



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, June 2, 2008

Issue 29e

The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 27th Legislature

First Session

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

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

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

7:30 p.m.

Monday, June 2, 2008

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated, hon. members.

Motions Other than Government Motions

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Crime Reduction

508. Mr. Amery moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to implement innovative methods of crime reduction such as mass media advertising and mandated educational programs for use in the province.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today and commence discussion on Motion 508. This motion urges the government to implement measures of innovative crime reduction in the way of media campaigns or other educational tools.

Mr. Speaker, crime and safety in our communities are amongst the top concerns of all Albertans. Property crimes are a problem that is often cited as they are often highly visible in our communities. Other communities may have more serious crimes such as theft, gang activities, heavy drug trafficking, and assault, where one's family may be tragically affected. Wherever the problems may be, they are unsettling to Albertans when they occur and when they show a blatant disregard for our values. This concern resonates with many Albertans, as I have seen. Crime was an issue of focus during the last election campaign and one that I myself am very concerned about.

To date, Mr. Speaker, there have been great advances in our crime reduction strategies at all levels, not just provincial. It has generally been acknowledged in Alberta and across the country that proactive strategies must accommodate our reactive measures. In other words, a strong justice system, while necessary, is not enough. There is a range of things that can be done to deter crime in the first place. These proactive, or preventive, measures contribute to a comprehensive crime reduction strategy.

Mr. Speaker, Motion 508 proposes one such measure that could offer a key element in our equation for crime reduction. Many criminals commit crime without wholly considering the costs of doing so. For a variety of reasons, social subculture and substance abuse, for example, they may not be able to rationally consider the acts that they are committing.

We all know that new Albertans may face stresses when they arrive here. I have the utmost respect for these New Age pioneers who seek a better life for themselves and their families. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, many of them do not have the community and family roots, for example, to help them and to help keep one grounded. This can leave them prone to activities that can lead to crime, though they may not immediately realize it. Therefore, they may need some extra guidance, community support, a nudge to stay on the right path. Well-placed messaging and educational tools can serve as a reminder and motivate individuals to reconsider their actions, specifically at-risk youth, who are more vulnerable and impressionable individuals. Also, parents and other mentor figures for youth can be targeted and informed of support programs and given tips for staying aware of their children's activities.

Mr. Speaker, communities can differ in many aspects, and crime

is no different. Specific types of crime can be more prevalent in certain communities than they are, on average, across the province. The intricacies that are behind the problem and the deeper knowledge of them often lie with the community and the community alone. The safe communities task force recently released the Keeping Communities Safe report, which acknowledges these findings. It also acknowledges that municipalities have pioneered a comprehensive approach but have received only limited technical and financial support from other levels of government.

The campaign proposed by Motion 508 could be implemented with the scope of community-based initiatives, thereby utilizing the unique knowledge and insights of community stakeholders. With a campaign that targets youth offenders and youth at risk, for example, community members could assist in the placement and design of the campaign so as to be most effective in reaching the target demographic.

Mr. Speaker, specific problems can be identified, and their root source can be addressed through innovative media and educational campaigns. These initiatives would also carry a strong underlying message that says that the community knows about the problem, the community is concerned about the problem, and the community is willing to take action to resolve the problem. If the campaign is combined with an increased presence in police force, then the message becomes even stronger. Effective messaging can change the minds of criminals, at-risk youth, and individuals who may be predisposed to crime. It can also strengthen a community resolve against crime, promoting a united front and a new-found attitude.

Mr. Speaker, Motion 508 proposes added measures to our current crime reduction strategy. These measures, I believe, would be effective and would be embraced by all Alberta communities. I urge all members to consider the merits of Motion 508, and I look forward to the discussions to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Mr. Hehr: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me some pleasure to rise and speak to Motion 508 this evening as I believe it does have some merit to it. I'm somewhat cautious on how much merit it will have, but anything that uses some community-based initiatives and some community-based ideas can't be dismissed and ignored.

You know, I guess if you look at the language of this, I'm not so certain as to mass media advertising and educational programs. I think that's all well and good, but I think there may be other more effective ways to actually reduce crime. Obviously, some of those are more extensive.

If we look at starting kids early in kindergarten and all the way up, I guess that's one thing. But if we're looking at actual crime, I think there are more provable ways that can actually achieve crime reduction. I think some of the better ways, with a little more forceful tooth action, are recommended in the safe communities report.

There are at-risk regions here in the province, for instance. We've heard of some of the increased crime levels in Hobbema. We've heard of the increased crime levels in Calgary-Buffalo and Edmonton-Centre, where maybe more resources directed to these trouble spots would actually be worth having, more additional funds put into the crime-fighting effort rather than going to a community sort of education program. For instance, I look around my community right now, and I know communities like the Beltline area are doing their own CPTED, crime reduction strategies, and things like that. So if this money could be directed to them, yeah, maybe it would help them facilitate some things. I'm just not so sure.

7:40

If we also look at what gets you better value for the money, let's face it: I think we'd be naive to say that addictions troubles aren't causing much of our current criminal element, at least with the criminal who is doing the crime on an ongoing, regular basis. Estimates are that 15 per cent of the criminals are completing mostly 100 per cent of the crime, and most of these individuals have some level of addiction to drugs, so wouldn't this money that's going to be earmarked for this new thing be better directed at creating more addictions programs, more direct help on that front?

I've also brought up in this Legislature, which is getting to be redundant: let's give our police more powers. Let's enable them to get tough on crime in ways that we can in this Legislature, through actually giving more ability to seize, say, vehicles that are carrying around handguns and shotguns. I know that last night there was another shooting here in Edmonton. Why not just give the police the ability to seize that car if they find it? And let's sell that car. Why not? That to me says you get tough on crime.

On drug houses. I know B.C. has really brought in legislation that if you have a drug house, the government can sell that drug house. Well, yeah, that's getting tough on crime. That's reducing crime, and it will give people pause before going into crime.

Also, I asked a question in question period on gambling. Let's say: do we need a VLT in every corner store and a liquor shop in every neighbourhood? When a larger portion of your crime is connected to VLTs, maybe it's time to look at limiting where they are and making people drive to a casino.

I don't know. It looks like if we had some targeted initiatives on those four fronts, it may actually be better than some media campaign that says: keep your neighbourhood straight. I know that in Calgary-Buffalo everyone knows there's an increase in drug trafficking here. The community is aware of it. They're not happy about it, but do you know what they want? They want more police on the street and not necessarily someone to say: well, let's keep our community safe.

Those are some of my comments. I'd say that crime reduction in any form, like this motion, is an admirable goal. I'm just not sure how much crime reduction this motion would really create. I'm technically in favour of it as something that maybe the community could use, and maybe with some funding some original processes would evolve.

So I support this motion, again, with the tentative nature of my support that has been indicated so far. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased today to rise to discuss Motion 508. The intention of this motion, Mr. Speaker, is to work towards the implementation of innovative crime prevention strategies. This is a proactive approach as opposed to a purely reactive strategy that depends on the deterrent of punishment in order to stop crime.

Mr. Speaker, by supporting this motion and engaging in proactive strategies to prevent crime, we could see a decline in criminal activities amongst at-risk groups, especially youth. Ultimately, these measures could save the province and society from heavy financial and emotional costs associated with criminal activity.

I'm not only talking about policing, judicial, and legal costs but rather the costs that are paid by the victims in society: property damage, pain and suffering, decreased trust, and weakened social bonds that cost us all dearly in society.

We don't have to reinvent the wheel, Mr. Speaker. There are

effective crime prevention strategies that already exist throughout this province that are designed to prevent crime within communities. We can build upon these initiatives and work with new ideas within communities as well. For example, a strategy highlighted on the website of the Solicitor General and Public Security encourages communities to hold block parties or barbecues where everyone within the area comes together to meet their neighbours. This helps to create a cohesive community network, which correlates to a decrease in property crime. Communities are also encouraged to hold community building days, where residents work together planting trees, painting buildings, mowing lawns, and beautifying their neighbourhood. Again, this process provides a vital connection between the community and its residents, especially the youth, and can considerably reduce vandalism and graffiti. These are but two examples of grassroots initiatives which have the potential to help make our communities safer. These initiatives instill community pride and a sense of belonging for all residents, particularly the youth.

An important element in crime reduction is to encourage and educate our youth at an early age that criminal activity is not acceptable. There's a reason why an old adage says that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. The benefits of a prevented crime truly outweigh the cost after the crime has occurred. Motion 508 promotes the use of educational programs and advertising campaigns to educate the youth, instilling pride in them, building communities, and ultimately it changes the attitude of young people regarding crime.

There are numerous crime prevention methods and techniques, as all situations are unique. One method that has proven itself to be effective and worth pursuing is seeking out reformed criminals to educate youth at risk. These former criminals oftentimes lived high-risk lifestyles and have chosen now to follow another path. Their stories communicate positive messages of change and possibilities that exist beyond the world of crime. These individuals provide a gateway out of high-risk lifestyles by presenting different programs and support networks available to deter youth from crime-related activities.

Mr. Speaker, a person with real experiences can deliver the message that crime and high-risk lifestyles can lead to a life of misery more effectively than others who have not shared the experiences. Advice from someone who has been there holds more weight than someone who has not. Just as often as we can't bear advice to quit smoking from someone who has never smoked or advice to exercise from someone who is obviously overweight, youth won't listen unless a source of the message is credible and is someone who has actually experienced what they're telling them not to do.

Mr. Speaker, we need to acknowledge the positive direction of Motion 508 and what it means for our youth. As a community we need to educate and work with our youth to prevent them from going down the wrong paths. We need to be proactive and innovative in our approach to crime reduction. Further educating youth in Alberta about crime in conjunction with utilizing the other great initiatives put forth by this government already is necessary in order to ensure that crime reduction happens and crime prevention is successful. It is for this reason that I support Motion 508.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise tonight and join the debate on Motion 508: "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to implement innovative

methods of crime reduction such as mass media advertising and . . . educational programs for use in the province.” You know, I’m a little bit surprised that it falls to us, although I’m not complaining about it. I often think that there’s much more work for us to do here on the floor of the Legislature than we sometimes are allowed to do. But I’m a little surprised that it falls to us to urge the government to do something as basic as this.

While I support in broad, general principle the motion, I wish it had more teeth. I wish it was more specific. This is kind of like, you know, urging the government to implement innovative methods of crime reduction. Not to make light of the subject because I know the hon. member whose motion this is is serious about this, but it’s a bit like asking the government to, you know, support motherhood or apple pie, something like that. It should go without saying, really.

I personally would like to see something much more specific in the way of a motion around crime prevention or crime reduction, something that we could specifically debate on the floor of this House and forward to the government and say: here, this is what the members of the Assembly are urging the government to do in a specific way or maybe more than one way to strive to reduce crime in the province of Alberta.

7:50

You know, there are a number of levels that crime prevention and crime reduction looks at. There are primary crime prevention policies that, you know, tackle risk factors in the general population known to be associated with crime trends: youth unemployment, addictions, poverty, and so on and so forth. There is secondary prevention. Those are policies that target situations where individuals or neighbourhoods or any distinct group can be at risk from crime, either at risk from crime as victims or at risk of falling into crime as perpetrators. There’s tertiary prevention as well, strategies that are aimed at preventing recidivism, assisting in the reintegration of convicted offenders into the community: the work of the John Howard Society, for example.

The Faculty of Social Sciences Institute for the Prevention of Crime at the University of Ottawa put together a paper called What is Crime Prevention, and I just want to quote very briefly from this.

Crime prevention encompasses a wide range of approaches, including those which . . .

And it gives three points, but I want to concentrate on point 2.

B. Change the conditions in neighbourhoods that influence offending, victimization and the insecurity that results from crime by building on the initiatives, expertise and commitment of community members (locally based crime prevention).

You know, one very good way to go about this, which has proven to be really quite effective in a number of jurisdictions where it’s been tried, is something called CPTED. C-P-T-E-D are the initials. It’s often referred to as CPTED, and it means crime prevention through environmental design. This is, for instance, one specific area where I think that if we had it to do all over again, we could have focused this motion and said: be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to do precisely this sort of thing about crime reduction.

Crime prevention through environmental design is pretty much as the name suggests: using designed features in an individual single-family home, in multifamily housing on a city block, in an entire neighbourhood, in an entire community to discourage the commission of crimes, to discourage bad guys from congregating in places where they can either plot or carry out their insidious plans, you know, without being seen by others.

It’s things that range from, you know, such obvious notions as installing deadbolts on the door of every unit in an apartment building, from that right up to landscaping so that the planting is

done in such a way that you have good sight lines, so that you allow for natural surveillance of the property. A very basic example of this is the message that we’ve all heard around the notion of keeping shrubs away from, you know, windows that open up on the front or the side of your house so that there’s nothing that can obscure the neighbour’s view of the bad guy if he’s trying to break in. All sorts of other things: adequate lighting, proper access controls into buildings, keeping a building presentable looking. In other words, the moment graffiti shows up, you get rid of it. That’s one of the basic rules. You keep coming back and removing the graffiti, no matter how many times the graffiti artist puts it up, until he finally is discouraged and goes away because there’s nothing like graffiti or a broken window to send the message to everyone who happens by that nobody in that building, nobody on this block cares about the overall condition of the building or the neighbourhood. That message of not caring sends a message to bad guys: “Come on in. It’s free for the taking. Everybody is going to look the other way because they just don’t care.”

The city of Surrey in suburban Vancouver in British Columbia has done a fair amount of work on CPTED as one of three phases of its program, its crime free multihousing program it’s called, or CFMH. The CFMH program was envisioned in 2004 and launched that year as a tool to keep illegal activity primarily out of rental and co-op properties, multifamily dwellings. It uses a combination of multimedia, police services, city and municipal involvement, and housing rental associations. It has three phases, one of which is an eight-hour training course for resident managers, for the building owners, for the residents, and for the police. Another one is what is called a safety social, where they encourage building managers to hold a social, inviting all residents to attend. Then they bring in bylaw officers, police, and fire services and present information on crime prevention, personal safety, and so on and so forth. They also explain the CFMH program, and they engage in some community building right there.

Phase 2 is CPTED, crime prevention through environmental design. They have set minimum requirements that all apartments are required to meet that are part of the program: deadbolts, that I mentioned; eye viewers; adequate lighting; landscaping. There are a couple of other points as well. They’ve had some fairly good results, and that’s something that I think we could look at very specifically as a targeted and defined way in which we could promote crime reduction and actually achieve some results.

The motion calls on us to “urge the government to implement innovative methods of crime reduction.” That is one. As I said at the outset, I would have preferred to see this motion specify a strategy or two rather than just saying “innovative methods” because it kind of invites the government to go away and study this and study this some more and then study the studies. Meanwhile the bad guys are breaking in and stealing the family belongings and doing whatever other kind of damage to individual Albertans and the communities that they live in.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I’ll take my seat. Thank you.

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

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to rise this evening and speak to Motion 508. I’d like to begin by congratulating the Member for Calgary-East on what I think is a very good topic for us to be debating in the Legislature and is worthy of our support. The motion demonstrates our commitment to promoting strong and vibrant communities and ensuring that Albertans feel safe. Implementing innovative crime reduction strategies is key to preventing crimes of growing prevalence in our

communities. Through the use of innovative marketing strategies and educational campaigns we are able to send the message to Albertans that we are taking a stand against crime, and we can send this message particularly to youth and youth at risk. I believe that our young people need to be resensitized to the detrimental impact that crimes have on our society and our communities.

Youth property crimes remain a prevalent trend in Alberta, 43 per cent higher than the national average in 2003. Vandalism, one of the more common invisible crimes, shows a cavalier disregard for others and demonstrates indifference to human decency. These attitudes can very well lead to violent crimes in the future. I agree, Mr. Speaker, with many of the previous speakers that young people need to learn and to be shown that vandalism is not acceptable in our communities. Its impact must be made clear. Vandalism, in fact, serves as an unfortunate reminder that there is an element of danger on our streets, and this is particularly worrisome when one thinks about seniors, such as the large number of seniors in my community, and those who are particularly vulnerable.

With mass media campaigns focused toward youth at risk, we can begin to shift societal attitudes about crimes like vandalism to the point where they are eventually rejected by youth. The safe communities task force reached similar conclusions in their 31 recommendations. In their report, *Keeping Communities Safe*, the task force noted that "targeted, consistent and effective marketing campaigns have been shown to have an impact on changing people's behaviours." I think we can find a number of examples of how social marketing has in fact contributed to behaviour change, Mr. Speaker. The public's attitude toward drunk driving and smoking in public places I think are two examples where mass marketing has in fact been a major factor in changing societal attitude.

8:00

Mr. Speaker, a smart, well-produced social marketing campaign geared toward our youth can gain credibility within this demographic, and it can accommodate messages for parents and teachers as well. Publicity campaigns have the potential to provide our communities with more support to educate our youth, helping them to keep off the streets, where Alberta's youth may be predisposed to commit crime. As well, this motion will allow the opportunity to work with our communities in implementing and designing a campaign that coincides with initiatives that are already in progress.

In order to successfully fight dysfunctional behaviour and crime amongst youth, we must acknowledge the fact that many offenders have been desensitized to the damage their actions cause. They are increasingly, apparently, devoid of a sense of responsibility to themselves, their families, and the general community. They have come to believe, I think, in some cases that this behaviour represents a normal state of affairs in our society. Such offenders may not have any community or family support to change their lives for the better, and we need to recognize that in designing any social marketing campaign that may emanate from this motion.

The media campaigns this motion proposes need to focus, in short, on resensitizing potential offenders to how their actions affect their community and, in turn, themselves. The task is no less, Mr. Speaker, than creating a new normal when it comes to societal attitudes regarding crime. We need to establish a clear, concise message for rejecting crimes like vandalism, and these campaigns can and should accomplish this task.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this motion provides a tremendous opportunity. The innovative crime reduction strategies concept could contribute to transforming societal attitudes and secure safer communities for all Albertans. I'd encourage all members of the Assembly to support this motion.

Thank you for the opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, appreciate the opportunity to stand this evening and spend a few moments discussing Motion 508. As it is proposed, Motion 508 seeks the government of Alberta's support for developing innovative crime reduction strategies in the form of awareness campaigns or educational tools.

Mr. Speaker, crime is an important issue in my home community of Kingsland in Calgary, throughout my entire constituency, and throughout the province. During the most recent campaign I heard from many citizens who have lived in Calgary-Egmont for many years and who now realize that their communities were almost considered to be inner city. My vision for Calgary-Egmont and for the province is for the streets that we walk on today to be as safe or safer for the next generation. In this pursuit I've had the privilege to meet with several people from the Calgary Police Service who also share this goal.

Recently the office of the Solicitor General and the Department of Justice formed the safe communities task force to reduce crime and improve safety in our province. In November this task force released 31 recommendations in order to accomplish that mission, outlined in the *Keeping Communities Safe* report. As part of these recommendations, Mr. Speaker, the task force suggested the use of mass media and social marketing campaigns as a way to dissuade youth from criminal activity.

This is particularly important because, as we know, all behaviours, positive or negative, are largely formed during these crucial years. I think of my own life, when I got hooked on politics as a teenager, and I haven't been able to kick that habit. These campaigns work specifically with the youth because they would presumably consist of the type of mass media that resonates most with them. Effective imaging and effective messaging can change behaviours, albeit not overnight but over a given period of time. Given time, these types of campaigns have proven successful in getting people to stop smoking, stop drinking and driving, and to start wearing their seatbelts. There's no reason why they can't have the same positive impact on our crime rate.

The task force also recommended implementing educational programs for youth to repeatedly inoculate youth against getting involved in crime. It is critically important to reach children at a young age about the dangers of criminal activity and to continue education at multiple levels. Children who are aware of and fully understand these pitfalls from a young age are much less likely to be involved in crime.

Now, there are many factors that lead to crime. Addictions would definitely be a major one, but in the end it is the individual who makes a choice whether he or she commits a criminal act. Much like the person who has too much to drink and then decides to drive, it is not a defence to state that someone pressured them to drink. They choose to drink and get behind the wheel. No one poured the alcohol down their throat; it was their choice. Accordingly, we as a government must show leadership to encourage our youth to make the right decisions as individuals. We must place funding to ensure that we can access our youth so that they do not choose to go down the road of crime.

Mr. Speaker, communities and the people who live in them have an integral role to play in promoting and preserving safety in this area. More needs to be done to equip communities with knowledge and power that they will need to fight crime at the most basic level. These campaigns and programs will act as tools for the community by empowering them to get active and intimately involved in making their streets safer. With our growing population and particularly our

expanding cities it is particularly important that we engage communities on these safety issues. Hopefully, communities will in turn foster safe environments as more and more people come to Alberta.

Alberta should look further at these types of innovative crime reduction strategies and educational programs referenced in Motion 508 as a way to fulfill the safe communities task force's key recommendations. Developing innovative crime reduction strategies will benefit the major cities in Alberta as well as the rural areas by instilling a culture against criminal activities. This will ensure that our streets are safer for the future, and for this reason I support Motion 508.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Olson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to have the opportunity to speak tonight in support of this motion, and I very much enjoyed the comments that I've heard so far. This motion, of course, encourages our government to employ communication and education as tools in our ongoing efforts to reduce crime in Alberta communities. While the motion specifies communication and education, I don't interpret it as being restricted only to those methods.

I want to congratulate also the Member for Calgary-East for his motion, which I understand is in response to a number of concerns that were voiced to him by his constituents during the recent election campaign. To a greater or lesser degree I'm quite sure that all of us have had those types of concerns expressed to us in our communities. I think few would argue that crime reduction is and must be a priority for this government.

When we look at recent statistics, although there is some cause for optimism, we certainly have lots of work to do. Alberta has an overall crime rate as well as a violent crime rate and a property crime rate that, while maybe not the highest in the country, are certainly higher than the national averages. We're particularly concerned about the relationship between violent and property crime and gangs and drugs. It just seems like whenever you find one, you find the other. One might be tempted to think that these are issues only for the big cities, but I think we rural MLAs have to be very conscious of this issue, too. For example, I note that in 2005 fifty-nine per cent of violent crime in Alberta took place outside of Edmonton and Calgary.

When one looks at various studies that have been done around the world in recent years regarding the issue of crime reduction, there's a common thread, I think, and that is that the solution can't be one dimensional. It can't be just about hiring more and more police, building more and more jails. I think we've heard that tonight, too, as a theme.

We need to look no further than the United States, actually, to see what their experience has been. While they've had some marginal success in reducing crime, it's been at massive cost. Irvin Waller in his book *Less Law, More Order* says, and I'll quote this, "more than 2 million persons are behind bars in the United States today – 22 per cent of all persons incarcerated in the world – a rate . . . higher than any other nation." Waller as well as many other commentators and organizations maintain that an underutilized yet very effective tool is crime prevention, early intervention. Through a broad array of community programs, everything from sports to music programs, health care, education, economic development, community watch, and so on, all of which come at far less long-term cost than incarceration, criminal activity can be nipped in the bud by this early intervention.

Now, I want to hasten to add that this is not an argument against

well-funded, strategic policing and prosecutorial resources, but based on this impressive body of research it does appear that a combination of these tools strategically used are the best and most effective use of taxpayers' money.

8:10

I wouldn't presume to suggest, obviously, that this is an original thought. There's been lots of talk about it, and we've heard it tonight as well. Our government, with its safe communities initiatives, is on the right track. For example, I'm very pleased to see the holistic approach that's being taken through the creation of the Safe Communities Secretariat. It represents no less than nine government departments, including Justice and Attorney General, Solicitor General and Public Security, Education, Health and Wellness, Housing and Urban Affairs, Children and Youth Services, Municipal Affairs, Aboriginal Relations, and Culture and Community Spirit.

As impressive as this initiative is, though, I feel that there is an additional element that's really going to largely determine whether it's ultimately deemed a success, and that is the involvement or the buy-in of local communities. I firmly believe, sir, that each community has to take control of its own neighbourhoods. The community of Hobbema is showing some great leadership right now in this sense. Derelict houses used for drugs and gangs are being bulldozed. Gang graffiti is being painted over by community members. People are no longer putting up with criminal activity. Now, there's still lots to do there, too, but they are leading by example, and they are a great example for us.

Once again, much work has already been done in Canada and around the world as to which community initiatives work best, which are the most effective. From the reading that I've done I found another common thread, another truth, and that is that what works in one community doesn't necessarily work in other communities. For example, in Seattle in the 1970s was really the first Neighbourhood Watch initiative. It reduced burglaries by some 50 per cent. One of the things that distinguished that program was that there was scientific measurement of the effect. But when it was transported and imported by other communities, it was much less effective, and the commentary would suggest that just taking their leaflets and handing them out in another community didn't work.

You have to have the buy-in of the local community. Also, it's suggested that perhaps the police are not the best delivery vehicle for those kinds of programs. For one thing, they've got other things that they should be focusing on, and it's not, perhaps, their prime activity. The people in the community in these other communities where it wasn't successful didn't take the time to analyze what their problems were and what the solutions should be. So a cookie-cutter approach doesn't work. Specific and unique problems have to be identified in each community and then the solutions identified and then work towards a common goal.

It's only logical that you would use communication to do that, communication between the government and the communities to identify the challenges, agree on a game plan, come up with the measures of whether the plan is a success. Of course, all community members need to be educated and understand what the plan is, and they need to be encouraged to participate. In short, this is communication for social change. The Rockefeller organization has done some work in that area, and it has been described as a very valid initiative. The objective is to empower individuals and communities to engage people in making decisions that enhance their lives and to allow previously unheard voices to be heard.

For all of these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I think we want our government to communicate with its citizens, listen to what they

have to say, and work with them in partnership to make our communities safe and free of crime. We have to be willing to think outside the box. We have to be proactive. We have to intervene at an early stage. This motion encourages us to do that; therefore, I encourage all members to support it.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Elniski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and add my thoughts to the debate on Motion 508.

An Hon. Member: No dipsticks in this one?

Mr. Elniski: No. No dipsticks.

Tonight we address the issues of crime and violence, issues that pervade the lives of many people in the world today. In Alberta I think that most people would consider the communities they live in to be relatively safe places. However, I also think that many Albertans know of places where they would be extremely uncomfortable walking alone at night. In June 2007 it was reported that the homicide rate in Alberta was 64 per cent higher than the national average and that our rate for serious violent crime was the fifth highest in the country. These are not areas in which we should be leading. According to the Alberta Crime Reduction and Safe Communities Task Force report one-third of surveyed Albertans considered crime in their neighbourhoods to be a serious problem. Following this, more than one-third of the people polled in this report thought that crime activities had risen in their communities over the previous five years. Motion 508 asks the province to consider implementing innovative approaches to supplement its success in reducing crime, such as education and mass media advertising.

During the election campaign – and I'm sure everyone in the House saw a very similar thing – many of the houses that we went to had stickers on their doors representing their community leagues or the Neighbourhood Watch program, or perhaps more common were alarm system stickers. It occurred to me while we were door-knocking that people really were taking the whole issue of crime very, very seriously and very, very personally.

Edmonton Neighbourhood Watch is an organization very near and dear to my heart. My wife is the communications chair of that particular organization. They've done some really good work and in my constituency have gone a long way towards representing individual participation and individual responsibility as being key elements to dealing with local crime.

I think that the creation of the Alberta Crime Reduction and Safe Communities Task Force is an excellent indication of this government's continuing commitment to recognizing the importance of crime prevention. To further exemplify this point, we can look to the recent establishment of the Safe Communities Secretariat and the announced funding of \$468 million, which will be used to implement the task force recommendations. This is not to suggest, however, that more cannot be done. I think there are some interesting merits in using mass media to effect preventable crime measures.

Mr. Speaker, to illustrate a point, I'd like to refer to the Montana meth project, conceived by businessman and Montana rancher Thomas M. Siebel. The Montana meth project is a large-scale media initiative with the goal of significantly reducing the use of the drug crystal methamphetamine in the state of Montana. The program is a research-based marketing campaign supported by community outreach and public safety policies. It realistically and graphically communicates the risk of methamphetamine to the young population

of that particular state. In 2005, prior to this campaign, Montana with its very small population ranked fifth in the United States for methamphetamine abuse. As of April 2008 Montana is currently 39th in the United States for crystal meth use. The project is still ongoing, but it is worth noting that this state has enjoyed fantastic success so far.

I would also add that although the Montana meth project is aimed at the topic of drug abuse, on a more general level it illustrates the consequences of making bad choices. I think this certainly fits into alignment with criminal activity. Mr. Speaker, this sheds light on an extremely important point, that preventable crime measures can bring about significant change in addition to addressing the present symptoms of crime.

The Alberta Crime Reduction and Safe Communities Task Force concluded that fighting crime means preventing more people from committing it. A similar conclusion was reached centuries ago by the Roman philosopher Seneca, who said, "He who does not prevent a crime when he can, encourages it." I think that this motion fits nicely within the crime prevention framework of our government. The Montana meth project offers an excellent example of an innovative and proactive way to reduce crime. If the innovative strategies proposed by the motion are well designed and well implemented, we will see great results.

I urge all of my fellow members to join me in supporting the passage of Motion 508. Thank you.

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

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to rise and speak to Motion 508, innovative crime reduction strategies, as presented by the hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Mr. Speaker, pursuing crime reduction strategies and improving upon the safety of Alberta's communities is already a priority of our government, but there is no reason we cannot incorporate innovative ideas like Motion 508 with our current government policies.

8:20

Mr. Speaker, in Alberta many of our crimes are committed by repeat offenders. This level of crime by repeat offenders has many people in my community afraid to walk the streets of their own neighbourhoods. This is especially true of our seniors and parents with young children. With new education programs and the use of modern media capabilities it is likely that many Albertans could be prevented from entering the criminal realm and those already immersed in criminal life could be influenced to choose a law-abiding lifestyle. Across Canada approximately 15 per cent of offenders are responsible for between 50 and 60 per cent of all offences. It should go without saying, then, that we have a serious problem with repeat offenders. Often these offenders are caught, charged, and released only to offend again at a later date, carefree of any punishments they are awarded along the way.

Mr. Speaker, the solution is prevention through education and awareness. For example, during the consultations conducted by our government's safe communities task force, the issue of substance abuse was repeatedly highlighted as a reason for reoffending. It became quite clear through the consultations that people fight because of alcohol and drugs, that they steal because of alcohol and drugs, and that they are more likely to abuse their family members when alcohol and drugs are heavily involved in their lives.

Mr. Speaker, it has also become quite clear that drug and alcohol abuse cuts across all communities, no matter what economic, social, or ethnic background they come from. Even though addiction impacts all Alberta communities, it seems to have had a particularly

devastating impact on our aboriginal families and their communities. Drugs in Alberta are a source of organized crime, a source for the recreational drug atmosphere which has developed in our province resulting from our province's increased prosperity. They are often a primary motivation for criminals to reoffend in one way or another.

Mental health goes hand in hand with addictions. Just like addictions, mental health issues are often not adequately addressed in our communities before the individuals slip through the cracks of our society or end up back in the criminal justice system. Alcohol, drugs, and mental illness are huge contributors to recidivism in criminals, something that could be drastically reduced with the types of innovative initiatives brought forth in Motion 508. With modernized education programs and awareness programs which utilize the capabilities of our modern media, we could potentially prevent many individuals from entering the criminal lifestyle and possibly even sway criminals back to a productive lifestyle. Any prevention that these programs could precipitate would be of great benefit to this province.

Our police are working very hard, Mr. Speaker, but we must be proactive and use preventative measures to reduce crime. These educational and awareness programs may also help our seniors and our young families in my community learn how to combat crime in their own neighbourhoods and help them take back their own communities. It's been estimated that approximately \$1 million in cocaine, with a street value of about 2 and a half million dollars, is sold to wholesalers in Medicine Hat each month. As acknowledged by the safe communities task force, this is likely a contributing factor to the crime rate. With the innovative measures as present in Motion 508 we are moving in the right direction of prevention and education for both addictions and mental health issues, hopefully reducing this reoffending element in Alberta.

It's because of this, Mr. Speaker, that I will vote in favour of Motion 508, and I would urge all hon. members in the Assembly to do so as well. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Does any other member wish to speak?

Then I will call on the hon. Member for Calgary-East. You have five minutes to close the debate.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to thank all members for their input and consideration of Motion 508. I believe this discussion is very important to have and reflects our commitment to lowering the crime rates in our communities. Crime is amongst the top concerns of Albertans, as I have seen and noticed. Motion 508 proposes that we add measures to our crime reduction strategy, media campaigns that strive for education and awareness. The idea is to expand our proactive strategy so as to prevent crime along with the appropriate reactive strategies of the courts.

Mr. Speaker, such measures would be visible to communities and criminals. They could serve as an effective tool for community-based initiatives, as acknowledged by the safe communities task force. If these campaigns are well designed and effectively executed, they could have an impact on crime rates outside the scope of police enforcement, litigation, and incarceration, which are very costly.

Mr. Speaker, awareness campaigns can target citizens with useful information, as some members have pointed out. This nature of campaign would educate citizens on ways that they can actively counter criminal activities. This would also promote stronger community ties, a united front against crime, and a better flow of information between the community and the enforcement agencies.

Campaigns can also strive to engage youth and at-risk groups with anticrime messages. Properly designed and placed, we can perhaps

change the attitudes of these at-risk groups, saving our communities much grief and in some cases saving lives. Mr. Speaker, our youth are our future, and criminal activities can have a tragic snowball effect that is hard to stop. I feel that we must get the message out potentially in a variety of ways that crime is simply devastating to individuals, their families, and their communities.

Mr. Speaker, Motion 508 offers in many ways the opportunity to achieve a comprehensive crime reduction strategy within our communities, one that includes a mandate to target crime through media campaigns and educational tools within the context of community-specific problems. Working with communities, we can ensure that these messages have the desired impact. There are a great number of possibilities and great potential within our communities to accommodate this motion. Some other jurisdictions have had some impressive campaigns, as we heard.

Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the involved discussion we have had amongst the members on innovative crime reduction, and I urge all members of the Assembly to support Motion 508. Thank you.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 508 carried]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 7

Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2008

[Debate adjourned May 28: Dr. Sherman speaking]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and finish moving second reading of Bill 7, Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2008. On May 28 we introduced many of the amendments outlined in Bill 7, so tonight I will focus on where we left off, which was at the consequential amendment needed to deal with the Universities Co-ordinating Council amendment and the other outstanding housekeeping amendments.

First, I'd like to reiterate the points made by my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Meadowlark about the main purpose of the proposed amendments to Bill 7. The amendments are largely designed to help facilitate the implementation of the government's approved roles and mandates policy framework for the advanced education system. This framework was developed to ensure that Alberta's postsecondary system aligns with the needs of students, taxpayers, and society. The new framework will enable sound decision-making to strategically and effectively invest public resources to address critical skilled labour shortages while at the same time creating a more educated society.

This new type of comprehensive planning for the system, which will be done through an access planning framework, is collaborative and being done by the ministry in consultation with members of the postsecondary system. The amendments do not create a rigid centralized planning framework and will allow for great flexibility for both government and postsecondary institutions in responding to labour market and societal needs as well as learner demand.

The amendments will also help us realize our vision of Campus Alberta, which is that Albertans will have the opportunity to participate in learning opportunities throughout Alberta through a co-ordinated and integrated system approach. In addition, as stated before, the amendments will allow for the naming of institutions in the regulations to the six sector categories identified in the roles and mandates policy framework. This amendment provides greater clarity around the program responsibility, research activity, and service regions of our institutions and helps guide the evolution of the postsecondary system into the future. This amendment, while

naming institutions to specific categories, does not constrain institutions from evolving in the future and moving between the categories, provided there is a demonstrated system need and they receive ministerial approval.

8:30

Now I'd like to switch to where we left off last time, which is outlining the housekeeping amendments that have been identified for the Post-secondary Learning Act. These amendments do not have broad policy implications and are largely designed to align the act with current practices or to clarify language use discrepancies in the act.

Universities Co-ordinating Council. The first is an amendment to the sections on the Universities Co-ordinating Council, UCC. As my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Meadowlark indicated, universities have not been active in the role of the UCC for many years, and this role is being phased out. All affected professionals are accommodated within their own legislation, so the amendment will remove mention of the UCC in the Post-secondary Learning Act. Consequential amendments to other affected legislation have been identified to reflect this change.

Termination of membership of the board. This section of the legislation referred only to public colleges and technical institutes when clarifying when the term of office of a member of the board is terminated. In actuality, the section should also apply to universities. Therefore, the suggested amendment was to change the wording to refer to public postsecondary institutions. This amendment was requested by one of the universities after the proposed amendments were approved by cabinet. The ministry did consult with other universities and the umbrella faculty association, who supported an amendment. This clause should have been added in the original amalgamation of the four acts but was missed.

Employees of the board. Finally, consistency is needed when referencing employees of the board and employees of the university to ensure the terms are consistently used. Additionally, clarity is required to reflect that employees of the board are hired, not appointed.

A wording change is being suggested to the section of the Lieutenant Governor in Council regulations that relates to program of studies to say that an institution may request that a proposal be suspended or terminated rather than deleted. These words more accurately reflect the practices used in the program approval process. This is not a policy change.

As you can see, these amendments are designed to enhance the responsiveness of the postsecondary system to meet the needs of learners, the economy, and society, our three clients, and I ask all hon. members to support Bill 7.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a second time]

**Private Bills
Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Cao in the chair]

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

**Bill Pr. 1
Young Men's Christian Association of Edmonton
Statutes Amendment Act, 2008**

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, amendments to be offered with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Olson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs I move that Bill Pr. 1 be amended. The amendment is being distributed as I'm speaking here. It's a small, simple amendment. There are two places, one in the preamble and one in the body of section 1, where there's a reference to "personal property." This act was originally intended to create an exemption from municipal real property taxes for the YMCA. The original reference said "real and personal property," personal property being nonland type of property. Subsequently it was determined that the reference to personal property is really not very helpful because there is no municipal taxation of personal property in this context. All of the interested parties, I think, have agreed that it would be most appropriate to delete the reference to personal property.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Certainly, I rise to support the amendment circulated on Bill Pr. 1. When we look at these two amendments, A and B, it was discussed last week at the Private Bills Committee, and the explanation that was provided to the Assembly by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose is absolutely correct. I would urge all hon. members to pass this amendment at committee.

This bill in its original version makes all the Edmonton YMCA lands and buildings exempt from assessment and taxation as opposed to select buildings. This, I would remind everyone, brings the exceptions for Edmonton in line with those of Calgary. It is a bill that is supported unanimously by the city council of Edmonton and also by the Department of Municipal Affairs. I would urge all hon. members to please consider the amendments and support this legislation.

Thank you.

[Motion on amendment carried]

[The clauses of Bill Pr. 1 as amended agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

**8:40 Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole**

Bill 17

Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2008

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. leader of the third party.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to talk a little bit about Bill 17, the Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2008, and I have made some comments in the past. This bill will increase the amount of the tax credit which is available to those who take care of a disabled or elderly relative. You know, this is an important thing in our society. It's very important that we recognize the enormous amount of care and compassion and assistance that people in our society, in Alberta society, contribute to taking care of people who are disabled or who are elderly and require care.

I want to say that it's pretty clear to me that our lives, our families, our communities would be far less meaningful if we didn't have a sense that care for our elderly and disabled was important. I think it's pretty clear to me that increases to a caregiver, an infirm dependent, the disability supplement credit amounts, will mean that the taxpayers who are currently claiming one of these credits will be able to receive an additional benefit of up to \$500 a year. For those individuals who are able to claim both the disability amount and the disability supplement, benefits could increase by up to \$1,000.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that this is a recognition of the critical importance of family members in our society and in our community. I think that this is a foundation for Alberta society and one of the things that underlies the really caring and compassionate nature of Albertans. I believe that family members are prepared to provide this assistance whether or not the government is going to give them a tax credit. If that was the only thing that affected this issue, I would say that, in fact, we probably didn't need to provide a tax credit for these individuals because through their own compassion they are prepared to do this and would be prepared to do this for free.

But we have a difficult situation because the Conservative government will not touch the brake, as the Premier has said. Because the Conservative government, in fact, has its foot firmly on the floor, on the accelerator, driving the economy faster than it should go, we're affected by all sorts of economic distortions: an incredible shortage of labour affecting many sectors. In particular, it affects sectors where the pay is traditionally very low. It doesn't just affect those sectors. I was speaking about a year and a half ago to the mayor of a medium-sized city in the province who told me that senior officials, engineering officials, planning officials, lawyers, and so on that worked for that city were being recruited by big oil companies to go work in Fort McMurray or to work in Calgary or in Edmonton and were being offered signing bonuses of up to \$100,000 to do so. Those are fairly senior positions. Those are areas where people command salaries in the six figures, and they're professional people, and the municipal governments were unable to retain people at that level.

Now, you come down to the level of people who are asked to provide care in long-term care facilities, and the wages are so low. They are amazingly low. I happened to be on the picket line – it wasn't a picket line, actually, because it was not a strike. It was a rally of Alberta Union of Provincial Employees held last week just outside the University hospital. Of course, they're in negotiations with the government for their income. I talked to a number of people that provide care in that facility and other facilities. Their wages – in fact, what they're being offered is in the range of \$14 an hour. Person after person told me that if they go out into the service sector, say, restaurants or something like that, they would be offered even more than they are providing for the ill and the disabled and the elderly in our province.

So it says to me that we have a problem. We say that we value family members providing this care, that we want to reward that by the provision of a tax credit, but where we have actual employees, even though they have a union and even though they have a collective agreement, the wages are so low that, of course, they can't attract the people necessary to provide this service. I think it really speaks to the hypocrisy of the government on this issue. If we were able to attract enough people to provide adequate care, it would not be necessary to offer tax credits to family members to provide that care, which should be and has traditionally been provided by qualified, motivated, caring, and compassionate staff.

Now, I'd just like to go back to the Auditor General's report on long-term care of a couple of years ago. I thought that that was a

most enlightening report, Mr. Chairman. The Auditor General talked about the shortage of staff and the impact that it had on care. He talked about people who were incontinent who were left in their own waste products for hours because there was no one there to come and help them – they pressed the button; they rang the bell; no one came – not because they didn't care but because they were severely overworked, severely short-staffed, and severely underpaid.

The Auditor General also talked about seniors in long-term care facilities who had to be got up for breakfast at 3 o'clock in the morning, not because that's when they ate – they ate at 7 or 8 o'clock the next day – but they were so short-staffed that in order to get everybody up and get them dressed and ready to eat, they had to start at 3. Of course, the seniors were then left sitting, waiting for their breakfast for four or five hours.

8:50

This is the kind of situation that we've got in this province because of the misguided policy of the provincial government when it comes to the development of our economy and particularly in regard to the tar sands. It means that families are forced to provide for the basic needs because if they don't, then people are left without adequate care. People are left sitting in hallways. They're not taken care of. They're not cleaned up. And it's not because the staff don't care. I think they do care, Mr. Chairman. I think they care a great deal.

I want to just put on the record my very strong view that the economic direction of this government is having multiple effects. It cascades through sector after sector and impacts the ability of people in all sectors to attract the people that they need to do the job. When it comes to areas that are traditionally low paid, like long-term care, then the effects are devastating. We've seen a similar thing in the child care business – I hate to call it a business: the child care sector, Mr. Chairman – where there are huge waiting lists in the province for child care, and it's not like there aren't people willing to provide the service, but they can't get the staff. They're very, very short-staffed. They have long waiting lists.

It's because as a society and as a government we don't value the people that provide for children. We say, on the one hand, that children are our greatest asset, children are the future, children deserve the very best. But, in fact, when it comes down to putting our money where our mouth is, it doesn't hold. It doesn't hold because the level of financial compensation to people in the child care sector is so low. It's comparable, in my view, to the low levels of wages in our long-term care sector, which discourages people from entering the sector because, frankly, they can make more money sometimes working in a fast-food place or in a restaurant than they can in providing care to our elderly or to our children.

This is something that I think the government needs to address. You know, I know that McDonald's and Tim Hortons have both raised their wages in Alberta well beyond what they pay in other places because they know that their business depends on continuing to be able to attract people. The fast-food industry, Mr. Chairman, is traditionally one of the very lowest paid sectors, but the companies involved in that sector make a lot of money, and they are prepared, if they have no other choice, to step up with higher wages and other incentive programs to keep people involved in their industry.

But is the government, which is responsible in an overall sense for long-term care and for child care, prepared to do the same thing? I think the answer is that they're not. They're not. They would rather give a tax incentive to a family member who has to be there anyway because if they aren't, their loved one will be left out in the hallway, unattended, and possibly lying in their own urine.

I've talked to individuals who have essentially been involved in their own job, an unpaid job, going to a nursing home or a long-term care facility and providing supplementary care for their elderly mother or father because they can't get the care they need. Those people go back day in and day out to look after their loved ones. They often give up a big chunk of their lives, Mr. Chairman, to do that. They often give up jobs to do that. If this government thinks that this tax credit compensates someone in some way for having to give up their job in order to take care of their elderly mother or father, then they are very much mistaken.

I don't know what else we can do to get this through to the government, Mr. Chairman. I think that it's great to have a tax credit. It's great to have a little bit of financial recognition for people who take care of a disabled or elderly relative. But I think most people would do it for free if they didn't feel that they were having to do that because the government was not ensuring that their parent or relative was well taken care of. If they didn't have to give up their jobs, if they didn't have to give up their lives, if they didn't have to stop paying attention to their children so that they can pay attention to their parents, I think most people would be glad to do it.

But it has become a burden. It has become an enormous burden on many, many thousands of Albertans because the government is not doing its job. The government is not pursuing an economic policy in this province that's balanced, that provides for full employment but does not create the kind of economic situation that we've seen in this province, where there's a severe labour shortage. That's unnecessary. It's not necessary to have a severe labour shortage in this province if the government would proceed at a more measured pace in terms of the economic development of this province.

This, in fact, Mr. Chairman, is the course of action that has been suggested by former Premier Peter Lougheed, who has argued that we need to have a more rational pace of development in the province, that we're going too fast, that the province's economic policy is not driven so much by the interests of Albertans but by the interests of big oil companies, most of which, as we know, are foreign owned.

The disruptions we're seeing in our province are primarily because the government insists on serving the interests of foreign-owned oil corporations, energy corporations that are attempting to feed an American market. The energy strategy that we're following is not a made-in-Alberta energy strategy. It's not a made-in-Canada energy strategy. It's a made-in-the-United States energy strategy, and in the long run it will leave Alberta with an enormous environmental liability for future generations to clean up. The oil companies will have moved on, will have taken the enormous profits that they've generated in this province and invested them in something else. It might not even be another form of energy at all; it might be something entirely different.

That's, I think, the responsibility of the government. The government needs to address the real issue in this case. The real issue is to make sure that our caregivers in home care get a decent wage, that they can afford to take part in the benefits of this province, that they can afford to participate in the economy on an equitable basis. But the way things are going, Mr. Chairman, that's not going to happen.

A tax credit, to me, is just a way of the government washing its hands of the crisis that they've created. They've created a terrible situation for tens of thousands of Albertans who worry about their parents, who worry about their elderly relatives.

9:00

I just want to bring to members' attention a study from the

University of Alberta a couple of years ago. It talks about employed people who care for friends and family with health problems who face financial and career-related consequences. This study came out of the department of human ecology. That's part of an ongoing \$2.3 million research initiative funded by the social sciences council.

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

Dr. Swann: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. A pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 17, Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2008. Yes, it's an opportunity to think again about what government is for and what we think the public interest is. It's clear in this province, where we are so bountifully endowed with natural resources and such a strong oil and fossil fuel based economy, that we would depend and fundamentally base our whole planning and budgeting around this oil industry, that is notoriously inconsistent, up and down. In fact, as a number of commentators have said, we have continued a trend that was started 15 years ago under the Klein government to spend most everything that comes out of the ground and continue to spend the capital instead of living off the interest of the capital. Any prudent financial planner would say this is not a recipe for a sustainable future.

Even the C.D. Howe Institute last week indicated as much in its recommendation that we should be saving \$15 billion a year, and we should get Alberta off this kick of lavish spending on so many issues and take a hard look at how effective our spending is – that includes every system from the health care system to how we're managing the environment for effective, measurable results out of our spending – and move towards a sustainable economy that actually taxes on the basis of what it needs to live each year and provide the services that people expect each year, not live off the capital that's coming out of the ground and is nonrenewable and is going to be gone within this generation in terms of its major contribution, as it is, to almost 50 per cent of our budget when one looks at both indirect and direct input into our tax base.

Mr. Chairman, while we do have an enviable reputation for having the lowest tax rates in the country, it's built on the back of an unsustainable decision to spend the capital as it comes out of the ground. Many countries have chosen to make some different choices. The one I often refer to is Norway, which over the course of 15 years has amassed a \$360 billion savings account. One could argue that maybe they would not need significant income taxes, but we certainly do if we're going to continue to live and support the public interest as we say we are committed to as government.

Clearly, we have to start living within the means. That means the sustainable means of economic development. Individuals and corporations, I believe, are prepared, for the sake of future generations, to pay more into this in terms of income tax. It's clear that we are leaving our children and our grandchildren an environmental legacy that is going to be massive and may not be capable of reclaiming. It's clear that we are not living within the means of our environmental endowment, whether it's water or whether it's airsheds. We are continuing to stretch the very limits of everything in this province due to a blind faith in the market, and we see examples around the world of economies that have put too much faith in the market. We see even in our own east coast fishery a profound failure of the market and the same with the salmon fishery on the west coast.

Civilization after civilization not recognizing limits: I guess the reality for most of us as citizens who see a future and want to see a more sustainable commitment to the future and to future generations. A serious commitment to climate change would also indicate to me

a much more credible government governing in the public interest, the long-term public interest, not the four-year term of an election that we see from this government.

So when we talk again this year about cutting personal taxes, many citizens are saying to me they feel that we should be paying more in taxes and be taking us off this addiction to fossil fuels and the fossil fuel surpluses that we have enjoyed. It's clearly time to show leadership in this province with many, many pressures now crashing in on us. The limits to growth and water shortages and now the significant impacts of climate change that appear are facing us so directly.

It will be difficult for me, obviously, to support this amendment and to support the kind of gutting of a sustainable tax base that would ensure for future generations that we are preserving the funding to do the reclaiming of many of these oil, gas, and coal sites that need to be in a productive state for our children, that would allow reforestation, that would allow real stewardship and significant habitat preservation as we continue to see increasing numbers of species threatened. Songbirds now in the grasslands: a number of them are threatened. We know quite a bit about the woodland caribou, the grizzlies, a number of species that we continue to assume are going to be there without taking the proper authority as government and setting limits, part of which is to say that we need a reasonable tax on income to support the way of life that we've decided we owe to ourselves and to our children and to future generations.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this. I'll take my seat.

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

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I had a chance to speak on this a little bit the last time it was up, but I want to take the opportunity to expand a bit on the concerns that we have with the subject matter that is covered by this bill. We've indicated, of course, the idea of recognizing the commitments that are made and the sacrifices that are experienced by family members who care for their infirm dependants. While we recognize that as a valuable act on the part of those who sought to bring this bill forward, it doesn't address what we see as the more significant problems facing these people. It doesn't address the huge gaps that exist in our province with respect to the care of our most vulnerable. While we recognize through this bill the degree to which these obligations have fallen onto the shoulders of average Albertans, the bill itself doesn't go anywhere near far enough to help people with the burdens that we've asked them to carry on our behalf, and I do believe it is on our behalf because it is us, our community, that ultimately has the obligation to care for those most in need of it on any given day.

I wanted to start by referring to a study that was completed at the University of Alberta. I think it was entitled Wounded Veterans, Wounded Families. It was a study of the experience of many families who were caring for veterans who had returned from active duty with severe disabilities. There were a number of really telling observations that were described in that study.

9:10

They noted, for instance, that with respect to the wounded veterans that returned, almost 55 per cent of the spouses who were taking care of those veterans reported spending five or more hours each day helping their spouses with certain daily living activities. These were people that were severely disabled that still had access to other forms of therapy and other forms of care, yet their spouse was spending at least five hours a day assisting them. They also went on to say that a certain portion, 40 per cent of those spouses,

had been providing that care for anywhere between 10 to 19 years. This is a huge, huge commitment that's being made by these family members. You know, five or more hours per day for 10 to 19 years is a commitment that I would suggest is perhaps not very well reflected in the \$500 to \$1,000 that a family might receive as a result of this bill passing.

In this report they also noted, of course, the effect of the lost wages and benefits that were experienced in these families as a result of the tragedy that they had experienced. Forty per cent of them reported having a reduction in the overall family income earned by the nondisabled spouse. Another 35 per cent reported worrying quite significantly about the future of their finances. Sixty per cent of the caregivers found that they were invariably compelled to spend money on medications and travel and transportation associated with the care of their disabled spouse. Indeed, of the total group, 16 per cent said that they were spending more than \$5,000 per year on incidental expenses associated with caring for the wounded and disabled veteran who was living at home.

They also noted that, of course, as I think we might have mentioned previously, they were all themselves reporting significant health effects of having to shoulder this burden. They talked about, you know, being exhausted, about being sleep deprived, about having no time for other family members, about having limited time for personal activities. They talked about severe strain on the relationships within those family units as a result of the kinds of commitments they had to make in order to do the best they could for their loved ones.

Ultimately, the study itself concluded by suggesting that significant funds should be dedicated to assist veterans and their families with the consequences of having been injured while engaged in active duty. It's interesting because, you know, all these observations apply to most of the people who would be eligible for the tax break that is covered by this bill. This study, of course, just dealt with veterans who were injured while on active duty, but the observations, frankly, apply to all families where the primary responsibility for caring for someone with a disability or who is in some way infirm falls to the family members.

My hon. colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood started to talk about another study completed at the U of A about what happens with respect to caregivers who are dealing with disabled or infirm family members in the home. The study showed that in 2002 roughly 260,000 people were employed and also caring for older parents or disabled relatives in their home. This was across Canada.

They noted that most of those people had reduced their working hours and that they had compromised their own pension plans and their own contributions to their future pension plans. They noted, of course, that the vast majority of those caregivers, as I might have mentioned in the past, were women, and they noted that a lot of them were making workplace adjustments to deal with the caregiving responsibilities that they had taken on. They were leaving work early, they were working part-time, they were reducing their work hours, they were changing their work so they could work from home, or they were quitting their jobs, and by doing all of that, they were significantly reducing their RSPs, significantly disintitling themselves from pension benefits.

The irony, of course, is that in many cases these very women are doing it because they can't contemplate the notion of putting their parents or their grandparents into the substandard system that exists in our province today with respect to long-term care, yet in so doing, making those sacrifices to care for their parents, they are in fact shortchanging their own future and putting themselves at risk of having to be in a lower standard facility in the future. There is that irony in terms of this.

I had a chance to look a little bit at what kind of other supports people who are caring for infirm adults at home might have. Of course, you know, the first place to look is in the home care program. If you check with Capital health or whatever else, you'll see that the type of clients that typically are eligible for provincially funded home care programs are those who need community-based, short-term treatment, who need long-term services for ongoing needs, who need palliative care, who need different types of support and treatment services. In fact, the caregivers themselves are recognized as being eligible for home care in the form of respite services because we know that we need to provide respite services for those who are doing the most work caring for those infirm or dependent relatives at home.

The difficulty, of course, is that while these people may be eligible for a couple of hours a week of physiotherapy services or a couple of hours a week of nursing services or respiratory therapy, all of those services that you would often in the past have seen provided in a properly funded, properly administered long-term care setting or in a hospital where there were actually enough beds to care for patients, all those people are being cared for at home, but they don't have ongoing nursing services, and they don't have ongoing licensed practical nurse services, and they don't have ongoing nursing aide services. No. Those services are provided by the family member who is at home, who has taken time off from work, who has quit a job, who has downgraded their career aspirations, who has opted out of their pension, who is not contributing to RSPs. Those are the people that are providing that type of bridging care between the little bits and pieces of physiotherapy or occupational therapy that may come through the door. So these are the people that we're talking about.

It's interesting that if a family member is concerned about sending a parent or an aunt or a relative to one of our long-term care centres if, for instance, they actually are able to find a bed and actually get their parent or relative in there, they do have another option. Instead of doing it all themselves, if they're quite wealthy, they can hire somebody to do it. It's actually through the Calgary health region community and supportive living options that you can find information about what it would cost to hire somebody to come into your home to do the work that so many of these people are doing on their own.

You'll find on this website that a registered nurse will cost you roughly \$50 an hour, a licensed practical nurse will cost you \$35 per hour, a community support worker will cost you \$20 per hour. Of course, these are all people that are out there in the private sector putting themselves out to the wealthy, wealthy families who would rather not see their loved ones go into our somewhat questionable long-term care system right now and who themselves are not able or not willing to do that work on their own time. So they can hire these people to come in and do that work. That's great for those of us who are making hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, who can afford somebody to come into our homes, I suppose, if we can hold our nose and engage in this kind of private delivery of health care, which is being encouraged through this website. That's what it roughly costs.

9:20

As we know, the majority of Albertans don't really have that option at their disposal. Instead, it's they that are doing it, or it's their wife, who maybe is making a little bit less money, so they're going part-time, or it's their daughter, who is, you know, staying home on mat leave and so will come over and take care of grandma while also taking care of their kids. Those are the people that are doing that work. Were they to be doing it professionally, they would

be earning anywhere from \$20 to \$50 an hour. Instead, we're looking at compensating or acknowledging – large quotation marks around the word acknowledging – those people by offering them a tax break of between \$500 and \$1,000 a year.

So you can see our point that this is not even a drop in the bucket. It's an entirely different vessel that we're talking about here. Unfortunately, this may make people feel like we're dealing with the problem, but all we're really doing is saying that we're dealing with the problem. We're not actually doing anything substantial to deal with the problem.

Interestingly, the coalition Who Cares? Alberta has noted that they've had a number of people contact them with concerns. I'd like to read just a couple of lines from a letter that they posted on their website to the hon. Premier, but I'm sure that that could be raised in the future as well. There are a lot of descriptions out there of the kinds of hardships that people are having to undertake.

The last thing I'd just like to talk about a little bit is an article that ran in the magazine *Alberta Views*, I think, two or three years ago about the state of our long-term care centres. It was entitled *Warehouses for Seniors*. The person that wrote that article interviewed a number of people. They interviewed families, they interviewed people who worked within the system, and they interviewed advocates. One of the people they interviewed was a nurse, actually, who worked in long-term care. That nurse was quoted as follows: "I want to die before I ever go into a nursing home and a lot of us do because we know what the situation is." This was a nurse who had worked in a nursing home for over 30 years. It was interesting because her making that comment sparked quite an interesting discussion within the long-term care community.

In my time as an advocate for the nurses' union I had the opportunity to go to a series of meetings where we sat with management and discussed the implications of having a nurse and nurses speaking out about the conditions of the long-term care situation. We ended up having some very honest and forthright conversations. A lot of the comments that I heard back not just from the nurses but also from the people managing and running these long-term care facilities was that they knew full well that the nurses were overworked. They knew full well that almost every shift was understaffed. They knew full well that they had a 25 to 30 per cent vacancy rate, that was always posted and never filled. They knew that nurses and LPNs and nurses' aides were being asked to do twice what they used to do. They knew full well that they could not spend the time with the patients that they used to be able to 10 or 15 years ago.

They knew that there were serious problems in terms of basic care around people: you know, having access to the bathroom, having their diapers changed, being fed in an amount of time that was safe vis-à-vis their other medical conditions, all those kinds of things. But they said: there's nothing we can do about it because we get our funding from the government, and the last thing that we could do is publicly suggest that the government needs to give us more because then what would happen is that we would get less. I found that quite interesting, hearing those kinds of comments coming back from administrator types within the system.

The fact of the matter is that the system does not in most cases provide the kind of care that many of us would want to see our parents enjoy were they having to go into care, so many, many people are making many, many sacrifices to care for them, and they are essentially carrying on their shoulders the responsibility that we have abdicated here by not properly funding our system of long-term care services for people in this province.

While my hat is off to those people who are shouldering that responsibility that we are abdicating day in and day out and while I would, of course, support whatever minimal effort is put out there to

assist those people, I think we would be doing them a great disservice were we not to point out how incredibly minimal the proposed effort which is on the books right now really is and how it really would be a travesty, a tragedy, were we to leave this discussion and leave this bill as though we had addressed the problem and as though we had done what these people deserve for us to do in meeting our responsibilities to them and to the people they care for day in, day out.

Those are my comments on the bill at this point. Thank you.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I want to continue our discussion on this bill a little bit further because I think that we need to focus some attention on the terrible situation that has evolved and continued in this province with respect to long-term care and the inadequacies of this bill in addressing that issue. It doesn't mean that the bill is wrong. It just means that by setting it up as the answer, as the response to this situation, the government is failing to meet its obligations to provide for the care of seniors and people with serious disabilities in our province.

I'd like to read a couple of letters that were sent recently. Well, one was sent in April of this year to the Premier by Mr. Ted Woyillowicz. He says to the Premier:

I am writing to you to call upon the Alberta government to develop a real plan that will address the growing human resources crisis in the human services sector.

I believe that the work of the human services sector plays a vital role in your government's plan to "improve Albertans' quality of life, and provide safe and secure communities". Yet, the reality is that for human service organizations, the crisis is getting worse as the demand for their services grows and they cannot attract and retain the necessary staff to maintain quality services for the many Albertans in need.

For this reason, I am asking the Alberta government for:

1. An immediate government investment to respond to the human resources crisis in the human services sector so to provide an increase in wages, benefits and supports that will allow the sector to attract and retain a workforce.
2. A commitment to invest in a three-year social infrastructure plan (2008-2011) that will establish Alberta as a world leader in supporting quality of life in strong, healthy and connected communities.

I appreciate that you have many pressing demands upon you and your government, but feel that unless significant action is taken to address this crisis, there will be many serious consequences for Albertans.

Premier . . .

He uses the Premier's last name, which I'm not allowed to do, but we all know what it is.

. . . I distinctly remember you stating during the election campaign that you care about people. I am certain you do for you wouldn't have said the following which I will paraphrase: a society is judged on how it treats its most vulnerable. By acting aggressively to resolve the very serious issue in the human resources field, the disadvantaged among us will come to realize and understand your moving words which I have paraphrased above.

It is not something that the market understands so it can not be counted on to undertake action to resolve the problem. The market does not understand because it is heartless. But most humans understand the problem and because of your compassionate words, I know that you will rise to the challenge to resolve this problem. Why? Because it needs to be done.

9:30

Mr. Chairman, another letter was sent, in September of last year,

by Samantha Appleton to the Premier. This is a much shorter letter. She says:

I currently work at the Robin Hood Association where you our Premier and the honourable [Minister of Finance and Enterprise] . . . She uses her name, but I can't.

. . . stopped by to address with us our staffing crisis. You explained if elected you had a plan that would ease this crisis within 45 days.

Also you said you would implement a plan to help us in the future.

What happened [Mr. Premier]?

That's the end of the letter. I infer from that that the Premier made a promise and didn't keep it. Or at least that's the view of the people that he made the promise to.

Mr. Chairman, I know that there are a great deal of people in this province who are very, very concerned about this. I have a very moving letter from Carol Wodak which was written a number of years ago but I think is still very relevant. The letter talks about the period of time towards the end of her mother's life. It began with a fall in which she got a nasty gash on her forehead. "The hospital was very busy," she said, and drew the simplest possible conclusion: the injury was caused by a fall on an icy sidewalk. They said: "Normally we would keep her here for observation, but we have no beds. Her family doctor can take out the stitches." It was several months later when a CT scan revealed that her mother had actually had a stroke, and by then it was too late for meaningful remedial therapy.

Then her mother required long-term care, and over the next five years there were repeated admissions – admissions to hospitals, four different privately owned care homes that they paid for – some other strokes, and four assessments by Capital health. The first three came to the conclusion, which she believes is very unrealistic, that her mother could still care for herself with only minimal assistance.

Finally, they changed that and admitted that she was eligible for long-term care, so she was admitted to a nursing home, and the problems continued. The facility care, she says, consisted of strapping her in her wheelchair for the whole day, using diapers which were changed only four times a day instead of toileting her, asking her to come down and feed her mother since she couldn't eat without assistance, ignoring her calls for assistance or distress. The care, Mr. Chairman, consisted of routine chores: get her out of bed; take her to the dining room; take her to the common area; change her diapers; put her to bed.

There was a recreational program which helped with a few hours of the week, but there was little, if any, one-on-one comfort when needed, social interaction, regular exercise, or assistance with walking. There was also no therapy to help counter the effect of the strokes and only minimal and occasional therapy to try and maintain mobility. Ms Wodak, who wrote the letter, said that she or her son visited her mother every day, and that was usually time to assist her with her meal. They were responsible for brushing her mother's teeth and trying to help her walk a little bit.

Then, Mr. Chairman, they found that there were even more serious problems than neglect. The facility refused to place her mother in a dementia unit, which she thought was necessary given all the medical assessments and where she thought her mother could expect better care. There were serious dental problems, and the issue was not properly resolved. There were major, major problems. They discovered that the normal daily tooth brushing at the facility was not included in personal care. The staff in the care facility didn't have the time or the training necessary to provide this.

Now, can you imagine this, Mr. Chairman? Here we have an elderly woman suffering from a number of strokes who has a major dental crisis, including gum disease, tooth decay which required seven extractions, the loss of a bridge and five fillings. This was the result of the fact that the facility did not include brushing her teeth

as part of the care package. She was unable to do this on her own, but the facility did not provide it. Of course, this is a major health issue for a very elderly person, especially one prone to strokes because, of course, without a major sedation they can't do the work that's necessary, and that puts the patient at more risk.

The failure to toilet was a big problem. It caused her mother much misery but more than that, she says, actual physical harm. She had persistent skin breakdown and infection as well as urinary tract and bladder infections because of inadequate hygiene. There's a description here, which I'm not even going to read, about the condition which Ms Wodak found her mother in.

But she doesn't blame the staff. She says:

Staff is overwhelmed by the volume of chores and the number of patients that they have to care for. Care aides, optimally two staff for 25 residents, have an onerous assignment of tasks. They go through the list: twenty minutes to get someone out of bed, washed and dressed for breakfast; change diapers four times in the day; administer meds as required; feed instead of assisting a resident to eat. They do this, using physical force if necessary. There is no time to explain, to get consent, to come back in a few minutes to try again, to cajole cooperation, to respond to signs of distress. Can you imagine caring for a child, or even a pet, in this way? My mother was miserable for the more than two years she spent in the regular unit of the nursing home. She was withdrawn, agitated and frightened and ill; my regular requests for better care got responses about "best practices within available resources." The antiquated bath lift was a traumatic experience; there are many more suitable tubs available. There were inadequate staffing levels; many staff were not trained for dementia care. There was continual reliance on casual and part-time staff so there was no familiar faces, or continuity of caregiving, or even awareness of individual needs or preferences.

Can you imagine, Mr. Chairman, putting your parent in these conditions? Yet these are the norm in this province.

There was minimal comfort care or reassurance or one-on-one social interaction; there was inadequate assistance with meals.

9:40

Mr. Chairman, she talks about the facility being designed for a resident population when less than 10 per cent were in wheelchairs and few had dementia. At the time this letter was written,

the vast majority of the residents are in wheelchairs, and most have a severe dementia. Staffing is reduced to half of original levels.

She says that her

continued complaints to the administrator of the facility resulted in invitations to move my mother to a different facility (but no promise of better care there), and finally I was asked to sign a "Contract for Care", outlining only the existing inadequate care, but offering to move Mom into the dementia unit for a trial period. It also, however, required her to stop complaining, or they would move Mom to a different facility.

Can you imagine that? You're trying to intervene on behalf of your parent, your mother, who is receiving completely inadequate care, to the point that it is producing very serious psychological and physical health problems. You are told that if you don't stop complaining, if you don't stop advocating on behalf of your mother, they will move her out of the facility. I just don't know how any member of this House would consider that to be in any way acceptable.

To her credit she refused to sign, but they were relieved when her mother was moved to the dementia unit 27 months after admission. Months after that a health region representative admitted that the original assessments of her mother's care were obviously wrong. At the time, she had appealed the decisions all the way up to the chair of the health region without success. Throughout those years, she indicates, she had written to and met with the health region authori-

ties and her MLA, written to two ministers of Health and Wellness, and to the Premier. She called the Health Facilities Review Committee, which said that no existing standards had been broken. She made a submission to the standing policy committee on health and community living. She worked with others to make the request for the Auditor General's audit. The response she always received was: thank you for bringing your concerns to our attention.

She goes on to say that there was some improvement in her mother in the dementia unit and that this was noticeable within a couple of days. The only difference was that she now received care from trained and caring staff and that they had started weekly reflexology treatments. Her mother was more content, not frightened, and not strapped into her wheelchair. She started to respond. She tried to learn a song to remember how to talk to others. A year later, when the improvement continued, the cocktail of antipsychotic drugs was reduced. It was recommended that she stay on a small dose of one of them because she still had periods of agitation, but another year later, when Ms Wodak's research raised real concerns about this remaining drug, she asked to have it removed it as well.

Later she happened to see a medications log for her mother and realized that they had continued to give her one of the other drugs regularly and had maintained outstanding as-needed prescriptions for two others contrary to her instructions. There was no evidence that these drugs were useful and every indication that they could cause harm. Their use was primarily to sedate, to control behaviour, to reduce care needs.

Mr. Chairman, we have seen this and heard this over and over again from one end of the province to the other, and I have personal experience with this with my own grandmother. They use drugs to sedate seniors in order to control their behaviour because they don't have the staff to adequately deal with them. The drugging of seniors in our long-term care facilities is, I think, bordering on criminal. I think that there are still some ongoing problems with that.

Mr. Chairman, these facilities function at an inadequate level, but I think the last point that Ms Wodak makes in this letter is that it would be even worse if it wasn't for the use of volunteers. These facilities use volunteers, or unpaid assistants, in order to enable themselves to function even a little bit. They have volunteers that do staff work as well as supplemental social and recreational work. Without charitable donations to furnish, repair, and maintain the facilities or to give a lift to a tub or other necessary equipment, these things simply wouldn't function. She goes on to say that after a resident at a local care facility died because of scalding in a bath, there are still no temperature controls on the many sink taps accessible to the residents of her mother's dementia care unit.

Mr. Chairman, with that I would move that we adjourn debate on this bill. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 7

Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2008

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is my pleasure to rise in committee stage to continue the debate on Bill 7, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2008. I want to make it clear to all members of the House right now that it is not my intention to drag this out this evening, that in principle we supported Bill 7. We do have a couple of concerns with it, and I do have a

couple of amendments that I want to put on the floor. Of course, we will debate those amendments to the fullest extent that the House feels like debating them, but it is not my intention to turn this into a long, involved process. I think what we're proposing here is fairly straightforward.

I will say very quickly that there is one amendment that I wished I could have brought forward, but unfortunately it didn't pass muster with Parliamentary Counsel for, I think, perfectly understandable reasons given the rules around amendments. But were this the perfect world, I would have brought forward an amendment that would have in one way or another allowed us to move towards renaming Mount Royal College to Mount Royal university. The minister knows my feelings on this, so I won't go into this in great detail. In fact, I think anybody who has read my comments in *Hansard* regarding Mount Royal over the course of the last four years knows my feeling and my party's feeling on that. There is just no good reason to drag out the process of allowing Mount Royal to become what it is destined to be, but tonight is not necessarily the time and place to deal with that in any great detail.

I do have a couple of issues with this bill. The first issue that I want to bring up has to do, I guess, at least in part with the feeling that we have on this side of the House that this bill is being rushed through. The indication that we were given in the early stages was that Bill 7 most likely would be introduced in the spring session but would probably not come up for debate until the fall session, which, certainly, when you're looking at a small research staff for a small caucus that is fairly well taxed with preparing background and briefing documents for estimates debates on all the various government ministries during budget debate and tasked as well with producing background and briefing notes on other pieces of legislation, would have given us time over the summer, very much-needed time, to consult fully with stakeholders about the areas that we are concerned about.

9:50

As it is – surprise – lo and behold a few days ago, last week I guess it was, we learned that Bill 7 was going full steam ahead in this session. So we did what we could to find out what we could about a couple of sections that we thought looked potentially contentious and to find out what we could about how stakeholders felt about those. One section where we ran into – I don't know whether to call it a roadblock; let's call it a patch of fog – is section 3 of the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2008, which proposes to repeal section 21(2)(a) of the Post-secondary Learning Act. Now, section 21(2)(a) presently reads:

- (2) A dean of a faculty
 - (a) is the chief executive officer of that faculty.

When we saw that Bill 7 wants to remove that, wants to repeal that section, we wondered to ourselves: why? What does this mean? Why are we, apparently, taking powers away from deans? Or are we? Where is that power going? Or is it? What are the government's intentions? How do deans of institutions and their bosses, if I can call them that – the vice-presidents academic and presidents of the institution – feel about this? Is this a way of centralizing the postsecondary system in the province and to what end?

Unfortunately, Mr. Chairman, we have not been able to come up with the answers that we would have liked to in the time that we had, so with that in mind I am bringing forward an amendment to the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2008, which seeks to strike out section 3. I will give this to the page now for distribution, and when you signal the go-ahead, we'll continue the discussion.

The Chair: Hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, please proceed.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Do we have a designation for this amendment?

The Chair: A1.

Mr. Taylor: A1. Good. Speaking now to amendment A1, I will read it into the record. I move that Bill 7, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2008, be amended by striking out section 3. I've already read section 3, the section that it seeks to repeal.

Here it is in a nutshell. There's a lack of clarity as to the exact implications of removing this role from the dean of a faculty. How does this change the roles of the dean, and why are we changing the roles of the dean? Is this to bring deans of universities – excuse me. I should use the new terminology since the major purpose of Bill 7 is to enshrine the roles and mandates framework, after all. So let me use the correct terms as proposed by the roles and mandate framework. Is the institution to bring the dean of an institution in the comprehensive academic and research institutions sector in line with the powers of the dean in an institution in the baccalaureate and applied studies institution sector? For instance, were there differences there? What are the new roles of the dean going to be?

It's not stated where the authority of the dean, that's implicit in the dean having been referred to under section 21(2)(a) as "the chief executive officer of that faculty," would be transferred to. Will it go to the board of governors or the institution? Will it go directly into the president's office since the president really, I guess, could be described as the CEO of the institution? Will it go to the minister? There are very important functions built into the university system, and removing one piece of that system without indicating where it is to go, to my way of thinking, doesn't make much sense. It's really because of a lack of clarity and a lack of information around this and the fact that it kind of stood out when we went through it as a housekeeping item – I'll have to go back and check the Blues, but I don't believe the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose actually referred to that in his list of housekeeping items.

It needs some explanation. It needs some justification, in our view. So as a way of moving to that and to very well perhaps doing the right thing, I have moved this amendment, that Bill 7, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2008, be amended by striking out section 3. That is amendment A1, Mr. Chair.

With that, I will take my seat and see if there's further debate on this or answers to my questions from the minister or any or all of the above or none of the above, and we'll continue on from there. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Technology.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Chair. Recognizing that perhaps the hon. member has not had a great deal of opportunity to visit with all of the stakeholders that are involved in the Post-secondary Learning Act or the roles and responsibilities mandate framework, I can understand that perhaps there might be a little bit of confusion there, but the reality is that this entire legislation is derived from a document which was prepared not just by our department but by the institutions themselves in working in collaboration with all of those institutions – working with the presidents, with the provosts, with the managers of these institutions – to arrive at what were the recommendations that created this legislation.

When the hon. member talks about the deans as the CEOs, we're not changing the role of the dean. In fact, the powers of the deans, as I understand it, are given to the deans by the executive branch of the institution. Therefore, the financial aspect of a CEO's role really

resides in some institutions in the provost, in some institutions in the president. In some institutions it resides in another individual. What we're saying is that the institutions themselves have said to us that this is something that they need to do to streamline their operations. Based on that and the fact that I know that the hon. member will be able to speak with the other institutions in the province, not just the one or two that he is close to, he'll find that there is a fairly broad range of support for the bill and for the roles and mandates framework as it is written.

Therefore, Mr. Chair, I would ask members not to accept this amendment, amendment A1.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the hon. minister's comments that there was a comprehensive document that was prepared in consultation with all of the powers that be in our postsecondary system. I wonder if that document might be tabled in the House.

Mr. Horner: It was.

Mr. Mason: It was tabled. When was it tabled, if I may through the chair?

Mr. Horner: Before the election. Last session.

Mr. Mason: Before the election. Last session. Okay. Thank you. I'll go have a look for that, Mr. Chairman. But I didn't hear in any definitive way from the minister the specific impact of this amendment or not passing this amendment; that is to say, the powers of deans and how they are affected.

10:00

A CEO has, I think, some fairly agreed-upon things that are defined by this, and it means not just the power to administer. For example, a chief administrative officer administers the policy that exists whereas a chief executive officer implies the right also to make policy as well as administer it. That might not be appropriate for a dean given the very democratic nature of postsecondary institutions, where they have faculty councils, where they have general faculties councils that are involved in developing policy within the postsecondary institution or within the specific faculty. That might be a reason why they would want to remove it, or alternatively it might be because they want to centralize power and the higher administration of the postsecondary institution.

I agree with the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie that we don't know. We don't know what this is doing to the postsecondary institutions. In that sense I would really encourage the minister to respond to the question in a little more detail because it's piqued my curiosity and left me thinking that there might be other things in this bill that I might be curious about as well. So I'd appreciate that. Otherwise, I will be forced to support this amendment. I know that that will strike fear in the heart of the minister, but I still would appreciate having the answer. I'm informed by my colleague from Edmonton-Strathcona that she recalls reading the framework document that the minister refers to, and it does not specifically address the role of deans. So I think we are waiting on the minister to hopefully give us that answer.

Thank you.

Mr. Horner: Well, the hon. member is correct; specifically in the roles and mandates framework deans are not mentioned nor is the

naming of the Banff Centre for Continuing Education. There are a number of things that the institutions asked us to put into the legislation to cover these things off.

When you compare this clause with the powers in other acts related to universities in other provinces, this power provided to deans is found to be unique in Alberta. It's kind of a historical carry-over from the Universities Act. The problem with it is that there's no clear definition within that act of what a chief executive officer means. Removing the dean as the chief executive officer will not – and I repeat: not – infringe on the academic freedom or the autonomy of deans because they will continue to maintain the authority of general supervision over academic work and the authority of supervision over the instruction of faculty staff.

At the same time the amendment provides the university boards, as I mentioned in my response to the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, the additional flexibility to determine the types of programs they need to offer to better align with the economic and the learner needs as outlined in the policy framework document. So we had to give the boards the authority, which they already had in the act, which they had delegated down to the deans without a definition. That was the problem. It was very ambiguous for that one set. The board of the university could still delegate additional powers down to the dean level should they choose to do that. But we, hon. members, put boards in place to do the governance of the institutions. We should allow them to do it.

The Chair: Seeing no other members wanting to join the debate on amendment A1, the chair shall now call the question on the amendment.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

Mr. Taylor: I do have another amendment, which I will give to the pages to pass out now, which, Mr. Chair, I assume we'll be referring to as amendment A2.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Taylor: Okay. Good. I'll allow them to distribute and then speak to it.

The Chair: On amendment A2, hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, please proceed.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Amendment A2 reads that I move that Bill 7, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2008, be amended "by striking out section 10."

Now, if you turn to your bills, you will see that section 10 reads as follows:

Section 60(1)(b) is amended by adding "for the economic prosperity of Alberta and" before "for the educational."

Section 60(1) presently reads:

The board of a public post-secondary institution shall

- (a) manage and operate the public post-secondary institution in accordance with its mandate,
- (b) develop, manage and operate, alone or in co-operation with any person or organization, programs, services and facilities for the educational or cultural advancement of the people of Alberta.

If section 10 is allowed to stand, then 60(1) would now read:

- (b) develop, manage and operate, alone or in co-operation with any person or organization, programs, services and facilities for the economic prosperity of Alberta and for the educational or cultural advancement of the people of Alberta.

Well, I've got a problem with that. You know, we're talking here about postsecondary learning, postsecondary education, not postsecondary job factories and career training factories. Now, postsecondary institutions, no matter how you describe them in the roles and mandates framework, whether you call them a comprehensive academic and research institution, a baccalaureate and applied studies institution, a polytechnical institution, a comprehensive community institution, an independent academic institution, or a specialized arts and cultural institution: all those institutions, Mr. Chair, do have as part of their role, as part of their job, and as part of the result of what they do the effect of turning out graduates who are prepared to take on certain careers, certain jobs in certain sectors of the job market. That comes with the territory, and I don't believe that it needs defining.

I do believe that it needs defining that postsecondary institutions shall "develop, manage and operate, alone or in co-operation," et cetera, et cetera, "programs, services and facilities for the educational or cultural advancement of the people of Alberta." That speaks to their primary role: educating and developing culturally the people who attend those organizations. At any point in our lives that we attend those organizations, whether it's straight out of high school to get a degree or a diploma or a certificate, whether it's later on in life for a career change, whether it's because we want to learn advanced basket weaving because we have an interest in that, whatever it is: education and cultural development.

I think my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood probably took advanced basket weaving back in the '60s, but didn't we all?

10:10

Anyway, to get back to the point at hand. I'm talking now about section 10, the section that I wish to strike. What this proposal does is reorient the purpose of postsecondary education in the province of Alberta by specifically – and I would say, with premeditation – putting as the top priority that the board of the public postsecondary institution shall develop, manage, and operate programs, services, and facilities for the economic prosperity of Alberta.

I'm dying to hear the minister explain it otherwise or someone on the government side of the House, but it means only one thing to me. It means that institutions, be they universities, colleges, polytechnical institutes – I'm using the old terminology here because it's a little shorter than going comprehensive academic every single time – are suddenly going to be required, coerced, cajoled, pressured into turning out the kinds of students that industry says it wants.

Industry doesn't always want well-rounded educations in their worker bees. Sometimes they just want people who will go check out that geological formation for the presence of dead dinosaurs and other fossil fuels or build that pipeline and focus entirely and exclusively on that task and not get into a whole lot of subversive liberal educational thought patterns like, you know: is this actually something that is worthwhile doing? What is the meaning of life? That sort of thing.

Not that I'm suggesting for a moment, Mr. Chairman, that we should spend our time at work contemplating the meaning of life when there's work to be done, but the plain and simple fact of the matter is that a good liberal arts education, a good fine arts education, a good education in almost anything at the postsecondary level, a good, comprehensive education teaches you first and foremost the skill of critical thinking, of analytical thinking. You know, that works in oil companies. That works on the shop floor. That works when you're dealing with people, in any kind of endeavour that requires that you should deal with people. It works in this gig that we do here. It works in communications. It's the essence of

communications: critical, analytical thinking skills. It's the single most transferable skill any of us will acquire in our lifetime. Yet what section 10 says is that if industry tells the government of Alberta and the minister and the ministry of advanced education that four years hence it needs 8,000 engineers and 14 history graduates, the pressure from the ministry on down to the institution will be to do precisely that.

You know, I apologize in advance if you find my language too strong, but I think that it's a little hypocritical of us in this House on either the government or opposition benches to on the one hand be whacking the students of Alberta for the price tag of a postsecondary education and, on the other hand, to be telling them: no, you can't study what you want to study because we want you to be an engineer. We need engineers or we need pipefitters or we need welders or we need geologists, whatever we need, but we need what industry says we need.

Of course, we have an obligation to keep the system apprised of what it is that industry says it needs. We have that obligation as much to the students who will be part of that system as we do to the folks who are teaching in it and administering it because, after all, we do want our students to come out the other end employable. But we also want them employable, thinking members of society going forward – at least, those of us on this side of the House do – because you get better citizens out of that. You get more well-rounded people. You get better critical thinkers. There needs to be a continued emphasis on postsecondary institutions doing what they do for the educational and cultural development of the people of Alberta. I don't think we need to include the economic prosperity of Alberta. If they're doing part B right, part A will follow.

Mr. Chairman, that's why I am moving amendment A2, moving that the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2008, be amended by striking out section 10. I think I'll take my seat at this point and let others join the debate.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Technology.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Part of the roles and mandates framework and part of many, many of the discussions that we've had with the postsecondaries – in fact, I've said it here in this House: this is not about the institutions. The institutions are delivery mechanisms for the students, for the taxpayer, and for the economy. Those three customers, those three clients, are what the institutions serve. It should be recognized in our legislation that there are those three clients.

The hon. member throws some frightening things out there, that we're going to start streamlining kids and telling them what they can do and what they can't do. Mr. Chairman, I'm the father of a 16-year old boy. You can't tell him to do anything, so I don't agree. I apologize to my son right now so that when he reads this in *Hansard*, he won't be upset.

Mr. Chair, enrolment dictates in large measure what programs are going to be provided at our postsecondary institutions. The students will tell the institutions by way of their feet as to what programs they're going to take and where they're going to go.

I agree with the hon. member that we have an obligation to industry. We have an obligation to inform industry. We have an obligation to bring industry in as our partner because that will benefit the students, Mr. Chairman, and it benefits the students in a very viable and long-term way.

I would also disagree with the hon. member when he says that the big, bad industry only wants kids to do certain things and not to be

well-rounded thinkers. I happen to be one of those businessmen who used to hire those kids. I want them well rounded, and I want them to have a broad base of education in the skill set that we're looking for. I need to be able to let the institutions know as a businessman what skill sets they're lacking when they come out of their institutions because that's important information for those institutions to understand. To assume that industry is not interested in broad-based education or expanding our postsecondary institutions is simply wrong, Mr. Chairman. Look at the money that the industry has given to our institutions. It's tremendous, the value they place on that well-rounded education.

Simply putting into the legislation the fact that we have three clients that we serve is just, I think, good policy and good legislation, Mr. Chairman, so I would ask all hon. members to defeat amendment A2.

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

Ms Notley: Thank you. Well, notwithstanding the pleas of the previous hon. member I actually rise in favour of the amendment as proposed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Let me start by saying that we, too, you know, looked at this bill, which is not insignificant in size, and had anticipated that it would be put over to the fall so that we would have an opportunity to do more consultation on it because, as has been mentioned by a couple of the speakers, it is essentially an enabling document for the role and mandate framework, which is rather dense and includes quite a number of policy decisions. It's a bit difficult to sort of come forward and at this late date try to do a comprehensive analysis of this, so we do feel a little pressed for time in that.

Notwithstanding that, there's no question that the first thing that did occur to our research staff and to us, once we had a chance to look at this bill, is that there was, in fact, this change to the mandate for the boards of the postsecondary institutions. That raised a number of significant concerns for us.

10:20

We acknowledge that within the system of postsecondary education delivery is a process which relies on partnerships. It relies on partnerships historically between students, between education providers, between the community as a whole, between, in my view, business – and when I say business, I include the labour movement in that, you know, the economy as a whole – and then, of course, as I say, our community. So there is a balance that needs to be struck in the delivery of our postsecondary education system and the education within the province.

My concern is that the amendment that's being proposed here in essence unstrikes the balance and that it rather puts in place a priority system. The first priority is, in fact, the economic interests of the province and the economic prosperity – as defined by who I'm not exactly sure, but nonetheless the economic prosperity – of the province.

I have to say that I think if you were to look historically at all of the most venerable postsecondary education institutions in the world, they did not premise their reputation or their service on how well they were able to contribute ultimately to the economic prosperity of the given government of a given day. Rather, they were more focused on providing a true academic opportunity and education outside of the day-to-day influences that might be brought to bear by any particular political government of the day.

A big concern that we have relates to what the impact of this change would have on research and research initiatives in the future. Sponsored research is a type of research that occurs within the

postsecondary institution that, frankly, we have some very significant concerns with. Sponsored research fundamentally compromises academic integrity in a number of cases. It can result in a skewing of the research choices, the topic choices, and the outcomes that are widely reported with respect to the research that is undertaken.

The former MLA for Edmonton-Strathcona, someone for whom I have a great deal of respect, has spoken at some length about his concern around the growth of sponsored research in the postsecondary education system and in particular in Alberta. He has spoken at great length about his concerns around the implications of that growth for academic integrity and for the purity of the research that is undertaken at any given time.

He often referred, of course, to the case of Dr. Nancy Olivieri at, I believe, U of T, who was almost fired or I think was fired initially from her position at U of T because in the course of doing her research, that had been sponsored research, she came upon conclusions which did not meet the objectives or meet the interests of the private interest which had co-sponsored her research. By going forth to publicize that over the objections of the co-sponsor of her research, she ultimately found herself in a position where she was let go from the institution for which she worked. Interestingly, there was a corresponding occasion where that particular sponsor of research, in addition to sponsoring her research, was in the middle of considering whether or not it would go forward with millions and millions of dollars of private-sector grants to that particular institution.

Ultimately her name was cleared, the problems around the way that research was conducted were addressed, and recommendations were made with respect to trying to clarify the roles and responsibilities and maintaining the academic integrity of the research that was performed at that time. But we know that that type of pressure is brought to bear whenever sponsored research is the primary type of research that is undertaken. When the economic prosperity of the province becomes something that is the primary statutory obligation of a board of a postsecondary institution, it seems to me that we then almost automatically and invariably put a government stamp of approval on a sponsored research structure which can significantly undermine the academic integrity of various and sundry research bodies within the postsecondary setting. That's a really significant problem for us.

We know that the roles and mandate framework actually identifies as an objective the goal of making Alberta have the highest level of sponsored research in the country. I would suggest that that is a direction that we should not pursue and that we should change direction. I am all for, you know, considered economic development and integration in certain cases with respect to the postsecondary education system where it works. I have concerns about a legislated direction that economic prosperity be the priority consideration for boards of postsecondary institutions when they are considering how and where to allocate their resources.

Another concern that I have heard speaking with people within my own riding who are involved at the U of A is that this kind of focus, this stratified consideration of economic prosperity as being a dominant consideration demanded of any board of a postsecondary institution, will invariably result in further skewing away from the humanities and from properly contributing resources to the humanities sections of most universities. We see this now. I mean, we often are told about the reasonably average level of postsecondary funding in Alberta relative to other provinces. But when you factor out the amount of sponsored research that is primarily focused on oil and gas and the various sort of economic priority areas in the province and you actually look at the amount of funding which is enjoyed by the humanities sector, you'll find that, in fact, we are one

of the lowest provinces in the country in terms of the amount of funding that we provide, in terms of the amount of resources that we provide to students within that setting, in terms of the quality of the education experience enjoyed by students who choose to operate within that setting.

So we know that there is already a problem within our postsecondary education system where we have starved very important areas of it. We've done that in order to further fund and to leverage funding and to engage in partnerships with the private sector for, you know, the sciences and technologies. In no way do I want to detract from or negate the importance of the science and technologies, but in the same way I would never suggest that the science and technologies should receive the priority funding that it receives right now over the humanities. My concern is that that type of thing will continue with this amendment not going forward, with this act insisting that economic prosperity be a primary consideration of boards in postsecondary education.

10:30

With that, I would urge members of the Assembly to reconsider this element of the bill that's being put forward. I certainly will be voting in favour of the amendment to remove the reference to economic prosperity to ensure that the balance of the partnerships within the provision of postsecondary education in the province of Alberta is re-established and/or maintained and to ensure that we don't further skew considerations to the point of everything being about economic prosperity such that academic integrity, growth of knowledge, and the quality of the learning experience become secondary.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First of all, I must say my apologies to the members opposite who believe we rushed this. We on this side of the House like getting things done. Secondly, inserting the words "for the economic prosperity of Alberta" does not diminish the importance of the educational and cultural advancement of the people of Alberta. This is not a ranking system per se. We've recognized that we have three clients, essentially, that we must service: society as a whole, the student, and the taxpayer. This is an avenue for us to align the needs of all three of these clients.

Economic prosperity. Adding that to the equation, sir, does not diminish by any means the educational or cultural advancement of the people of Alberta. Rather, this integrates the needs that our three clients in this province have. I would urge members to vote against this motion.

Mr. Taylor: Well, I will rise one more time quite possibly to close debate and just reiterate our perspective on this and the reasoning behind our amendment seeking to strike out section 10. With respect to the Member for Calgary-Montrose it would seem to me that if we in no way wanted to diminish the educational and cultural development of the people of Alberta and we simply wanted to make note of the third client, we would put the new phrase "for the economic prosperity of Alberta" after rather than before "for the educational or cultural development of the people of Alberta."

I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona for speaking in support of my amendment and arguing, I think rather convincingly, the case for research, pure research, and the case against too much emphasis on sponsored research. I must point out that in our caucus we do not have a problem with sponsored research per se as long as it's an appropriate part of the broader context of the

kind of scholarly research that should be done by postsecondary institutions. When you put too much stress on sponsored research, you've got a problem, in our opinion.

I would just close, Mr. Chairman, by saying this. There are three customers here, but the way section 10 proposes to amend section 60(1)(b) of the Post-secondary Learning Act would just seem to me that not all customers are created equal.

With that, I would urge this House to support my amendment striking down section 10. Thank you.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, one tries. Sometimes one succeeds, and often one does not. I think that we have succeeded in making our point about what we see as a couple of deficiencies in Bill 7, and again I will reiterate that we saw them as deficiencies, perhaps, in part because this bill was rushed onto the floor of the Legislature and without the appropriate time that we thought we'd had indicated to us to consult with stakeholders. I think that it is wise to err on the side of caution in a situation like that and put forward amendments that call attention to a couple of areas that we are not too certain about.

I must say in regard to the rest of Bill 7 that we are reasonably to very satisfied with the bill, and we are prepared to support the bill going forward out of committee. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I just want to make a few comments with respect to some of the things that were said in the debate on the amendments. The concept that our postsecondary institutions serve customers is, I think, not entirely on the mark. The postsecondary system serves a number of functions, and in a sense you might call a student who pays a fee in exchange for an education a customer, but I'm not sure that it's the most appropriate way to look at it.

I think that our postsecondary system serves, first of all, society. I don't think that's a customer, nor do I think that it's appropriate to call it a client. I think education in the broadest sense serves society in the broadest sense; that is, intellectually, socially, culturally, and economically. The sense that we have customers of the system out there I think is unfortunate, and we should not be moving towards a narrower vision of our postsecondary institution, which I think some aspects of this bill implies. We also serve the individual, and the individual in getting a postsecondary education makes a contribution to his or herself as an individual, to his family, to the community, but also, again, to society as a whole.

The whole concept that we should consider corporatizing our postsecondary institutions, whether in research or in the endowment of chairs and programs for students, I think needs to be handled very carefully. I'm particularly concerned about the corporatization of research in our postsecondary institutions. What it does is create a very unlevel playing field. Engineering, which might serve the tar sands, is the recipient of enormous largess from corporations, who provide funding and endowments in order to support that sector of our economy. This comes, in my view, at the expense of other sectors: nursing, human ecology, the humanities, and the arts. Even some of the basic sciences may suffer in comparison because of this distortion.

10:40

It's my view that society as a whole should set the priorities and that we ought not to allow for-profit corporations to distort the

priorities of our postsecondary institutions. I think that in one respect, at least, in this bill we've headed down that path. I think those that would argue that this has no impact on the priorities of our postsecondary institutions are mistaken. It will in fact set a direction to orient our postsecondary institutions to a greater degree toward support for the for-profit sector in our society. In my view that is unnecessary and will come at the expense of other aspects of our education system and our priorities as a society.

Mr. Chairman, I want to say that I believe that Alberta has an excellent postsecondary system, I think one of the best in Canada. An excellent system was built up in this province by the government of the day, and I think we owe a debt of gratitude to that government, being of course the Social Credit government, that preceded this one.

Having said that, I think that there are reasons to be concerned about where we're going. I appreciate much of what the minister has put forward, but I just think I would be remiss if I didn't sound a note of caution with respect to the role of for-profit corporations in changing – I won't say hijacking – the priorities which we as a society ought to have with respect to our postsecondary institutions. I do think that I want to echo some of the concerns of the Member for Calgary-Currie when he talked about some of the issues related to one of his amendments. I think that it's pretty clear that we want to have a postsecondary system that promotes critical thinking as a top priority.

You know, Mr. Chairman, there is plenty of research now, and it's fairly generally accepted that people will change their careers many times in their life. Sometimes that may involve going back to school, but in general giving someone the capacity to think critically is the best tool that they have as they move through life and move from job to job. So I think that there's an economic benefit which may not be quantifiable but is nevertheless there.

Mr. Chairman, having said that, I want to indicate that I'm prepared to take my seat and let this bill proceed out of committee unless there are other members that wish to speak, as well. We'll debate it again when it comes to third reading.

Thank you.

The Chair: Seeing no other member wishing to speak on this bill, are you ready for the question on Bill 7, the Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2008?

Hon. Members: Question.

[The clauses of Bill 7 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 8 Climate Change and Emissions Management Amendment Act, 2008

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure

to rise to speak to Bill 8, the Climate Change and Emissions Management Amendment Act, 2008, a bill that has a primary purpose of enabling a delegated authority to manage the climate change and emissions management fund, to establish emissions intensity targets and substitute a new mechanism for the minister to change these limits applicable to any undertaking in Alberta, to allow the director to specify an emissions intensity limit for an operation for the purpose of determining the specified gas emissions intensity of that undertaking, to reclassify an operation and make the reclassified undertaking subject to specific emissions intensity limits, and give the director the ability to issue orders to require an undertaking or operation to take measures to remedy or minimize the effects of an operation that exceeds a specific gas emissions intensity limit.

In general, Mr. Chairman, we have no great difficulty with the bill. I guess the questions I have around this relate to the delegated authority, which is under the power of the minister, and questions around what criteria will be used to select this delegated authority and how they will make decisions on this fund that this year, I gather, is close to \$40 million from the \$15 per tonne fee levied on the hundred largest emitters in the province.

Climate change is the central test, to me, of the role of this government in Alberta. The question is whether this government will get a handle on the seriousness with which Albertans and Canadians are taking climate change and reflect in this legislation along with other legislation related to climate change the public values associated with a longer term action plan, a serious commitment to reduction in carbon emissions, a commitment to sound science, and, again, show real leadership on climate change.

We know from the international panel and many experts, including the Stern report, that we have approached 400 parts per million carbon in the atmosphere. We have had, as I understand it, almost a 50 per cent increase in extreme weather events in the last 30 years – hurricanes, major damaging storms – that have resulted in a massive increase in insurance claims. We have things like pine beetles that are affecting us locally. We have the West Nile virus here as a result of the warming of the climate and the movement of these mosquitoes from Africa and southern parts of the States. We have massive changes in our own north. It's clear that we need to be very much more committed than we've seen to climate change mitigation.

The target that we've set of 14 per cent below current standards by 2050 is laughable by most standards on the planet, yet this government continues to say that they're leaders. Most jurisdictions, including 400 American cities, are calling for 80 per cent reduction by 2050. This is serious. I think our children, our grandchildren deserve better than this. If we were to accept the international panel's recommendation of 80 per cent reduction by 2050, that's simply 2 to 3 per cent per year. This is doable if we were serious about our commitment to future generations and to preserving our quality of life at some level, including our water supplies and our food production.

10:50

I believe that all the tools should be on the table, not just this carbon levy and a technology fund. When I say all the tools, I think of regulations; I think of carbon tax; I think of cap and trade. I believe that all of these should be considered if we're serious about reducing our carbon footprint.

An Hon. Member: Albertans told us they didn't want it.

Dr. Swann: More than half of Albertans have said that they would

take serious action, including a carbon tax. Over half of Albertans have said that they would in national polls.

There are lots of ways of addressing that extra fee in terms of a national program that has to be aligned across the provinces and across the country. Our citizens are looking for real leadership on this, especially the young people I hear from. Those that are not in despair – and there are a number – are saying: “We want to see more action. We are prepared to take more action. We are prepared to change our own lives and change our way of using energy, our transportation, our use of electricity, our consumption patterns.” They need leadership in order to make those kinds of decisions. I will say, Mr. Chairman, that Bill 8 is showing some leadership, but it’s very, very modest. It is not accepted nationally as any kind of leadership, and it’s certainly not in sync with even the federal government’s targets and timelines.

The concern I have about this technology fund is that it seems to be so dominated by carbon capture and storage as the mechanism for dealing with the carbon problems. We’re not looking at an array of tools. We’re not looking at the full scope of what we could be doing, thereby having a fairer playing field so that consumers as well as producers are paying for the carbon we use. This government is saying through their actions, their one small step today, that they want consumers to take action on climate change. Well, a very clear message to consumers is to increase the price of some of those carbon-related fuels. That sends a strong message. People reduce their use of automobiles. They retrofit their homes. They travel by public transport. If we’re serious about wanting to make changes, then we have to have an impact on both producers and consumers. It’s clear that this government is very politically astute and unwilling to be courageous in the face of the challenges that climate change is putting before us.

With this climate change fund and the delegated authority that’s going to decide how to spend this \$40 million, I would simply like to be reassured that we are going to invest some of this \$40 million in renewables and energy efficiency, not just in carbon capture and storage, which appears to be the direction this fund is taking.

Mr. MacDonald: I just hear about those propaganda campaigns, the \$25 million propaganda campaigns.

Dr. Swann: Well, that \$25 million that has been recommended for giving Alberta and its environment a new image is clearly a sham for most Albertans. It’s an excuse for not taking the right actions. It’s a way of conveying to Albertans that we are serious about our environment when evidence abounds that we are not serious about preserving our environment and our climate into the long term.

It would be very good to see what kind of appointments this minister is going to make to the delegated authority, what kinds of decisions they’re limited to making.

Mr. MacDonald: Who would you like to see on it?

Dr. Swann: I’d very much like to see on that delegated authority some people involved in renewable energy production, people involved very seriously in geothermal and wind and solar, stimulating real, meaningful changes in our way of using energy, of travelling, not simply a focus entirely on carbon capture and storage.

We have to do some carbon capture and storage. There’s no way we can get to where we need to go quickly without some carbon capture and storage, but industry should be carrying the bulk of the costs of carbon capture and storage. This is the price of pollution. We say we want polluters to pay, but we’re not willing to force them to pay. We give them a thousand and one escapes from paying the

full price of pollution. All in the name of what? The free market? What’s free about a market that doesn’t charge polluters the true cost of pollution? This is a government that continues to subsidize industry and wonder why we are continuing to pay through the health system and through public dollars for environmental cleanups that rightly are the purview and responsibility of industry.

I would be very much grateful if the minister would comment on some of the criteria for this delegated authority, what some of the criteria for their decision-making is and whether or not it is going to be balanced with fossil fuel producers as well as renewable and those that can focus on reducing demand. If we don’t deal with the other side of the coin, if we continue to just produce more energy through fossil fuels, we are not serving future generations. We could reduce our demand on energy by 40 per cent according to the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy – 40 per cent. How quickly are we moving in that direction with retrofits, with public transit, with a serious commitment to renewables? If people were generating their own electricity in their own homes or in their own neighbourhoods, they would see much more quickly how they are using their energy and how they could make substantial changes in their lifestyles.

This is our about future, Mr. Chairman. This is about our children and our grandchildren. The world is looking to us for leadership. We are laggards on climate change. We are the laughingstock in many parts of the world. Scandinavian countries are miles ahead of Kyoto, and their economies have continued to flourish.

So, I guess, Mr. Chairman, I’ll leave it there. I would appreciate comments from this minister on when he’s going to raise the price of carbon, when he’s going to seriously look at other regulations, who’s going to be in the delegated authority, and how they’re going to be focusing on technology as opposed to some of the other important ways to reduce demand. We cannot continue to provide never-ending increases in energy. We have to find ways to reduce our demand on the energy production in this country. If not Alberta, who is going to lead the way in technology and brain power and real, meaningful regulations that will send the right signals to business and send the right signals to consumers? Everybody has to pay if we’re going to do the right thing. We cannot have it both ways.

With those comments I’ll turn the floor over. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It’s a pleasure to have the opportunity to continue the debate this evening on Bill 8, the Climate Change and Emissions Management Amendment Act, 2008. Certainly, when you look at this bill and you look at the attempts with Bill 3 last year and we look at this bill line by line in committee this evening, I would like to know, first, from the hon. minister when we’re looking at section 4 here – section 4 is: “The Specified Gas Emitters Regulation (AR 139/2007) is validated as of June 27, 2007.” The validation of this regulation: what are the implications of this going back not quite a year, Mr. Chairman, but for all purposes it is a year?

Now, we’re looking at section 5 here, which is deemed coming into force, and we look at the new section 3(a), which is deemed to have come into force on April 20, 2007. That is a change, and I would like to know why. We are certainly repealing clause (d) from the original bill. Clause (d) will now read:

governing the maximum specified gas emissions intensity for operations and undertakings in Alberta based on levels of emissions of specified gases per unit of energy input or output, material input or output, product output or other thing, including, without limitation, regulations.

11:00

So we're making a change. Whenever the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View talks about the rest of the world lacking confidence in the direction this government is going, that would give this member concern. When we look at this change, this change that's retroactive, does this mean there's going to be significantly less money collected? If this is retroactive, could any of the polluters potentially get a rebate from this section, which will, if this bill becomes law, have come into force on April 20, 2007? If so, how much would they get? We were talking about this in second reading, Mr. Chairman.

I, for one, thought that there was going to be considerably more money collected. I, for one, am not nearly as skeptical of CO₂ sequestration as the New Democrats are and as my hon. colleague from Calgary-Mountain View is. I'm not going to get into the details on this, but again I would refer hon. members to please just have a look at EnCana's annual report, and you can see first-hand how successful CO₂ sequestration is in southeastern Saskatchewan.

Now, we talked a little bit in second reading about Alberta's climate change policy and what the rest of the country and the rest of the world are thinking. During budget debate, of course, we had a discussion on this with the hon. Premier. He took great offence to the greenwashing program, as the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View calls it, the \$25 million program, and how that is going to work. Is that going to make the Governor of California change his mind? I don't think so. Is it going to make other organizations consider where they source their fuel? At this time I don't think so, Mr. Chairman, but it could happen. It could happen. [interjection] I heard that, hon. member, that they think they can expand their exports to China. But when one looks at the history of our pipelines right now that run to the Pacific tidewater and not down to places like Texas, where we're starting to export our bitumen and our jobs along with it – I'm not going to go there, Mr. Chairman, because this is a bill on climate change, not on job loss.

Cleaning up the environment will create jobs. It won't cause any kind of unemployment. We heard this threat with the original Kyoto debate, that if Kyoto was to be ratified, we'd be entering a dark age economically. Certainly, there would be more work created cleaning up the environment than there would be in allowing the current patterns to continue. Even in this election I think that 326,000 jobs was the Premier's number of jobs that would be lost, but everyone knows, Mr. Chairman, that that wasn't true. The Premier, I think, was challenged on that number and had a great deal of difficulty in getting supporting facts. Anyone can make these statements about how much we will lose if we don't clean up the environment.

When we look at the budget, for example, and we look at the amount that's needed to fight the pine beetle, not only this year but in previous years significant amounts of money have had to be set aside to try to get this pine beetle under control. I can remember in this Assembly six years ago, hon. members, when there was a debate about the pine beetle, and many of the members across the way failed to recognize that the pine beetle and its migration north were a signal of climate change. I was astonished that so many hon. members of this Assembly, Mr. Chairman, failed to recognize the relation between global warming and the pine beetle and its movement north through the mountain valleys of British Columbia and then, unfortunately, across into the Peace River district and other areas in this province.

We only have to visit the glaciers in the Rockies to see how they are receding, Mr. Chairman. Many people in this province still seem to think that we are not operating in conjunction with the rest of the world, and we are part of that world. As we accumulate more wealth

in this province as a result of our resource extraction, there's also a duty associated with that, and there has to be leadership. With that duty is a recognition that we must be part of the solution, which is to change not only how we operate but how the rest of the world operates.

I recognize that we are in a unique situation here because of our winter climate and our distances. It takes you a lot longer to drive from Edmonton, for instance, to Saskatoon than it takes someone to drive from San Francisco to San Jose. In California they don't have the extreme winter climate, Mr. Chairman. So it's easier in a lot of places for people to make changes, but we in this province can do our part, too, and we should.

I know people may be offended, but again when we look at Mr. Simpson's column in last week's *Globe and Mail* and his skepticism of Alberta's climate change policy, we really need to take his advice, Mr. Chairman, into consideration in this debate again. Now, we know that there seems to be a difference of opinion between the federal Conservatives and the provincial Conservatives here. We certainly know there is a difference of opinion between the federal Conservatives in the province of Quebec and the province of Ontario regarding climate change.

Bill 8 may have been introduced with the best of intentions. Bill 3, the legislative parent of Bill 8, certainly was. The Minister of Environment can talk about having the first carbon tax in Canada, and technically he would be right, as far as I can see, but this doesn't seem to be working. If it was working, we wouldn't need this \$25 million propaganda campaign to convince the world that we're green.

11:10

Now, I came into the rotunda today, Mr. Chairman, to talk to a group of students from McCauley school, and I saw a booth set up there off to the right-hand side with two individuals giving away items. There was a promise of how we would improve our activities, and there were suggestions as to how we could do this to reduce our environmental footprint. I thought to myself: is it a little too late? I hope it's not, but if we look in this Assembly, many people have been calling for quite some time that we would install energy-efficient light bulbs. Hopefully the Minister of Environment and his staff are going to get around to that quite soon. I'm sure that by the time we come back here in October, it'll be done.

Now, when we look at the initiatives that were proposed, the citizens here have told me that they do not want to see the air they breathe and that they don't want a foul taste in the water that they are to drink.

An Hon. Member: And they don't want water that burns.

Mr. MacDonald: That's a good point, hon. member. Particularly in rural Alberta, we don't want to turn on the kitchen taps and hear gas and smell gas emitting from the tap. I can only say that I'm relieved that there are a lot fewer smokers now in this province because if citizens weren't reducing their cigarette consumption, there might be fear that some farmer or farmer's wife – I don't want to get anyone upset with me over gender here. The farmer and his wife could easily be over the kitchen sink doing up dishes and stuff.

An Hon. Member: What has this got to do with climate change?

Mr. MacDonald: This has a lot to do with climate change, hon. member, a lot to do with Bill 8 because it is yet another example of how whenever we don't have prudent environmental stewardship, that can cause harm to citizens. Perhaps we should consider when

we are developing methane. Now, I'm not a scientist, hon. member, but methane would be one of the gases that creates significant global warming. Is it working? I don't know, but it certainly is relevant to this discussion, and I'm surprised that the hon. member would suggest that it isn't.

Mr. Chairman, when we look further at the Climate Change and Emissions Management Amendment Act, 2008, and we see the changes to section 10, I can only think that it'll be a matter of time, if this bill becomes law, before this delegated administrative authority, I'm sure, will be on the list of agencies, boards, and commissions that would be considered for an appearance before the Public Accounts Committee when we look at what we're creating here. After subsection (3) we're going to be

paying salaries, fees, expenses, liabilities or other costs incurred by a delegated authority in carrying out a duty or function of or exercising a power of the Minister in respect of the Fund that has been delegated to the delegated authority, if authorized by the regulations.

So there's going to be, I would assume, an annual report created by this delegated authority. I don't see it in here, but I would certainly think that there will be – at least, I hope there will be – an annual report created and it would be tabled at the appropriate time on an annual basis before this Assembly. But when we look at the money that is being used here and we look at the past Progressive Conservative governments and their fondness for using delegated administrative authorities, we have to be careful with this, Mr. Chairman. I don't know if it would be necessary to have this authority appear, but at some point in the future it may. I think there's going to be considerable money in the future channelled or funnelled or paid to this delegated authority.

I'm curious about the liabilities that are mentioned here in the amendment to section 10(h). What liabilities does the Minister of Environment have in mind? Are they cleanup costs that will not be picked up by industry, or are they other liabilities? Environmental liabilities these days can mean a lot of different things, Mr. Chairman. I certainly would like some clarification on that.

Now, the amount of money . . . Oh, I ran out of time. [some applause]

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 8, and I appreciate the warm reception that the comments of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar received. I hope that I will also earn the esteem and appreciation of my colleagues for my remarks.

An Hon. Member: Don't bet on it.

Mr. Mason: Now, see, hon. minister, you're not in touch with your caucus because I can feel the love already.

I'm pleased to speak a little bit about the Climate Change and Emissions Management Amendment Act, 2008. I want to just indicate right off the bat that the issue of climate change is a very serious one indeed. When I first joined this Assembly, there were many doubters on the government side that climate change actually existed. We heard comments in this Assembly to the effect that, you know, this is a natural cycle, this is produced by sunspots, it's produced by any manner of things and that there was no real proof and no real evidence that climate change existed. At that time, Mr. Chairman, we felt that those government members really resembled the dinosaurs because, of course, they too were victims of climate

change and were unaware about the changes that were taking place around them which would eventually lead to their extinction.

11:20

There has been some progress, but you know, Mr. Chairman, there needs to be more progress. The degree that progress has occurred has been a grudging acceptance of overwhelming evidence that climate change exists, that it in fact is perilous to the future of the world.

I am very, you know, hard pressed to understand why some hon. members can accept that climate change is taking place, that it will negatively impact future generations, that it may reduce the capacity of the Earth to carry the billions of human lives that currently exist, yet they don't want to come to grips with it in a serious fashion.

You see, Alberta is in a unique position. First of all, we are very much dependent in our economy on petroleum and on our carbon fuels. Coal has long been a part of our economy. Conventional oil and gas have formed the basis of our current prosperity, and now the tar sands and oil from the tar sands represent a great deal of our future economic potential and, in many people's view, our future prosperity. We have a unique challenge because the very thing that gives us our economic prosperity and our current standard of living is, in fact, something that ultimately threatens the very existence of human civilization on this planet. It's very difficult to square that circle.

Fortunately, though, Mr. Chairman, we also have a unique opportunity. Because of the value of this very commodity, which is becoming increasingly in short supply, we have the potential to develop the financial means to actually solve this problem, not only for ourselves but for the country and even, to a degree, for the world as a whole, but it requires that we get the full value of that resource for the people of Alberta. Members opposite have heard me speak many times about the whole question of royalties and my very strongly held view that we have not yet gotten even close to the real value for this resource that needs to flow back to the people of this province.

Mr. Chairman, most jurisdictions in the world do not even allow private oil companies to operate and extract and refine and export their petroleum products. The majority of countries in the world have state oil companies. They've decided that this resource is too valuable to let the major oil companies extract it and produce it. So there's actually a fairly limited number of jurisdictions in which the big oil companies, so favoured by this government, are actually allowed to operate. Saudi Arabia, for example, has its own national oil company, as does Venezuela, as do any number of other major oil-producing countries.

Those countries that do allow private oil companies to operate have generally reviewed their royalty regimes in light of the dramatic increase in the price of oil. They've all taken a look at it and said: "Do you know what? We're in a new world now, a new age of expensive oil, of oil that's in short supply and is going to become increasingly short in supply, that will in fact, in general terms, result in escalating prices." One by one they've revised upward the royalty regimes that they have in place, in most cases very dramatically.

Some countries, like Norway, for example, have established royalty rates very much higher than the province of Alberta. So have Britain, many states in the United States; Russia has been mentioned and Angola. I think that before the latest change to our royalty rates there was only one country that had lower rates than Alberta, and that was Ireland. Mr. Chairman, I have to admit that I was unaware that Ireland actually had any oil, but I guess it does. But Alberta retains some of the lowest royalties, and this is a shame

because this is, in fact, the resource that we need. We need the wealth that's produced by the oil to prepare for the day when we can no longer produce the oil because people won't buy it.

I know that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has already talked about California putting rules in place that would prevent very high-carbon oil, like we produce in the tar sands, from being purchased there, and that movement is growing in the United States. Obviously, there are forces in the United States that very much want to have Alberta's oil, so I wouldn't say it's a foregone conclusion that the United States won't buy our oil in the future, but it is going to be a controversial question for some time.

If we seize the opportunity, Mr. Chairman, we can in fact do some real positive work in terms of dealing with climate change because we have, on the one hand, a very strong dependence on developing a fossil fuel economy in this province. At the same time, there is growing awareness that fossil fuels may potentially damage the climate of the earth so as to make it virtually uninhabitable or, at the very least, the loss of some of the most productive land in the world to flooding, huge storms, and so on. People know enough about global warming now that they are more than concerned. Sensible people are alarmed by what's happening to the world's climate, but there seems to be a disconnect with the government on this issue because they don't want to take meaningful action.

Emissions intensity is a concept that they copy from the Bush administration in the United States. The Bush administration in the United States, in my view, was bought and paid for by the big oil industry. There's plenty of evidence about that in terms of the funding for the Republican Party in the last two general elections. You have had under President Bush and Mr. Cheney some of the most sympathetic ears that the oil companies have ever had, even to the point of being prepared to invade other countries in order to acquire their substantial resources of petroleum. It's the Bush and Cheney administration that came up with emissions intensity in the first place. Quite frankly, the whole concept of emissions intensity is simply a way to allow total emissions to continue to climb while creating the illusion of progress. This approach has been wholeheartedly adopted by this government, which is also highly dependent on the big oil companies for its political existence, and this bill enshrines the whole question of emissions intensity in a major way.

I know that the government is very proud of the approach that they've taken. After fighting for years and years against a carbon tax, the government has in a strange sort of way, in its own little way, endorsed the concept of a carbon tax in this bill. Now, it's true that the carbon tax is based on companies' emissions which exceed an intensity target rather than an absolute target, and it's also true that it's a market within Alberta and not international or national in scope. Nevertheless, it is in its own way, actually, a carbon tax. So the government's arguments against the carbon tax, in my view, have been substantially undermined by the adoption of this approach because they're willing to accept a carbon tax under different circumstances, but they are willing to accept a carbon tax.

11:30

Now, they're going to require oil sands facilities, coal-fired power plants, and others to reduce the intensity of their greenhouse gas emissions – the intensity of the greenhouse gas emissions – by 12 per cent. The companies involved can do this through purchasing offsets, actual real reductions in the intensity of their emissions, or by paying \$15 a tonne into the fund. That's an interesting point: \$15 a tonne into the fund.

Bill 8 permits the minister to appoint a committee that will decide how to spend the fund. This entity will invest in projects and technology to reduce greenhouse gasses in Alberta. Well, that's a

good thing, but I think the composition is the problem. The minister appoints this. Now, as we understand it – and if we're wrong, I'd appreciate being set straight – the intention is to have the committee comprised of industry representatives entirely, and the minister is in the process of now establishing it. I don't know if there will be some government people or whatever on it. But in its basic form, Mr. Chairman, industry pays \$15 a tonne to emit greenhouse gasses. Industry then gets paid to sit on a committee to decide how to spend their \$15 a tonne minus the salaries that they get paid to do that. I think, just looking at it in its most simple form, this is not entirely satisfactory. First of all, there's no balance on the committee, and, secondly, the \$15 a tonne may be too little. I'll add a third, which is, I guess, more basic, that it's based on emissions intensity and not on absolute amounts.

Now, I just want to digress a little bit to talk about the approach that we took and are continuing to take with respect to this because it looks like this fund might be as much as a hundred million dollars a year. We proposed something much more ambitious. We proposed a \$20 billion fund, which would be used with a much broader goal, in fact a real vision for this province: moving towards an end to the reliance on fossil fuel as the basis of Alberta's economy, moving towards the development of renewable energy on a major scale and, in fact, strategically repositioning the province away from dependence on fossil fuels, to become a leader in the world on green or renewable energy sources, to make Alberta the place where the research is done, where the components are manufactured, a place where renewable energy technology is exported around the world.

Now, you're not going to be able to do that on a measly hundred million dollars. So it raises the question about whether or not the \$15 a tonne is actually enough. In fact, Mr. Chairman, with respect to the work that we have done in looking at this, we discovered that the international average is approximately \$30 a tonne, or double what Alberta is proposing to charge. One of the things that we would suggest is that, in fact, the government might want to take a look at increasing the amount beyond that.

We also know that the government is embracing carbon capture and storage. That may in fact be one of the uses of the fund. I don't know. If it is, it's going to take considerably more than \$30 a tonne in order to finance it. Now, we've taken the position that if this can be proven to be safe and reliable as a means of reducing carbon emissions into the atmosphere – that is, sequestration of carbon – we have no objection to government and industry experimenting with it. It may be part of the solution. Ultimately, of course, what we're afraid of is that the government simply wants to landfill carbon and not take meaningful steps to reduce the production, which is where we need to go. It's ultimately where the government doesn't want to go, and I think that's part of the problem.

With regard to carbon sequestration we are adamant that if that's part of the solution, then industry needs to pay the full cost. It's not satisfactory to us that the taxpayer should be on the hook for the cost of storing the oil and gas industry's carbon. That's not our job. Now, we know the government has already said that they're willing to put up \$2 billion of taxpayers' money towards this. We think that that is unacceptable, Mr. Chairman. That is wrong. The principle that the polluter should pay is radically violated by this movement.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Environment.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, we've had some interesting debate this evening on Bill 8. With the exception, however, of most of the comments, not all of the comments but most of the comments from the Member for Calgary-Mountain View,

everything else has been totally irrelevant and has nothing to do whatsoever with Bill 8. So I would suggest that we adjourn debate on Bill 8.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 17
Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2008

(continued)

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Chairman, I want to talk a little bit more about Bill 17 because as we've heard the debate and as I've gone through the various aspects of the situation facing our seniors, it really cries out for some answer from the government, something far beyond what we have here today before us. We have a very, very dreadful situation. I think that some of the comments that we've heard from other people who've been involved in this with loved ones indicate that there is a problem that we need to address, a very, very serious one. The conditions that many of our elderly people are living in in this province are appalling. You know, they haven't been addressed adequately by the government, and this bill really doesn't solve the problem.

11:40

The purpose, I think, of wanting to talk about this tonight at some length is to try and bring some pressure to bear on the government to actually resolve the issue. I haven't seen any indication from them that they're prepared to do this, but we cannot continue to leave our parents and grandparents in the kind of conditions that exist. The stress that it places on family members is also unacceptable and very, very real. I would like to see some indication from the government that they're going to do something about this. I would like to see some indication from the government that, in fact, they will do something about the drugging of seniors as a way of controlling them because there's not enough staff.

You know, I think we've probably kept the hon. members to listen to some of the problems maybe longer than they would like, but I hope that something will come out of it, Mr. Chairman. I really hope that we can work together and that the government will accept that there's a need to do better when it comes to long-term care. I would very much hope that there would be some legislation that would prohibit the use of drugs to sedate seniors because they're not being properly cared for. I think that should be an offence. I think people that do that should be held accountable, and I include the medical profession very much in that.

The Chair: I would like to remind the hon. members that this is Committee of the Whole. The discussion is on the clauses of the bill, not the principle of the bill.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for that. I know that the bill deals with the issue of providing tax incentives for people that provide care. I only make those comments with

reference to the fact that this should be necessary and whether or not this is an adequate method of providing for the proper care. With respect to that, I will take your direction. I just want to indicate that we feel that this issue needs resolution and it needs it quickly. Our seniors are depending on us, and this bill is entirely inadequate to deal with this issue.

With that, I will take my seat and let the next speaker make their comments.

The Chair: Seeing no other member wanting to join the debate, I want to put the question on the bill.

Hon. Members: Question.

[The clauses of Bill 17 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Mr. Renner: Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee now rise and report Bill Pr. 1, Bill 17, Bill 7, and progress on Bill 8.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Marz: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 7, Bill 17. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill Pr. 1. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 8. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Minister of Environment.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Having made some good progress, I move that the House now stand adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[Motion carried; at 11:48 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Monday evening, June 2, 2008

Motions Other than Government Motions	
Crime Reduction	1115
Government Bills and Orders	
Second Reading	
Bill 7 Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2008	1121
Committee of the Whole	
Bill 17 Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2008	1122, 1139
Bill 7 Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2008	1128
Bill 8 Climate Change and Emissions Management Amendment Act, 2008	1134
Private Bills	
Committee of the Whole	
Bill Pr. 1 Young Men's Christian Association of Edmonton Statutes Amendment Act, 2008	1122

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
Lukaszuk

Lund
MacDonald

Mitzel
Notley

Webber

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.

