now. You know, regardless of the pace of development, regardless of how much money the government thinks is coming through the door, most Albertans are struggling daily with some significant affordability issues. This budget does not deal with those affordability issues.

A perfect example – and this one is a good one because it so clearly links into the issue of planning for the future – is the plan in this budget with respect to advanced education. We have some of the highest tuition rates in the country. We have no plan to bring down those tuition rates to make education more accessible. We have the lowest rate of attendance at university in the country. Does that not seem weird? We continuously pat ourselves on the back for being such a wealthy, progressive province, yet we have the lowest rate of attendance at university. We have all this money, and we're not managing to make tuition fees go down in any kind of significant way, in any way that would make a difference in terms of the affordability for people being able to go to university.

Very critically linked to that is the issue of affordable housing just with respect to students. Once again this government is unprepared to take measures to substantially increase the affordability of attending university for those people who are struggling to pay rent of \$1,100 or \$1,200 or \$1,400 or \$1,500 or \$1,800 a month. We're not seeing any kind of comprehensive plan that increases the affordability of vehicles which will help all Albertans plan for a more healthy economic future. We don't see that in this plan.

We don't see any kind of significant attempt to repair the damage done to our social services network by this government in the 90s. To the member who gets upset when we talk about the 90s: I'm sorry, but we've just got to go back there because the damage that was done by the decisions made by this government is damage that we will be paying for for years and years and years and years to come. So like it or not, we're going to have to keep talking about it because we're going to have to pay to fix it for years and years and years to come.

One of the areas that was most hard hit when this government decided we had to all, you know, tighten our belts and pay off the debt that they had created was the area of our social services network. We're now seeing a situation, as we've discussed a lot in

this House, where the people who provide the most important services, to the people who need them the most, who are least able to provide for themselves otherwise, can't be found because we can't pay them enough. We are paying them at roughly half of what the market suggests we should be paying those people. As I've discussed before, we have disabled Albertans who are living in, if they're lucky, their own apartments, oftentimes, you know, in dark, dank basements suites because that's all they can possibly afford anymore, who are waiting 24 hours to have a diaper changed.

You hear these fabulous stories from the member over there about door-knocking. I remember knocking on the door of a woman in an apartment that had nothing to do with disabled services. It was just your standard apartment building close to Bonnie Doon mall. I knocked on the door and I went in and I was overwhelmed by the smell of urine. This woman had a wheelchair. She was completely incontinent. She couldn't make her own food. There were a number of other health problems, but those were the critical ones. She was unable to find someone who would come to her house to provide these services. She simply was unable. She would go for days without having somebody come in. Then she would end up calling community health, and a home care nurse would come in. Well, okay. The home care nurse, as we all know, is making roughly a hundred thousand dollars a year. She would come in, but she would only come in for a very short period of time. She couldn't come in anywhere nearly as frequently as this woman needed. As a result she wasn't bathed, the smell in the house was overwhelming, and she couldn't get out. This is how we are treating the people in this province who most need us to be there for them.

4:00

There is no plan in this budget to deal with this problem. Let me be clear. A 5 per cent increase isn't going to fix the problem. A 10 per cent increase is not going to fix the problem. This is such a broken system that if we are truly going to provide comprehensive care for those people in our society who need it most, who need us to do the right thing by them, we need to be looking at providing funding to at the very least double the salaries of all these people providing care in the nonprofit social services sector. It's not happening. It's not in here. We hear, unfortunately, platitudes but no comprehensive action to bring about that change. We are failing the people in Alberta who most need us to be there for them.

You know, Esso is going to take care of itself regardless. They will. It may be hard to believe, but Esso is going to be just fine. But that woman that I met in that apartment building across from Bonnie Doon may or may not be just fine. I haven't seen her for seven or eight months. I don't know how she's doing now. It's people like that that we are also elected to be here for and to do the right thing by, and this budget doesn't do it. That's a really critical area that we believe needs to be addressed.

The other area, again looking to the future, is the area of education. We talked a bit about that in question period today, but we've talked about it generally throughout the last few weeks that we've been here. There are so many areas in which our current approach to education is not forward thinking. It's not planning for the future. It's not strategic, shall I say if I want to use the phrase that is bandied about with so much apparent pride by folks on the other side.

First of all, we are not allowing our education system to work in concert with our municipal system, with urban planning, with land planning, with any of that kind of stuff. We've got this process going on where we have inner-city schools closing, and then we're going off and incurring 25 or 30 years of future debt so that we can give the private sector an opportunity to roll in and bid on P3 schools and fund those schools on the ring of our cities. You know, I guess it takes a while for these things to get to everybody in government.

I'm pretty sure it's been at least 25 or 30 years that the knowledge has been out there that that pace of development is not one that benefits anybody in the city, that creating the doughnut effect is horrifically damaging to communities and to social and economic development, yet that's exactly what we see happening in our cities. That's exactly, at this point, the way in which we fund schools, and the construction of schools is hastening and enhancing that effect. Again, we're not looking forward. We're not thinking about the fact that if we keep this pace, it's going to cost people a hundred dollars a day to drive in and out of town from their homes to where they work.

[The Speaker in the chair]

We need to encourage young families to settle at the centre of the city. We're not doing that because we're closing the schools there, and we're allowing that to happen throughout the city. The other thing, you know, I spoke about in terms of those schools is that we're not properly funding the maintenance deficit that those schools have. Again, we're funding in a way that discourages older schools from staying open.

Looking towards the future, as I was discussing earlier, we're not providing adequate levels of support for our special-needs children in the education system. You can have a special-needs child come through the education system successfully to the point where they are more than capable of living a full life and from a purely economic point of view also taking care of themselves.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood under Standing Order 29(2)(a), I presume?

Mr. Mason: Yes. You presume correctly, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Please proceed.

Mr. Mason: I would like to ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona if she believes that it is fair that special-needs children, to use one example, are not having their needs met in this province when, on the other hand, the government puts regularly in the budget financial subsidies for the horse-racing industry, which exceed I think now about \$50 million.

Mr. MacDonald: It's 250 million plus dollars.

Mr. Mason: Two hundred and fifty million dollars in this one budget?

Mr. MacDonald: No.

The Speaker: It would really be helpful if you spoke through the chair, who is very attentive to what's going on, is very interested in what's going on. It is the custom and the tradition and the decorum of the Assembly to do so.

Mr. Mason: I appreciate that.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Mason: I would never want to deviate from the custom or the decorum or any of the other things that you said, Mr. Speaker.

I would put this question through you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. I think that in this budget it's about \$50 million or so. Of course, this has been building. It's a little bit higher every year, and it has been going on, you know, ever since

I've been a member of this Assembly, which is about eight years now. Does the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona believe that we should be subsidizing the horse-racing industry at the expense of children with special needs, and could she elaborate on her reasons?

The Speaker: Hon. member, we're asking for personal opinion here, right? Proceed.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that question. It will probably come as no huge surprise that, certainly, I'm not in support of that kind of comparison of the priorities within the budget. There are separate objectives, of course, I'm assuming, to the funding of the horse-racing industry to the tune of \$50 million per year.

I would suggest that if it had to be an either/or kind of situation, the consequences of having special-needs children not get the services that they need, the long-term costs of having those children come out of the system and being unable to care for themselves, to ensure their own economic well-being, to participate fully in society and contribute overall to the economic health of the province – in the long term those consequences are much, much greater. Those children have, I would argue, as much, if not more, to offer to the health and the well-being of our province as the horse-racing industry.

It's really a question of priority. It's a question of choosing the interests of regular Albertans over the interests of various and sundry businesses who have close relationships with a number of advocates who are able to have their opinions heard in this government. So I would rather see that this budget reflected the ongoing needs of children, as discussed in question period today, to be better funded within the school system to ensure that they could get the kind of one-on-one assistance that most experts know they require and that they are not currently able to access.

The Speaker: Hon. Minister of Education, did you have a question or comment with respect to this matter?

Mr. Hancock: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I was going to ask the hon. member if she knows how long her seatmate has been beating a dead horse with respect to this Horse Racing Alberta agreement, whether she knows and understands that the agreement, as the hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne pointed out, has to do with an entertainment centre, and if that entertainment centre weren't there, there would be no money. Does she understand that, and does she appreciate the fact that with the entertainment centre there and the government getting a portion of the revenues, there is actually more money available to deal with the other priorities that she has raised?

The Speaker: Hon. member, do you wish to respond?

Ms Notley: Yes. What I'm aware of is that I see a certain amount of money in the budget dedicated to this industry, and I don't see a similar amount dedicated to ensuring that the best interests of special-needs children in Alberta within the education system are being met. In the same way that there is an argument made that, "Well, if you don't put A amount of money in, we won't get B amount of money back out," that's the same argument I'm making with respect to investment in our education system and investment in our special-needs population.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that exhausts my speaking list.

Does the hon. minister wish to participate?

Shall I call the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:10 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Allred	Fritz	Prins
Amery	Griffiths	Quest
Berger	Hancock	Redford
Brown	Horne	Rogers
Campbell	Jablonski	Sarich
Cao	Johnson	Sherman
Dallas	Knight	Tarchuk
DeLong	Leskiw	VanderBurg
Doerksen	Lund	Vandermeer
Drysdale	McQueen	Webber
Fawcett	Olson	

Against the motion:

Blakeman	Mason	Pastoor
MacDonald	Notley	

Totals:	For – 32	Against – 5
---------	----------	-------------

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a third time]

The Speaker: Hon. members, prior to proceeding, might we revert to briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to all members. Today it is such an honour for me to introduce to the Speaker and to all of you a lady that absolutely needs no introduction to this House. Mrs. Shirley Cripps was a great leader here in the House for many, many years and a dear friend of mine and mentor for me as well as co-chair of my campaign. I'm so proud to have her here. She's a woman with great vision for this province and is a great advocate in her communities and in my constituency and in this province who continues to work for bingos and lots of other areas. I'm so proud today. If we could please give her the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 19

First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Amendment Act, 2008

[Adjourned debate May 26: Mr. Blackett]

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, I am very pleased to rise today and speak in support of Bill 19, the First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Amendment Act,

2008. Indeed, I can remember when the original bill was passed back in 2000, and I did participate in the debate at the time. I've been rereading the *Hansard* that recorded our original debates around the passing of that act at the time, which was, of course, a different number, Bill 2 at the time.

We were debating it in the spring of 2000, and what we have here is an updating of that original act in which we have a number of other articles and agreements that are being included under the repatriation act. This is a situation where the government rightly recognized that its various museums, what are now the Royal Alberta Museum and the Glenbow, were holding sacred ceremonial objects, in many cases medicine bags, of various First Nation communities and that the rightful owners of those were the communities. They are religious or faith community articles, and they should be returned to them to be used in those various ceremonies.

I was struck in reading the comments from my then colleague who would have been the Member for Edmonton-Norwood, who herself is Métis. She put it in context very well and said: you know, this would be like these First Nation peoples trying to conduct their religious ceremonies without the object, similar to a Catholic trying to say the rosary without a rosary or without a chalice in the ceremonies. Every faith community uses some objects to focus upon and to represent other things, and they are an integral part of those religious ceremonies and carry great meaning for the people that are involved in that and should, I think, carry great respect from those outside of that particular faith community or religious organization.

We need to respect each other's articles of faith, if you want to put it that way, and we hadn't been. We still have situations in different parts of the world where individual private collectors are collecting First Nations artifacts, so the government in 2000 was right to recognize that we should be repatriating this. They took the right steps to do it. The idea was that when the object went back to the First Nations – and part of that is spelled out in the regulations, which I now have an opportunity to read, but of course we didn't at the time – the groups would be using those articles for their ceremonies, that they needed them for the ceremonies and would use them for the ceremonies. I think that for the most part that has happened. But it's a question I'll put forward to the sponsoring minister: have there been any instances that the minister is aware of where the band or the nation did receive back a sacred ceremonial object and didn't use it appropriately? Frankly, I'd be surprised to hear that, but I'll ask the question and see if the minister is able to find me a response.

The second issue that we raised at the time that caused us concern and continues to cause me concern these many years later was the amount of discretion that was given to the minister to decide which objects would be repatriated and which wouldn't. Again, it put a lot of discretion in the hands of the minister. That language is still in this bill, and you can see it reflected in the bill that we have in front of us. When we look under section 4, which is amending section 6 of the original act, you get that language. "The minister agrees (a) to the repatriation to the Blood Tribe of . . ." and it starts listing off a number of ceremonial objects that are included in the schedule. But it has to come through the minister. We always felt that that should be a wider group, that it shouldn't lay only in the hands of one minister who, of course, could make these decisions behind closed doors and without any public accountability.

Having been able to read the regulations now, there is some criteria that is set out that the minister should be following but, frankly, not a lot. You know, a group has to apply. They have to be a society. They need to identify which object they are applying for, indicate which society would want it repatriated to them. The individual who is making the request agrees to put the sacred ceremonial object back into use as a sacred ceremonial object and establishes that they must be identified in an application. So it

doesn't really tell us how the minister makes up their mind. There are still no clear criteria there.

4:30

If there's only one applicant and if the minister decides to repatriate, it goes to the one applicant. If there are two, the minister can decide to give it to one or the other or to neither. But, still, it's hard to know how the government is going about doing this. I'm assuming that there's some kind of expert advice that's being offered, but I'd be interested in hearing what the actual process is from the minister. Perhaps he can respond to me during Committee of the Whole.

I've talked a bit about the importance of recognizing, honouring, and respecting sacred objects used in many different religions and how we should be respecting those in religious organizations or faith groups that are not our own. That, in fact, is what happens here, and it is appropriate. At the time there was a great deal of concern about: oh, well, if we gave this back to various bands or aboriginal individuals, they would not value it, and they would just sell it. But, you know, I think the same thing could be said for people that are not a member of an aboriginal community. Didn't Victor Hugo write an entire story about a man who was accused of taking the silver candlesticks out of a particular church? There's always been an issue of that happening, but it's always an issue that's been regarded as something not to be contemplated, that it's horrid to be abusing a religious organization or church or faith community by stealing their objects or by not according them due respect.

This bill is an update bill. I think that it does reflect a maturation of our society that we recognize that. We entered into agreements. Very simply, all that this is doing is adding a series of other agreements to the original schedule. This is particularly, I'm sure, welcome news for the Blood Tribe, the Peigan Tribe, and the Siksika Nation, who are all listed here. Then again, there are schedules that go with the bill that detail each of the agreements, the dates of the agreements, although we don't actually see what's inside of the agreements, but we get the dates of them.

I think this is perfectly appropriate. I'm delighted to see it come, and I will do my best to have swift passage of it through the Assembly. Certainly, on behalf of my caucus I'm willing to support it in second reading. Thank you.

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

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'm pleased to rise in second reading of the First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Amendment Act, 2008, and congratulate the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit on bringing this piece of legislation forward. You know, in a very general sense we've seen dominant societies around the world acquire and accumulate through various means, sometimes legal, sometimes not, the articles of culture of other less powerful societies with which they come into contact. This always creates problems as you go into the future. I think we've seen a movement around the world with respect to this as indigenous cultures or cultures that have come into contact with more powerful cultures begin to assert their rights and begin to ask for justice with respect to some of the things that have happened.

If you look at the British Museum in particular, there are examples of articles of culture from dozens and dozens of cultures which the British came into contact with and which at the time they thought nothing about taking as interesting artifacts to be displayed back in the home country. Many of these artifacts were, in fact, key elements of cultures from nations around the world, some of them indigenous cultures but others civilizations that had endured for

hundreds or even thousands of years, and they were merely curiosities. They were merely articles of interest to the empires of that day. I'm thinking in particular about Egypt, which was virtually looted of many, many valuable articles from that very ancient civilization, many of which remain in the British Museum today.

We've seen this as well on the part of other countries. I'm just using Britain as the most obvious example as it became the centre of a great empire in the second half of the 19th century and through most of the 20th century. I think that on a smaller scale we've seen this happen in the settlement and development of our country. We've seen objects which are considered sacred and central to the culture of First Nations people taken or acquired and placed in museums as objects of interest and curiosity with no regard for the importance of these artifacts or the central role that they played in the cultural activity of those First Nations. For example, if a group came and decided to acquire the Shroud of Turin and take it away and stick it in a museum or the sacred artifacts in Mecca, which are so important to the people from the Muslim faith, and displayed them as something that was just a curiosity, I think you can get the sense of how people would feel and respond, particularly if they were powerless to do anything about it. I think that this is how we have to look at this issue.

The restoration of sacred ceremonial objects to the Blood Tribe, the Peigan Nation, and the Siksika Nation is welcome and a step that I think will go a long way to restoring respect to the culture of those nations. Their use in ceremonial activities and religious activities is very important to those people, and I'm pleased to say that it seems that this is going to be restored and the respect accorded.

With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to support this because I think that this really does strike a more modern approach, if you will, a less imperialistic approach to things, a less paternalistic approach to things, and something which establishes some respect between the government of Alberta and the First Nations of this province, who I think have never given up their rights to these articles. But it requires an act in order to enshrine that in law and to give formal recognition to that principle. In so doing, I think the bill creates a bit of justice where some injustice previously existed, and it's something which I think all members of this Assembly ought to support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:40

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

As I have no additional speakers on my list, shall I call the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 19 read a second time]

Bill 16

Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2008

[Adjourned debate May 28: Mr. Allred]

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When we look at this latest amendment to the Municipal Government Act, it is certainly a good move. It's a good move for smaller communities as it allows them to, hopefully, generate more revenue from linear assessments. I believe it to be a more fair and equitable system of doing linear assessments.

Hopefully, this will decrease the number of appeals to the Municipal Government Board, and hopefully it will provide the

certainty and predictability of revenue that many municipalities have asked for and require. I, certainly, look at this bill, and there would hardly be an area of the province if we look at the petroleum wells, the oil and gas wells, the pipelines, the electricity transmission systems and stations that are around the province, the telecommunications systems, phone, and cable – they're all affected by this bill.

These assessments are carried out by the linear property assessment unit and the regulated standards and utilities assessment unit. These units, of course, are under Municipal Affairs, and all of these assessments are carried out on behalf of the municipalities. I understand that the branch also informs municipalities of new oil and gas wells within their boundaries so that they can apply their appropriate taxes where applicable.

I don't know if it's too late, but there seemed to be some confusion around oil and gas wells and coal-bed methane wells, but I'm led to believe that coal-bed methane wells are included in this, and I certainly hope that is correct. The wells and pipeline assessments are compiled using data that is maintained by what we call now the ERCB, or the Energy Resources Conservation Board.

If we look at the amendment here and at the amendment specific to section 291, I certainly would urge all hon. members to consider passing this bill. I don't know how long this legislation has been contemplated; however, I would like to thank the minister for correcting what we certainly have heard on this side of the House as a deficiency.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will cede the floor to an hon. colleague. Thank you.

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

Additional speakers? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 16, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2008, and congratulate the Minister of Municipal Affairs for bringing this forward. Now, as I understand it, the purpose of this bill is quite clear. It's possible under the legislation as it currently exists for the owner and operator of a pipeline to construct a pipeline, say for example, from Fort McMurray to the Industrial Heartland or to Edmonton or from Edmonton to Calgary and escape being taxed.

There's a loophole here, Mr. Speaker, that I think we would be well advised to close, and that's why I wanted to congratulate the minister on bringing forward Bill 16. It would be possible – and I assume that there are cases that have been brought forward – to build a pipeline and not quite finish it, but you could have a station, say, 90 per cent of the way along the line where the petroleum would be off-loaded into trucks or train tank cars or something like that and shipped the last distance to its final destination. The whole line then would be deemed incomplete and would be exempt from linear taxation by the municipal government. It really speaks to a very, very significant loophole that exists.

You know, I would hate to think that the big oil companies that operate some of these pipelines would ever try to avoid their fair share of taxation, Mr. Speaker. I would be shocked. I would be horrified that they would put the interests of their shareholders ahead of the public interest. I think that would be wrong. But just in case – just in case – this might happen in the future, then I think it's important to close this loophole because, you know, when a municipal government deals with taxation, a lot of the taxation that it depends upon is for linear property.

When I was, for example, on Edmonton city council, we dealt a great deal with this issue. There are pipelines, power lines, all of which require a significant amount of disruption and so on from time

to time. Generally, taxation of linear property – and this, you know, has been a very important issue as well with respect to the cable industry, which is challenging municipal government in respect to the ability of municipal government to impose linear taxation.

Mr. Speaker, it's really just a form of property tax, and that's the primary basis of a municipality's finances, the property tax. Municipal government is based to a large degree on providing services to property. Roads, utilities, police, and fire: these are all services to property. That's one of the main functions, one of the central functions of municipal government. Previous governments, Legislatures, and so on have shown the wisdom of allowing municipal government to levy property tax. This is a version of a property tax because, of course, these conduits, this cable, the gas lines, pipelines, and so on all travel through public property and through the area covered by the jurisdiction of the particular municipal government. It's important to them as a source of revenue to provide the necessary services to their people and to the property of the people of that municipality and to provide all of the things that people need, including, you know, recreational facilities and crime protection and garbage collection. The list really does go on and on.

4:50

Municipal government is really an important and critical level of government. I should correct myself because I know that people in municipal government don't like to talk about levels of government; they like to talk about orders of government. In the view of people in the AUMA and the AAMD and C and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities it is the order of government that's closest to the people and an order of government that provides critical services to people from one end of this country to the other.

It's important that we prevent loopholes or close loopholes which might be used by hypothetically unscrupulous corporations in order to avoid paying their fair share of taxes. I think, to his credit, the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs is taking a hard line with those unscrupulous corporations and is standing up for the municipal governments of this province, at least in this case. I'm sure, you know, he will in other cases as well. It's nice to see somebody in this government who's willing to take on big oil. I think that the Minister of Municipal Affairs is doing just that by bringing forward this bill to make sure municipal governments in this province receive their fair share of revenue which is afforded to them by the right to tax linear property in our province.

I'm pleased, Mr. Speaker, to indicate that we will be showing solidarity with the Minister of Municipal Affairs on this matter and supporting his bill. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Are there additional speakers? There are none on my list. Shall I call the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 16 read a second time]

Private Bills Second Reading

Bill Pr. 1

Young Men's Christian Association of Edmonton Statutes Amendment Act, 2008

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill on behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon.

Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs I am pleased to move second reading of Bill Pr. 1, Young Men's Christian Association of Edmonton Statutes Amendment Act, 2008.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill would be to allow all of the real estate properties of the YMCA of Edmonton to be held on a tax-exempt basis. I urge the members of the Assembly to support Bill Pr. 1 on second reading.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to participate this afternoon in the debate on Bill Pr. 1, the Young Men's Christian Association of Edmonton Statutes Amendment Act, 2008. Certainly, earlier this week as a member of the Private Bills Committee we had a meeting, of course, with the president and CEO of the YMCA. There was a delegation attending the committee that also included the city of Edmonton and representatives from the Department of Municipal Affairs. The recommendation was for members of this Assembly to support this bill. There was a unanimous recommendation from Edmonton city council to support this initiative, this endeavour, this tax exemption.

Certainly, when we consider all the good work that is provided not only in the city of Edmonton by the YMCA but in Ys throughout the province, I would urge all hon. members to give this private bill speedy passage through the Assembly. This tax exemption has already been provided, as I understand it, for the Y's holdings in Calgary. The dollars that they save annually with this bill would certainly be spent on programs and services.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to lend my voice to the call for speedy passage of the private member's bill dealing with the YMCA. I'm pleased to see that the city of Edmonton council has unanimously agreed that the YMCA property should be exempt from taxation. I think that that's in recognition of the progressive social benefits that come from the activities of the YMCA both in Edmonton but, of course, around the world. They have been providing that service for many years. I think they had their hundredth anniversary a number of years ago internationally.

Certainly, the principles of mind, body, and spirit embodied by the Y are things which are very beneficial. They have provided great services to the community and especially to families and to young people. The opportunities for physical recreation and fellowship that the Y has offered over many years I think bring a great social benefit as a whole. As a result, I have no difficulty in providing my support for the passage of Bill Pr. 1 and would urge other members to do so as well.

Thank you.

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

I have no additional speakers. Should I call on the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill to close the debate, or should we call the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 1 read a second time]

**Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Cao in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 17

Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2008

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

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Certainly, at this time in committee in regard to Bill 17 I would urge all hon. members of the Assembly to give due consideration to the Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2008. This would boost the amount of tax credits available for caregivers, infirm dependants, disability and disability supplements, family employment. It also ensures that these credits are not double-indexed.

5:00

Certainly, last night during debate I heard a very reasoned and compelling speech from the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo as to why the Assembly should give this bill speedy passage as well. The reason to support this bill is that it does provide some financial assistance to caregivers and the disabled. It also gives assistance to low- and middle-income families. The intentions behind this bill are good. I would certainly urge hon. members to review the comments in *Hansard* from last night. It was very well outlined, as I said, by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo. We need to do everything we can to support those who are caring for an individual with a disability so they can carry on.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I certainly would urge all hon. members to please give due consideration to this Bill 17. Let's get it moved through committee. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. leader of the third party.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate that. I know my colleague is anxious to speak to this bill as well. I just want to reinforce some of the comments that I made the other night and, certainly, the great comments that were made yesterday by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo. It was a very well-crafted and insightful set of comments.

I just want to indicate that I have a real concern with the bill. It's great to give some tax credits to people that are providing some assistance to a loved one who is infirm or elderly or requires care, but we've seen far too much of the burden of looking after family members transferred onto the families not because that's what the family or even the aging parent, to use an example, might wish but because of the breakdown in the care that's taking place around the province in our health care system and our system of caring for elderly people.

We've had contact with dozens of individuals who are involved in providing for care because their people are not being properly cared for in the seniors' care centre in the first place because they can't find the staff. They can't find the staff. They don't pay them enough. Because of the overheated economy these are the kinds of services that are suffering in our province. It's great that the government is prepared to give a tax break to people with respect to this, but it's not addressing the whole situation.

I know that we have a situation where people have actually had to

give up their jobs. If you have to give up gainful employment in order to take care of someone in your family who's not receiving adequate care in the system, then a tax credit will not replace that income. So it's nice, but it strikes me as almost a guilt offering on the part of the government. They know that the health system and our seniors' care system is not providing the care that people need because it's so short-staffed, so this is offered up instead.

I really want to urge the government to take another look at this issue. It really speaks to the whole question of: how fast do they want this economy to run along? You have industry after industry, sector after sector that can't find the people that they need to operate properly. This goes from the courts and the police all the way through municipal government, through small business, and into our health care system and the system of long-term care for our seniors.

We really do need to address this. It fundamentally comes down, in my view, to the Premier's statement, which represents the government's strategy, that he won't touch the brake on the economy and lets it roar well above the level of full employment to the point where we're having to bring in temporary foreign workers from offshore to fill all kinds of areas. We're having to employ children. Alberta was the first province in Canada since the Victorian era to restore child labour in order to deal with the labour shortage created by this government's policies in the context of the very high oil prices which we now have.

I want to say that I'm going to support this bill, but I have real reservations about this. I think that we need to really search our hearts about some of the things that are going on in this province. We don't see them. They're not out there. You have to go look for them to see the things. My hon. colleague from Edmonton-Strathcona talked in a very moving way earlier on another bill about the individuals that she ran across in her election campaign and the desperation that so many people live in because they can't get the supports that they need.

Mr. Chairman, I want to be clear. It is the government's responsibility to make sure that there are people in our health care system and people in our long-term care system to provide the necessary level of service to the people who are there, to patients and to seniors and to people who have disabilities. It is the government's responsibility, and they cannot evade that responsibility. Simply providing tax incentives for family members does not absolve them of their responsibility to make sure that our long-term care centres are adequately staffed with trained people and that people are not left in hallways, that people are not left in bed when they should be getting up, that when somebody rings the bell or presses the button in a nursing home, somebody comes. Right now, Mr. Chairman, far too often when they press the button, no one comes except for family members.

So good. I think good enough to provide family members with this tax concession, but not good enough with respect to the staffing and level of care and service that exists in our health and our long-term care systems. It's with that very great reservation, Mr. Chairman, that I'll indicate that I will support this bill.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other member? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

5:10

Ms Notley: Is this just to speak to the bill? Yes. Okay. I'd just like to follow up on a few of the comments made by my colleague in the NDP caucus from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, leader of the party, about our position on this bill. We do, as my colleague has indicated, support the bill in that there is no question that, basically,

any support that can be provided for people who take on the important responsibility of caring for their relatives, whether they be siblings or whether they be adult children or whether they be parents – that task takes a toll on people. In the smallest of ways this bill will at least acknowledge. I won't go so far as to say that it accommodates that toll or compensates for that toll, but it goes the first step in that it acknowledges that toll. I would suggest that that's one of the things that makes this bill worthy of supporting.

Our concern on the bill is, as has been previously stated, that it really doesn't go far enough to address the crisis, which we have talked about in so many different contexts throughout the course of the last few weeks, facing families who are put in the position of having to care for relatives who are dependent and are unable to find other places for their care.

I have in the past spoken about families that I've been aware of who have had to face a number of different challenges in the course of providing care to disabled members of their family. One of the key observations that I've made from speaking to those people, whether they're talking about caring for their parents, whether they're talking about caring for their children, or whether they're caring for other members of their family, is that, first of all, it is disproportionately women who are in that position of having to take on that role of caregiver. You know, I'm not saying that it shouldn't be that way or that it's anyone's fault that it's that way, but it is the reality that it is that way. So the burden that's borne by providing this care that is not otherwise provided through our systems is one that's borne primarily by women.

What tends to happen in most cases is that those people make significant – significant – financial sacrifices in order to carry out loving, appropriate care for their relatives. They will reduce their hours of work as the very first starting point and will receive the appropriate pay cut. I didn't do the math on this. I'm not sure if it came out to somewhere between 500 and maybe a thousand in a year, maybe a bit more. But when you're seeing people reduce their income anywhere from \$30,000 to \$40,000 to \$50,000 a year, ultimately, you can see why I point out that this doesn't even begin to cover off the cost that is borne by caregivers in our society, in our province, in our community.

We know that there is – it has been called a number of things, whether it's a glass ceiling or whatever – a huge gap in the amount of earnings enjoyed by women versus men, even within the same professions. Even if you narrow it down and look within certain professions that should all be earning the same amount, you will find that women are invariably earning less, and a good, good part of the reason for that is because they are reducing their hours at work, they are not accepting promotions, they are not moving forward in their career because they are caring for, often, their parents, sometimes their siblings, and many times their adult children. So that's a concern that we have.

We know that our system right now is not designed to effectively provide care for, let's say, seniors who need care, who can no longer live independently. There have been a lot of objective observers who have analyzed our system of long-term care and concluded that they hope to heaven that they are never put in the position of having to be in those facilities themselves. Often people are not put in the position of having to be in those facilities themselves because their family members take on the responsibility of keeping them at home, of feeding them, of helping them walk around the house, of dealing with their daily living requirements. But in so doing, there is a cost. There's a cost to our society.

One example – and we use it in a different context, with respect to child care – is the tremendous shortage of nurses in the health care system. It's so ironic. These are the very people that we need to

have working in our long-term care centres at higher levels so that we can provide greater care. But I know from my own experience that a large number of them are at that point in their life demographically, in their 50s, where they are responsible for caring for their parents, and you will see that a lot of them are not showing up to work. I don't mean that they're, you know, just not showing up; I mean that they're reducing their hours, and they're taking on part-time positions in order to meet the obligations that they have through their family responsibilities.

We've heard other people in this House talk sometimes with a bit of frustration about the percentage of nurses in Alberta who are working on a part-time basis, and there are two reasons for that. One is because the quality of their working conditions is decreasing dramatically, so it's much more exhausting to be in that setting. The second reason is because they have care obligations, whether it be young children or whether it be disabled adult children or whether it be disabled siblings or disabled parents. We know that that's a problem and that it has a very broad impact on the health and functionality of our labour force. It also has a broad impact on the ability of women who are part of the labour force to make up that gap in earnings that exists between them and their male counterparts in the same professions. So that is sort of an area that we're very concerned about.

The other concern that we have as well, apart from just the black-and-white sort of income loss that people experience when they are asked by the province, by society, by our community to make sacrifices and care for their parents because we don't have enough long-term care beds and not enough staff to properly care for disabled adults in the group home setting or alternative settings in a dignified, meaningful, life-fulfilling kind of way, is that they also pay a price emotionally and physically with respect to their health. Being on call 24 hours a day for a parent who is very ill, for a sibling who is very ill, for an adult child who is very ill takes a toll on people.

Those very same people are in our workforce – again, often women – struggling to maintain their contribution at that level, and then they are suffering the increased illness, increased stress, all that kind of stuff that comes from the fact that at home they are juggling numerous responsibilities, many of which, in my view, fall within the proper sphere of government, of course the perfect example of that being properly funded long-term care and long-term care beds and home care and home-care providers and home-care staff. I've already talked at some length about the salary problem with home-care staff, so I won't go into that in any more detail.

We have a system, as I've stated before, that is not caring for the people in our province who are most in need. While this tax break is a nod and an acknowledgement to people that they're doing this, I can think of many people I've spoken to who do this work who get two hours of sleep a night and then go to work and put in an eight-, nine-, 10-, or, if it's a nurse, 12-hour day and then go back home and, you know, sleep again for only two hours because they're caring for their dependent relatives. I'm pretty sure that they're not going to find that this tax break makes any kind of meaningful difference in their life in terms of their quality of life or in terms of the affordability that they experience or in terms of making up the financial sacrifices that they've made in order to care for their parents, in most cases, or their siblings or their dependent adult children.

5:20

Again, good first step but it's a very, very small baby step, and we would certainly be very, very pleased to see the government come forward with a much more comprehensive package, perhaps in the

next session, to truly and substantively and effectively deal with the experience of so many Albertans, most of whom are women, who are engaging in this very important caregiving role. We know that demographically the need for this is only going to grow. It's going to grow and grow and grow, and at the same time the shortage in our labour market is going to grow. So we need to think about how we're going to manage those different pressures within this province so that we can get ahead of the problem.

I appreciate having had the opportunity to speak on this issue, and I do urge the government to consider buttressing this initiative with a much more substantial and comprehensive initiative at the next opportunity.

Thank you.

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

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to have a few more words on this bill. It's my pleasure to be able to speak to Bill 17, the Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2008. Certainly, as a health care professional I can really relate to how badly we need this. I'm certainly prepared to support it, but I'm also prepared to support it by saying that I don't think it goes nearly far enough. I'm pleased that the government has at least recognized the concept of exactly the importance of families looking after their own family members.

The other thing is that according to the fiscal plan for '08-11 the three changes that they're talking about are actually going to cost the government \$20 million. I don't really have facts to go along with it; however, I would suspect that that \$20 million over a very short period of time could well be saved simply by the number of people that would not have to go into health care facilities or, actually, into hospitals. Where it would be offset the other way is that with a program like this and the benefits that would be derived from them by having family members being able to be cared by family members, it really means that we're going to have to be diligent and also have home care increase so that they can go and actually help family members.

Family members, particularly perhaps at the lower incomes, are really not all trained properly to deal with – and I'm thinking more of Alzheimer's and dementia people. It does take skill, and it also takes a great, great deal of patience. Certainly, I enjoyed my job, and I was very good at it; however, I also knew that at the end of the

eight-hour, 10-hour, or 12-hour shift, whichever it worked out to be – because I certainly came in on the front line of having to work short and the lack of staff – I could go home. When you have family members at home, you don't get the breaks that you need, so respite would have to be another large portion of this program.

It is a very good idea. No one can look after family like their own family. The aging process is a normal process, and in fact the dying process is part of the living process. If it's understood by trained people, the different stages that are gone through can actually be very positive ones if they're handled properly for the family.

I'll just repeat that I'm pleased that the government has the concept of the importance of recognizing the power of families looking after families. I'm hoping that this is only the start of a very good concept going forward.

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Chairman, I'd move that the committee rise and report progress on Bill 17.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: I wish to call on the hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 17.

Thank you.

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

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that we now adjourn until 1:30 p.m. on June 2.

[Motion carried; at 5:27 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

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

Activity to May 29, 2008

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

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

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

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

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

Second Reading -- 47-48 (Apr. 16 eve.), 203-08 (Apr. 23 eve.), 464 (May 5 eve.), 517-18 (May 6 eve.), 572-73 (May 7 eve.), 653-54 (May 12 eve.), 702-03 (May 13 eve.), 833 (May 20 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 916-19 (May 22 aft.), 962-67 (May 26 eve.), 988-90 (May 27 aft.), 1005-11 (May 27 eve., passed)

Third Reading -- 1025-30 (May 28 aft., passed on division)

2 Travel Alberta Act (Ady)

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

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

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

Third Reading -- 834-35 (May 20 eve., passed)

3 Fiscal Responsibility Amendment Act, 2008 (Snelgrove)

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

Second Reading -- 654 (May 12 eve.), 703-06 (May 13 eve.), 755 (May 14 eve.), 834 (May 20 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 912-16 (May 22 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 960-62 (May 26 eve., passed)

4 Alberta Enterprise Corporation Act (Horner)

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

Second Reading -- 654 (May 12 eve.), 834 (May 20 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 891 (May 21 eve., passed)

Third Reading -- 959-60 (May 26 eve., passed)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Second Reading -- 958 (May 26 eve.), 1037-40 (May 28 aft., adjourned)

- 8 Climate Change and Emissions Management Amendment Act, 2008 (Renner)**
First Reading -- 348 (Apr. 30 aft.)
Second Reading -- 958 (May 26 eve.), 1051-54 (May 28 eve., passed)
- 9 Land Agents Licensing Amendment Act, 2008 (Mitzel)**
First Reading -- 479 (May 6 aft.)
Second Reading -- 967 (May 26 eve.), 995-96 (May 27 eve.), 1042-44 (May 28 eve., passed)
- 10 Security Services and Investigators Act (Anderson)**
First Reading -- 586-87 (May 8 aft.)
Second Reading -- 889-90 (May 21 eve., referred to Standing Committee on Public Safety and Services)
- 11 Insurance Amendment Act, 2008 (Evans)**
First Reading -- 348 (Apr. 30 aft.)
Second Reading -- 990-91 (May 27 aft., adjourned)
- 12 Teachers' Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2008 (Evans)**
First Reading -- 348 (Apr. 30 aft.)
Second Reading -- 834 (May 20 eve.), 886-87 (May 21 eve.), 909-11 (May 22 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 958-59 (May 26 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 986-87 (May 27 aft., passed)
- 13 Financial Institutions Statutes Amendment Act, 2008 (Fawcett)**
First Reading -- 533 (May 7 aft.)
Second Reading -- 834 (May 20 eve.), 887 (May 21 eve.), 911-12 (May 22 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 959 (May 26 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 987 (May 27 aft., passed)
- 14 Court of Queen's Bench Amendment Act, 2008 (Redford)**
First Reading -- 770 (May 15 aft.)
Second Reading -- 992 (May 27 aft.), 1048-49 (May 28 eve., passed)
- 15 Family Law Amendment Act, 2008 (Redford)**
First Reading -- 770 (May 15 aft.)
Second Reading -- 992 (May 27 aft.), 1049-50 (May 28 eve., passed)
- 16 Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2008 (Danyluk)**
First Reading -- 904 (May 22 aft.)
Second Reading -- 992 (May 27 aft.), 1050-51 (May 28 eve.), 1077-78 (May 29 aft., passed)
- 17 Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2008 (\$) (Evans)**
First Reading -- 904 (May 22 aft.)
Second Reading -- 958 (May 26 eve.), 993-95 (May 27 eve.), 1044-47 (May 28 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 1079-81 (May 29 aft., adjourned)
- 18 Film and Video Classification Act (Blackett)**
First Reading -- 848 (May 21 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Community Services)
- 19 First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Amendment Act, 2008 (Blackett)**
First Reading -- 848 (May 21 aft.)
Second Reading -- 967-68 (May 26 eve.), 1075-77 (May 29 aft., passed)
- 20 Agriculture Statutes Repeal Act, 2008 (Griffiths)**
First Reading -- 848 (May 21 aft.)
Second Reading -- 968 (May 26 eve.), 996-97 (May 27 eve.), 1047 (May 28 eve., passed)
- 21 Heating Oil and Propane Rebate Act (Griffiths)**
First Reading -- 848 (May 21 aft.)
Second Reading -- 968 (May 26 eve.), 1047-48 (May 28 eve., passed)

- 22 Appropriation Act, 2008 (\$) (Snelgrove)**
First Reading -- 932 (May 26 aft.)
Second Reading -- 981-86 (May 27 aft.), 997-1004 (May 27 eve., passed on division)
Committee of the Whole -- 1030-37 (May 28 aft.), 1041-42 (May 28 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 1067-75 (May 29 aft., passed)
- 201 Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act (Mitzel)**
First Reading -- 59 (Apr. 17 aft.)
Second Reading -- 89-102 (Apr. 21 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 430-43 (May 5 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 625-31 (May 12 aft., passed)
Royal Assent -- (May 15 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 15, 2008; SA 2008 cH-15.5]
- 202 Alberta Volunteer Service Medal Act (Cao)**
First Reading -- 59 (Apr. 17 aft.)
Second Reading -- 102-07 (Apr. 21 aft.), 258-64 (Apr. 28 aft., six-month hoist amendment agreed to)
- 203 Election Statutes (Fixed Election Dates) Amendment Act, 2008 (Allred)**
First Reading -- 224 (Apr. 24 aft.)
Second Reading -- 265-74 (Apr. 28 aft.), 443-44 (May 5 aft.), 631-34 (May 12 aft., six-month hoist amendment agreed to)
- 204 Traffic Safety (Hand-Held Communication Devices) Amendment Act, 2008 (Johnston)**
First Reading -- 224 (Apr. 24 aft.)
Second Reading -- 937-49 (May 26 aft., referred to Standing Committee on the Economy)
- 205 Traffic Safety (Used Vehicle Inspection) Amendment Act, 2008 (Bhardwaj)**
First Reading -- 401 (May 1 aft.)
- 206 Alberta Personal Income Tax (Physical Activity Credit) Amendment Act, 2008 (Rodney)**
First Reading -- 587 (May 8 aft.)
- Pr1 Young Men's Christian Association of Edmonton Statutes Amendment Act, 2008 (Lukaszuk)**
First Reading -- 719 (May 14 aft.)
Second Reading -- 1078 (May 29 aft., passed)

Table of Contents

Thursday afternoon, May 29, 2008

Introduction of Guests	1055, 1075
Members' Statements	
Support for the Blind and Visually Impaired	1056
World No Tobacco Day	1056
Lethbridge High Level Bridge	1056
Commercial Fishing Industry	1056
E.R. Ward Neale	1057
Off-highway Vehicle Use	1057
Oral Question Period	
Oil Royalty Framework	1057
Ground Ambulance Services	1058, 1059, 1060, 1061, 1062
Temporary Foreign Workers	1058
Justice System	1058, 1063
Rental Properties	1059
Community Health Councils	1060
Oil Sands Tailings Ponds Impact on Groundwater	1061
Special-needs Education Funding	1062
Funding for Private Schools	1063
Workers' Compensation Appeals	1063
Fish Creek Provincial Park	1064
Radioimmunotherapy Drugs	1064
Utilities Consumer Advocate	1065
Presenting Petitions	1065
Notices of Motions	1065
Tabling Returns and Reports	1066
Tablings to the Clerk	1066
Projected Government Business	1066
Government Motions	
Committee Membership Changes	1067
Government Bills and Orders	
Third Reading	
Bill 22 Appropriation Act, 2008	1067
Division	1075
Second Reading	
Bill 19 First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Amendment Act, 2008	1075
Bill 16 Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2008	1077
Private Bills	
Second Reading	
Bill Pr. 1 Young Men's Christian Association of Edmonton Statutes Amendment Act, 2008	1078
Government Bills and Orders	
Committee of the Whole	
Bill 17 Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2008	1079

COMMITTEES OF THE ALBERTA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mrs. Forsyth

Deputy Chair: Mr. Elniski

Blakeman
DeLong

Denis
Johnston

Kang
Notley

Olson

Standing Committee on Community Services

Chair: Mr. Rodney

Deputy Chair: Mr. Hehr

Benito
Bhardwaj
Chase

Doerksen
Johnson

Johnston
Lukaszuk

Notley
Sarich

Standing Committee on the Economy

Chair: Mr. Allred

Deputy Chair: Mr. Taylor

Amery
Bhullar
Blakeman

Campbell
Marz

Mason
McFarland

Weadick
Xiao

Select Special Ethics Commissioner Search Committee

Chair: Mr. Campbell

Deputy Chair: Mr. Marz

Blakeman
Lund

Lukaszuk
MacDonald

Mitzel

Notley

Standing Committee on Health

Chair: Mr. Horne

Deputy Chair: Ms Pastoor

Dallas
Denis
Fawcett

Notley
Olson

Quest
Sherman

Swann
Vandermeer

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Mitzel

Deputy Chair: Mr. Lund

Bhullar
Blakeman
Campbell

Horne
Lukaszuk

MacDonald
Marz

Notley
Webber

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Kowalski

Deputy Chair: Mr. Oberle

Elniski
Hehr
Leskiw

Mason
Rodney

Snelgrove
Taylor

VanderBurg
Weadick

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Dr. Brown

Deputy Chair: Ms Woo-Paw

Allred
Amery
Anderson
Benito
Boutilier

Calahasen
Dallas
Doerksen
Fawcett
Forsyth

Jacobs
MacDonald
McQueen
Olson
Quest

Sandhu
Sarich
Swann
Xiao

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Mr. Prins

Deputy Chair: Mr. Hancock

Amery
Berger
Bhardwaj
Calahasen
DeLong

Doerksen
Forsyth
Johnson
Leskiw
Liepert

McFarland
Notley
Oberle
Pastoor
Rogers

Sherman
Stevens
Taylor
Zwozdesky

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. MacDonald

Deputy Chair: Mr. Griffiths

Benito
Bhardwaj
Chase
Dallas

Denis
Drysdale
Fawcett
Jacobs

Johnson
Kang
Mason
Quest

Sandhu
Vandermeer
Woo-Paw

Standing Committee on Public Safety and Services

Chair: Mr. VanderBurg

Deputy Chair: Mr. Kang

Anderson
Brown
Calahasen

Cao
Jacobs

MacDonald
Notley

Sandhu
Woo-Paw

Standing Committee on Resources and Environment

Chair: Mr. Prins

Deputy Chair: Dr. Swann

Berger
Boutilier
Drysdale

Griffiths
Hehr

Mason
McQueen

Oberle
Webber

If your address is incorrect, please clip on the dotted line, make any changes, and return to the address listed below. To facilitate the update, please attach the last mailing label along with your account number.

Subscriptions
Legislative Assembly Office
1001 Legislature Annex
9718 - 107 Street
EDMONTON AB T5K 1E4

Last mailing label:

Account # _____

New information:

Name _____

Address _____

Subscription information:

Annual subscriptions to the paper copy of *Alberta Hansard* (including annual index) are \$127.50 including GST if mailed once a week or \$94.92 including GST if picked up at the subscription address below or if mailed through the provincial government interdepartmental mail system. Bound volumes are \$121.70 including GST if mailed. Cheques should be made payable to the Minister of Finance.

Price per issue is \$0.75 including GST.

On-line access to *Alberta Hansard* is available through the Internet at www.assembly.ab.ca

Address subscription inquiries to Subscriptions, Legislative Assembly Office, 1001 Legislature Annex, 9718 - 107 St., EDMONTON AB T5K 1E4, telephone 427-1302.

Address other inquiries to Managing Editor, *Alberta Hansard*, 1001 Legislature Annex, 9718 - 107 St., EDMONTON AB T5K 1E4, telephone 427-1875.

