



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, October 14, 2008

Issue 32

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., 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	Senior Parliamentary Counsel	Shannon Dean
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
		Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>	Liz Sim

[Errata, if any, appear inside back cover]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, October 14, 2008

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon, and welcome back. I would ask all hon. members to remain standing after the prayer so that we may pay tribute to our former colleagues who have passed away.

As we commence proceedings today in this Assembly, we ask for divine guidance so that our words and deeds may bring to all people of this great province hope, prosperity, and a vision for the future. Amen.

Colonel Arthur Ryan Smith May 16, 1919, to June 30, 2008

The Speaker: On Monday, June 30, 2008, Colonel Arthur Ryan Smith passed away at the age of 89 years. Colonel Smith was first elected in the election held on June 29, 1955, and served until April 11, 1957. During his years of service he represented the constituency of Calgary for the Progressive Conservative Party. During his term of office Colonel Smith served on several committees: Agriculture, Colonization, Immigration and Education; Municipal Law; Private Bills, Standing Orders and Printing; Privileges and Elections; and Railways, Telephones and Irrigation.

Dr. Lawrence (Larry) Ralph Shaben March 20, 1935, to September 6, 2008

The Speaker: On Saturday, September 6, 2008, Dr. Lawrence (Larry) Ralph Shaben passed away at the age of 73 years. Dr. Shaben was first elected in the election held March 26, 1975, and served until February 29, 1989. During his years of service he represented the constituency of Lesser Slave Lake for the Progressive Conservative Party. He was the first Muslim Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and the first Muslim cabinet minister in Canadian history. During his term of office Larry Shaben served on several committees: Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Standing Committee on Private Bills, and the standing committees on Public Affairs, the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act, and Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing. Dr. Shaben also served on Executive Council as Minister of Utilities and Telephones from March 23, 1979, to November 18, 1982; Minister of Housing from November 18, 1982, to May 25, 1986; and Minister of Economic Development and Trade from May 26, 1986, to April 13, 1989.

Mr. Gordon Emil Stromberg December 25, 1927, to September 7, 2008

The Speaker: Former member Gordon Emil Stromberg passed away on Sunday, September 7, 2008, at the age of 80 years. Mr. Stromberg was first elected in the election held August 30, 1971, and served until April 10, 1986. During his years of service he represented the constituency of Camrose for the Progressive Conservative Party. During his term of office Mr. Stromberg served on several committees: the standing committees on Public Accounts; Private Bills; Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing; Law, Law Amendments and Regulations; Public Affairs, Agriculture and Education; and Law and Regulations. He also served as chair of the Crop Insurance and Weather Modification Committee.

With our admiration and respect there is gratitude to members of their families who shared the burdens of public office. Family members of Art Smith, Larry Shaben, and Gordon Stromberg are with us today in the Speaker's gallery and will be introduced momentarily. Our prayers are with them.

In a moment of silent prayer I ask you to remember hon. members Colonel Arthur Ryan Smith, Dr. Larry Shaben, and Mr. Gordon Stromberg as you have known them. Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them. Amen.

I would now invite Mr. Paul Lorieau to lead us in the singing of our national anthem, and I would invite all present here to participate in the language of their choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Mr. Groeneveld: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly a young fellow that comes from my constituency in Highwood. As a matter of fact, this young fellow was the president of my constituency for the last two elections and was very strategic in implementing my success in this area. He's an ambitious young fellow. He always manages to have a pretty young gal at his side. Today I look up with some trepidation because he happens to have my wife, Judy, with him today. I would ask Dean Leask and my wife, Judy, to please stand up and receive the warm greetings of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Mr. Rodney: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is, indeed, a privilege and an honour to introduce to and through you to all members of the Assembly a great Alberta humanitarian who is committed to family, who is a dreamer, and who is also a doer. She was born in Belgrade, Serbia. At the age of six she moved with her mother, Maria, and her sister Mimi to join her grandparents Mima and Peter and her uncle Alex in Edmonton.

She has gone on to earn her BA from Concordia University College with a double major in psychology and sociology. She's a founding member and former president of Concordia's Social Justice Club. Mr. Speaker, while this inspiring young leader was working for all Albertans as an incredible legislative assistant with us the last couple of years, she was also volunteering with the Schizophrenia Society of Alberta, Edmonton chapter, on the organizing committee of the annual Open Minds Walk & Run. Very recently she accepted a position as government relations and fund development coordinator with the organization.

I trust all members of the House will wish Miss Hana Marinkovic the very best in her future endeavours. Hana is seated in the

members' gallery, and I would ask her now to please stand and accept our warm welcome. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:40

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

Mr. Elniski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you the deserving students and staff of the Yellowhead junior high school. The students in attendance today were selected by the staff in recognition of their exemplary behaviour, academic achievement, and for living the phrase: make a good decision. The 12 students are accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Brian Gizzie, Mr. Robert Eglund, and Mrs. Margaret Taylor. I would ask the students and staff to rise and receive the traditional warm greetings of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Benito: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am privileged and honoured to introduce to you special guests from Weinlos elementary school, 30 of them, in the public gallery. The group is led by Mr. Terry Cruickshank and parent helpers Mrs. Karmjit Rai and Mrs. Candace Street. I would ask the Assembly to give a warm welcome for this group of students from Weinlos elementary school.

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

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise today to introduce to you and through you to members of this House a young man named Jerry Aulenbach. Jerry is a young, experienced, and up-and-coming realtor here in the city. He joins us every spring when session opens, and he joins us again the first day the fall session recommences because he has said himself that he understands that the decisions we make in this House don't just impact his future; they impact the future of his children and his grandchildren. I'd ask Jerry to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General.

Mr. Lindsay: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 17 students from Muir Lake community school situated in my constituency of Stony Plain. These students represent the future of our province, and they're joined today by their teacher, Ms Debbie Wayken, and by Miss Kozlow. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's an honour for me today to rise and introduce to you guests who are seated in the Speaker's gallery. These guests are family members of our former colleagues. I would ask them to please rise as I call them out. With us today are Mrs. Betty Ann Smith, widow of Colonel Arthur Ryan Smith, former MLA for the constituency of Calgary; Mrs. Alma Shaben, widow of Dr. Larry Shaben, former MLA for the constituency of Lesser Slave Lake; daughter Dr. Joan Shaben; son Larry Shaben Jr.; his spouse, Mrs. Tracey Shaben; granddaughter Kayley Shaben; and grandson Adnan Shaben. Mrs. Ardell Stromberg, widow of Gordon Stromberg, former MLA for the constituency of Camrose, is here with family members son Joel Stromberg and daughter Ms Feena Stromberg. Hon. members, please join with me in welcoming the family members.

Statement by the Speaker

Federal Election of October 14, 1935

The Speaker: Hon. members, before I call upon the first hon. member to participate in members' statements today, perhaps a little historical vignette. Today is October 14, 2008. This is the second time a federal election has been held on October 14 in the history of Canada. In the 1935 election, held on October 14, William Lyon Mackenzie King defeated the Conservative government of Calgary lawyer Richard Bedford Bennett, who had served as Prime Minister from 7 August 1930 to 22 October 1935.

R.B. Bennett was first elected to the House of Commons in 1911, representing the riding of Calgary, later Calgary-West. Mr. Bennett was leader of the Conservative Party of Canada from 12 October 1927 to 6 July 1938. Prior to his service in Ottawa R.B. Bennett was the first leader of the Alberta Conservative Party and was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta in the March 22, 1909, general election, representing the constituency of Calgary. He served until 1911, when he switched to federal politics. Mr. Bennett was born in Hopewell Hill, New Brunswick, on 3 July 1870 and died on 26 June 1947.

For William Lyon Mackenzie King his election on October 14, 1935, was to be the third time that he had been elected Prime Minister. William Lyon Mackenzie King was born in Berlin, later Kitchener, Ontario, on 17 December 1874. A lawyer by profession, he was elected to the Canadian House of Commons on 26 October 1908 in the riding of York-North and became leader of the Liberal Party on 7 August 1917. He served as Prime Minister of Canada on three separate occasions: from 29 December 1921 to 28 June 1926, from 25 September 1926 to 6 August 1930, and from 23 October 1935 to 14 November 1948. William Lyon Mackenzie King was the longest serving Prime Minister in Canadian history. He died on 22 July 1950.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Schizophrenia Society of Alberta

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From October 5 through the 11th was Mental Illness Awareness Week, a hugely important annual national public education campaign. I would like to draw attention to an organization that tirelessly strives to improve the quality of life of the 33,000 Albertans affected by one type of mental illness in particular. With branches and chapters in Edmonton, Camrose, Red Deer, Calgary, Canmore, Lethbridge, and Medicine Hat the Schizophrenia Society of Alberta is affiliated with nine other provincial societies and the Schizophrenia Society of Canada.

For people with schizophrenia and other severe and persistent mental illnesses stable, affordable, and supportive housing can have a profound effect on quality of life. According to the 1994 national mental health strategy, housing is the most crucial community support service required to achieve success in providing community-based care for people with mental illness.

In March 2008 the Schizophrenia Society of Alberta acquired funding through the former Edmonton Housing Trust Fund to purchase three vacant lots in the McCauley neighbourhood and designed blueprints to construct Iris Court, an affordable supportive-living facility for persons with schizophrenia and related disorders. This society is developing a supportive-living model which will provide ongoing care and necessary supports to the residents, and the objective of the model is to allow clients meaningful independence while providing necessary day-to-day support. Plans are already

under way to raise the balance of the funds needed for construction, with the goal for the facility to be open in 2010.

Mr. Speaker, common misconceptions – and we know what they are – about mental illness often leave individuals and families in isolation and despair, but what they really need is support and hope to get them through the tough times. Mental illness can be overcome when people work together, and Iris Court is a unique project that aims to do exactly this.

A salute to Hana Marinkovic and all of the people associated with the project. Thank you.

The Speaker: Clerk, we'll come back to this segment of our Routine a little later. Please call the question period.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

International Financial Crisis

Dr. Taft: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The big news in the world in the past month and, indeed, for much longer has been the meltdown of international financial real estate and other markets. Albertans, of course, have a lot of stake in these, not least of all because the provincial government is responsible for about \$75 billion in pension funds, the heritage fund, and other assets, and it's caught up in this turmoil. My first question is to the Minister of Finance and Enterprise: what has been the impact of the global financial crisis on the \$75 billion of Alberta government holdings?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Anybody with investment in stocks has been able to observe world-wide a very serious amount of market turmoil. Fortunately for Albertans we have minimal effect compared to many other parts, although people in Alberta that have investments in stocks will be affected as per their investment. The heritage fund, which is approximately \$17 billion, has incurred a loss of roughly 10 per cent, or roughly a billion dollars, to this point in the last couple of weeks.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

1:50

Dr. Taft: Thank you. I appreciate the information. Of course, Albertans can check the value of their personal investments every day. To the same minister: is the Minister of Finance and Enterprise also getting, say, daily updates on the impact of Alberta's investments and how they're affected by the global turmoil?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm getting almost hourly information from a number of well-informed sources, not only from the government of Canada: obviously, our own staff from the Alberta Investment Management Corporation, from the various chartered banks, from many people who have investment holdings, from regular Albertans with investments in a number of areas that have questions. I think most Albertans feel very fortunate that we do not have debt so we don't have the credit crunch that many have.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. Well, again to the same minister. Since the minister is getting such frequent updates, could she actually explain to this Assembly and to the people of Alberta what the value is of the heritage fund and of AIMCo and of the pension funds as they stand today?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, on Thursday evening there will be a public meeting about the Alberta heritage fund, and I know that at that time there will be many questions that no doubt will come to the all-party committee of the Legislature, that will have an opportunity to more fully amplify on that. But I am prepared to provide as much as I can at the timing of the second quarter, when we will know much more clearly what the impact has been. This has been a very volatile economy, with energy prices going up as much as \$10 or down \$10 in one day, so to make an annual prediction based on a day or two would be incorrect. We are going to do our best at the second quarter to provide more detail.

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Albertans are watching this crisis carefully, as they should. We've just learned that the heritage fund has lost about 10 per cent of its value in the last couple of weeks. Can the Premier spell out to this Assembly his government's strategy for protecting Alberta's investments during this upheaval?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, Alberta as a province is quite fortunate. We do have, as the hon. leader mentioned, a considerable amount of dollars in savings. We also have \$7.7 billion in the sustainability fund. This is to cushion any catastrophic drops in revenue so they don't have to make decisions overnight in terms of reducing any kind of social programs. We do have a very large capital fund set aside. I also add that we've got \$2 billion set aside for carbon capture and \$2 billion for green transit, which in itself is a huge amount of dollars going into infrastructure, which will keep the economy going.

Dr. Taft: Again to the Premier: given that ATB took a major hit from the global financial problems and that upgrader projects such as BA Energy and others are now in question and the price of oil and gas has dropped dramatically, what impact does the Premier expect the turmoil in global markets to have on the Alberta economy?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, the province of Alberta will not be immune from much of what's happening around the world, but I would think that compared to any jurisdiction in Canada, in North America, and indeed in the world nobody is as best prepared as the province of Alberta.

Dr. Taft: Again to the Premier: does the Premier expect the meltdown in global markets and the drop in the price of oil and gas to lead to cutbacks in provincial government spending here?

Mr. Stelmach: As I just said, we have \$7.7 billion set aside in a sustainability fund. I did make a promise during the leadership campaign that we'll not ever run deficit budgets, so if we have to adjust in years forward, we'll do that. We're not going to go back where we were many years ago. All I'm saying is: let's not listen to the panic, all the rhetoric. Things will settle down; markets will adjust. We've seen some positive news today, and I'm sure that compared to other jurisdictions, we're well prepared to weather any storm.

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to hear that we are well prepared to weather the storm. However, this government has

made a lot of spending commitments in the last few months based on much higher surpluses than originally budgeted for. The financial landscape, as we've been talking about here for the last few minutes, has changed suddenly and dramatically. You know, if you don't have the money you were promised, you're probably getting pretty nervous about whether you're actually going to see it. So this is about whether this government is delivering the money as promised. To the Premier: the municipal sustainability initiative is supposed to ramp up to \$1.4 billion in 2010 and continue until 2016. Will the decrease in resource revenue have any effect on MSI funding to 2016?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, as I stand before you today, I'll say no. I did mention to all of the municipal leaders: the money is there over a 10-year period, the \$11.3 billion or \$11.4 billion, the largest support for municipalities anywhere in Canada, but spend the money wisely, and make sure that you're getting value for the dollars. Once again, that's another \$11 billion that's going to be out there in the economy in terms of job creation, repairing infrastructure. I mean, this is all good news for the province of Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. About the \$4 billion, \$2 billion for carbon capture that the Premier mentioned a couple of minutes ago and \$2 billion for public transit: this was based on a projected surplus, which in turn was based on \$119 a barrel oil. To the finance minister: now that the price of oil is currently at \$80 a barrel, is this funding in any jeopardy of being delayed or pulled, and where is this \$4 billion invested?

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

Ms Evans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, our budget was based originally on \$78 a barrel for oil. It has averaged over the first six months \$121 per barrel. If in fact we had a slippage in the price of crude to about \$40 a barrel for the balance of this year, then we'd have trouble. But we don't have trouble today, not with that, not with the expected surplus, not with the \$4 billion that's identified for carbon capture and storage and the Green TRIP because the original projected budget surplus after the first quarter was 8 and a half billion. We're down roughly \$2 billion, but I have every confidence that we'll be able to meet those obligations identified by the Premier.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the finance minister again. These billions of dollars that we've been talking about: are they invested in relatively low-risk investments?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, the investment strategies of this government have always had a risk tolerance that is minimal because, obviously, our government funds are being looked after by the people of Alberta. Our pension funds and our long-term investment strategies are secure. We'll have every opportunity on Thursday evening to give more detail about how that investment strategy affects the heritage fund. We have long-term and short-term savings. We have bonds and cash. The balance is there to make sure that we have a diversified portfolio protecting the money of Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party, followed by the hon. Member for Peace River.

Climate Change

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. The Auditor General's report suggests that this government's environmental plan is about as lame as an oil-soaked duck. The Environment ministry isn't complying with directives to address climate change, and nearly \$5 billion has been earmarked for green initiatives that can't even be measured. The report says that this government can't prove any of the environmental claims it has made in the last six years, and it still has no master plan to reduce greenhouse gases. My question is to the Premier: without any formal method of reporting absolute emissions, how do you justify spending nearly \$5 billion on an environmental plan that leads nowhere?

Mr. Stelmach: I see he picked up a billion someplace over the summer; now it's \$5 billion.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to carbon capture there is a project in place, ongoing for many years at Weyburn, Saskatchewan, that has been sanctioned by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which that leader supports and that leader supports. It has been sanctioned. It says that it's a viable option for carbon capture. It's serving its purpose. We're going to roll that project even further in the province of Alberta to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The fact remains that the Auditor General has said that without accurate and transparent public reporting, Alberta's progress against its climate change goals and its overall investment in climate change programs cannot be assessed. I want to ask the Premier again how he can justify spending \$5 billion on an environmental plan that cannot be measured.

2:00

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, there's a very good example of what we hear right across the country of Canada: a lot of chatter about what we're going to do. This is the only province that has actually taken action, the first province to pass legislation in this House, the first province to put in an emission levy, which has generated about \$40 million to go into the technology fund that will be about \$100 million by the end of this year, all toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the province of Alberta. I challenge any other Premier, any other leader in North America to do the same.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has challenged other Premiers, but here's what our Auditor General says about Alberta's plan: "No evidence shows that the particular actions in the 2008 Strategy will allow Alberta to meet these goals and targets." So you can be proud as a peacock about that plan, Mr. Premier, but the Auditor General says that there is no way that that plan is actually measurable and is going to do what you say it will do.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, there is another solution. There is one. Follow his national leader, who kind of flew over the oil sands – in fact, he expended carbon to fly over there – kind of looked down, saying: oh, this is serious. He was going to shut it down. You want to reduce carbon capture? Phone your friend in Ottawa; he'll do it overnight.

Nuclear Energy

Mr. Oberle: Well, that's hard to top, Mr. Speaker, but the topic remains energy. As you are aware, there are announced plans to

construct a nuclear power facility in my Peace River constituency. My questions today are for the Minister of Energy. Can the minister inform this House as to the progress of the expert panel on nuclear energy struck earlier this year? Can we expect a report soon?

Mr. Knight: Mr. Speaker, yes, we can. As we engage in debate today, the panel is doing its work. I have questions with respect to the nuclear energy industry as it might pertain to Alberta, as many Albertans do. We've asked this group of individuals to go out and research and get answers for us for those questions that Albertans are asking. We think that within a short space of time now we will have a report in hand.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Energy: in the absence of that report and in light of statements made by our Prime Minister in the last week, can the minister inform this House as to whether or not the province has taken a position on nuclear energy?

Mr. Knight: Well, Mr. Speaker, absolutely not. Our Premier has said that only the government and the people of the province of Alberta will determine if – and I stress if – nuclear energy is an appropriate source of energy development for the province of Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A final supplemental: can the minister assure my constituents and, indeed, all Albertans that the expert panel's report will be released and that there will be a public discussion on the issue prior to the province adopting a formal position on nuclear energy?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Knight: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, most certainly, the Premier and I have already made a commitment to Albertans that, indeed, there will be consultation with Albertans on this very important topic. Albertans will have an opportunity for input into development of a position with respect to nuclear energy in the province of Alberta. We owe it to Albertans to consider all possibilities for alternate and additional energy resources for the province of Alberta. We're committed to this task, and we'll continue with that commitment.

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

Registered Disability Savings Plan

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This December registered disability savings plans will become available at financial institutions. The RDSP is a new vehicle that will assist families in planning for the long-term financial security of people with disabilities. I would ask the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports: will the minister tell us whether RDSPs will be exempt from being reported to AISH workers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, this is a good question.

It's about a good program that reflects a shared-responsibility approach. The RDSP is a federally sponsored program that allows families to save for their loved ones with disabilities. I met with members of the disability community this summer, and many of them are in support of this program. We are presently reviewing this program in my department.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That wasn't really a yes or a no. I'm going to assume that it was a no, and I'll ask my questions based on that. Will the minister explain what's wrong with the plans of British Columbia, Newfoundland, Saskatchewan, and the Yukon, who are exempting RDSPs from being calculated to determine funding of other forms of social assistance?

The Speaker: Perhaps the minister would not comment on that which would be in other jurisdictions but just focus on the Alberta jurisdiction.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, we are reviewing this program in our department and throughout the government departments. At present I don't have an answer for the hon. member across the way, but it is being reviewed at this time.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. If it's in review, I think I'll just curtail my third question. I would like to see that as soon as possible.

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

Provincial Meat Inspection

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The recent recall of meat products from the Maple Leaf Foods plant in Ontario has resulted in increased media attention on the Canadian meat inspection system. Although these are federally regulated facilities, I know that many of my constituents and Albertans want to be assured that proper food safety procedures are in place in all food processing facilities, including those under provincial jurisdiction. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. Can the minister tell us what his department is doing to ensure that proper food safety practices are being followed in provincially inspected facilities?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Mr. Groeneveld: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No doubt a timely question. My department has taken measures to ensure that appropriate food safety procedures are in place at meat processing facilities throughout Alberta. Immediately following the discovery in Ontario we conducted a comprehensive review of the sanitation programs at our facilities. All provincially inspected meat facilities were found to be compliant with the food safety standards.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental question is to the same minister. What are the differences in Alberta between federal and provincial meat processing facilities, and should Albertans be concerned about the local product being produced there?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Groeneveld: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. To ensure that products are safe, Alberta's producers and processors adhere to a strict manufacturing practice as outlined in our legislation. Agriculture and Rural Development inspects provincial facilities during slaughter activities, which often takes place two to three times a week. All food processing, regardless of where it is, must be safe.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question to the same minister: have any of the listeria cases that we've been hearing about been linked to any provincially inspected meat facilities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Groeneveld: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. To date there has not been a case of listeriosis in Alberta linked to a provincially inspected meat facility. These are small facilities where producers take a number of small animals, mostly for their own consumption. It should be noted that Alberta facilities do not produce very many sliced meats, which are at the source of the current listeria problem.

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

Arts and Culture Funding

Ms Blakeman: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Artists need to pay rent. They need to buy groceries. They need to pay child care. They need to make their car payments. But the new Alberta Arts Day doesn't help with any of that. It just gives them another venue in which to work without being compensated. Combine this with the federal funding cuts for the artists and the lack of a provincial response to that, and I question the minister's understanding of this sector. My question is to the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit. Why is the minister treating all arts and culture in Alberta as if they are leisure activities rather than the considerable portion being serious professions done by dedicated professionals?

Mr. Blakett: Mr. Speaker, does the hon. member actually believe that this government treats artists in that manner? This government has doubled the funding for artists through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts since 2002. This government spends more per capita for arts funding than every province except for the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. We spend 2 to 1 per capita compared to England. We believe in artists. The artists that performed at Alberta Arts Day at the Southern Alberta Jubilee were all compensated the full scale as part of the agreement with the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Actually, you added \$9 million to the complete sector; you certainly didn't double it. So let's be careful about that.

The next question to you: given that your counterparts in Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland and the mayors of Edmonton, Toronto, and Montreal have all written to the Prime Minister to express their outrage over the cuts to the federal Trade Routes and PromArt programs, why have you not stood up for the interests of Alberta's artists and done the same?

Mr. Blakett: First of all, if the hon. member can add, I said: doubled since 2002. Nine million dollars was the addition in 2007-2008.

Thank you very much.

Ms Blakeman: So no answer on why you didn't stick up for Alberta artists. Okay.

Final question to the same minister: will the minister commit to filling the gap in funding, that is a result of the cuts made by his federal cousins, to ensure that all of our artists and fine-craft artisans can continue to travel, showcase, and sell their Alberta talent around the world?

Mr. Blakett: First of all, I've already spoken to our federal counterpart and expressed my opinion with respect to funding for the arts. Just because I didn't do it publicly doesn't mean I have to tell you everything that I've done.

Secondly and lastly, I have publicly stated more than three times that if there are any Alberta artists or any troupes of artists that are adversely affected by federal funding cuts, we will step in and help them with assistance.

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

Affordable Housing

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Affordable housing continues to be a top priority of this government. Many in my constituency of Whitecourt-Ste. Anne have recently applied for an affordable housing program. The deadline was mid last month. My questions are to the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs. Can the minister tell me if the \$142 million that was made available last month has been subscribed for across this province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne is absolutely correct. This is a top priority for our government as we are committed to developing 11,000 affordable housing units by 2012, and \$309 million was allocated this year for the development of approximately 2,200 units, which is over and above 3,400 units last year. The RFP is a new proposal this year that includes municipalities and nonprofit organizations as well as the private sector. We have had great interest in the program, and I'm looking forward to the next question.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given that so many have applied for this recent funding, can the minister tell me when I can take home the good news to my constituency that these grants have been approved?

Mrs. Fritz: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are moving very quickly with this request for proposal initiative as it was initiated in June. Also, it was closed in mid-September. I can tell the Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, because I know you're very anxious to learn how your communities have done through the request for proposal, that we should have an announcement for you – there's been great interest in Whitecourt-Ste. Anne – by the end of November.

Mr. VanderBurg: Again, the last question to the same minister: given so much interest in this program and other programs across

this great province for affordable housing, will the minister see in her business plans an opportunity to provide extra funding for Alberta communities and housing foundations similar to this last request?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated, this is a five-year program to develop 11,000 units. We are committed to the program. We have fast-tracked the number of housing units through the proposals that we have this year. I can tell you that, yes, there will be future capital dollars in this same regard in the next year's budget and the next and the next until the end of the five-year period.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Heritage Savings Trust Fund Investments

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Earlier in question period today the hon. minister of finance admitted to the House that to date since March 31, 2008, the heritage savings trust fund has lost 10 per cent of its value in investments. Could the hon. minister please tell the House and the taxpayers of this province how many of those losses occurred from the investment in U.S. equities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Evans: Yes. Mr. Speaker, if I may be quite specific, the fair value of the heritage fund was \$17.1 billion as of June 30, 2008. The fund earned \$155 million in investment income in the first quarter: \$131 million of this income was retained in the fund for inflation-proofing as part of our ongoing plan for the fund, and \$24 million went to the province's general revenue fund.

People who invest are well aware that as long as you're not cashing in your chips, then that's a paper loss in the shorter term. It's estimated that there's about \$1 billion in reduced amount now, but obviously we're not cashing in our chips, so at . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given that 15 per cent of this fund the last time you reported publicly was invested in U.S. equities and you had a significant loss before in U.S. equities, what did you lose in the last three months in your investment in U.S. equities? This money belongs to all Albertans. It's not yours.

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I have never claimed it was my money, and I really reject that inference, actually. But the point I would make is that I guard it as if it was not only my money but everybody in Alberta's money, which it is.

I have already announced that we will have a meeting on the Alberta heritage fund. Those questions can quite properly come at that public meeting. I don't have a clear answer on what is in U.S. equities in the mix of the investments today. With those investments it's not just a simple matter of buying bread and milk. It's a very complex situation, where investments are put together in bundles, and I wouldn't be able to give you that information. It may take time even beyond this week to get that information.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the minister of finance: will you be present in the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder's constituency on Thursday night to defend this investment strategy of yours at the public meeting?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, this is a committee of the Legislative Assembly, an all-party committee, and I will be there. I've never had any intent of not being there. I don't know where the question is coming from. I have never failed to turn up when I represent the interests of constituents and what this ministry is about. I'm proud to be there.

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

TransCanada PipeLines North Central Corridor Project

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday the Alberta Utilities Commission approved a highly controversial trans-Canada pipeline set to slice through contested Lubicon territory. Now, strangely, over a month ago the Lubicon received a letter from a subcontracted company who had already been hired by TransCanada to work on the pipeline, which assured the Lubicon that their work would be going ahead. To the Minister of Energy: can the minister please tell us how it is that big oil sector companies are so convinced of the outcome of a so-called neutral process that they are signing contracts well in advance of project approval being granted?

Mr. Knight: Well, Mr. Speaker, the question is, you know: do I have information available to me about contracts made by private companies in the province of Alberta working on a particular infrastructure project? I would have to say that I am not aware of the answer to the question. You'd have to ask the people that signed the contract, I presume.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think maybe the answer might be that they're taking the process for granted.

On one hand we have the big oil sector taking the AUC for granted, and on the other hand the same company refuses to have meaningful consultation with the Lubicon. To the Minister of Aboriginal Relations: why won't you intervene on behalf of concerned Albertans and require that the pipeline company in question engage in real consultation with the Lubicon people?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Zwodzesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think most members of the House would know that the Lubicon land issue is one of the unresolved issues before us at this time. I met with the chief of the Lubicon just a few weeks ago. I've just written to him a few days ago. I've also spoken with the people at TransCanada who called me. We will be having a meeting in this respect very soon to hear what the exact issues are.

2:20

Ms Notley: Well, that's a good start but, as I say, it's been a hundred years.

To the same minister. Given the recent statements that the Lubicon have made with respect to their planned resistance to the pipeline, it's obvious that the situation is becoming increasingly volatile. Why won't you show some leadership and get ahead of this looming crisis?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, we did show leadership. We've shown leadership in this province for a number of years. We've tried very much to bring together the two sides, get them back to the table. I had an excellent meeting in Peace River with Chief Bernard Ominayak just a few weeks ago, as I indicated. He said: why don't we wait until a certain event is over on October 14, and then we'll get together again and pursue that issue and a number of others. I gave him the undertaking that we would do that, and that's precisely what we'll do.

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

Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Initiative

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the summer I visited and consulted with many constituents and agencies working within my constituency who are concerned about crime, specifically issues such as grow ops and crack houses. Now, this is a problem that we face throughout our major cities, but many of my constituents are especially concerned about these issues. My question is to the Solicitor General. Although crime is a federal issue, what are we doing to combat these sorts of issues?

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

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The safer communities and neighbourhoods investigative teams will be improving safety by targeting illegal activities such as crack houses, grow ops, gangs, and prostitution that occur in our communities. These SCAN investigators will always try to seek an informal resolution first. They would begin by calling the landlord or the owner. Community safety orders that shut the properties down are only going to be used as a last measure, and it's usually when the landlord is unco-operative or part of the problem. SCAN will help landlords remove problem tenants who disrupt communities and lower their property values, and our SCAN investigators can even provide evidence on the landlord's behalf at residential tenancy hearings.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must say that the SCAN program sounds like something my constituents will be very pleased with.

My next question to the same minister: can landlords and property owners be held responsible for something they have no knowledge of, or will this program in fact help landlords?

Mr. Lindsay: Mr. Speaker, that's a good question because there may be many cases where this happens. For example, if an adult son is dealing drugs in the home of his parents without their knowledge, in a case like that it is possible to evict the son and let the parents remain. If a property is shut down, SCAN investigators are trained to refer and link evicted people with other support agencies to ensure they get the help that they need.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Pension Plan Investments

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My first question again is to the minister of finance. Given that in the year

ended December 31, 2007, the local authorities pension plan lost over a billion dollars in potential investment income as a result of investing in derivative contracts or instruments, what has the local authorities pension plan lost between January 1, 2008, and now in investment income as a result of those derivative instruments?

Thank you.

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, the pension funds that are managed are managed at the pleasure of the board, so the minister of finance does not make a selection of the financial instruments. I know that currently the Finance and Enterprise officials have been in discussions with the boards on their concerns, clarifying the distinction between sponsor and fiduciary responsibilities. I know that, in fact, there is a court date established relative to concerns that the LAPP board may have. If you'll remember, there were issues around voting and quorum. There is a court date set for October 15.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given that the local authorities pension plan reports to the public through the hon. minister's annual report, I expect a better answer than that.

Now, the public-sector pension plan has also lost a considerable amount of investment income as a result of the same derivative contracts in the same period of time. How much has the public-sector pension plan lost in potential investment income as a result of investments in derivative contracts between January 1, 2008, and the present time?

The Speaker: Well, it seems to me that we have Written Questions as part of the process. We're getting very, very specific. If the minister would choose to go forward, fine.

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would make that point exactly. To go to two fiscal years, January to March and then March until this point in time, year to date, we can certainly provide the hon. member with some information. Pension funds by their very nature are not in short-term investments. They are very long-term investment strategies. That kind of solidarity, that kind of opportunity for revenue generation to assure that the commitment is made to those people that are enabled to receive that pension, we have got . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. minister told us earlier in question period that she was getting hourly updates on all this money.

Now, my final question is this: how much money was paid in bonuses to investment dealers for moving around these derivative contracts or instruments?

Ms Evans: Well, Mr. Speaker, AIM was part of the Ministry of Finance and Enterprise until January 1, when it became an arm's-length Crown corporation. That Crown corporation as of January 1 has been operating separately from the shadow of monitoring and evaluation about their specific strategies within the Department of Finance and Enterprise. I will come back with a written response to the very detailed questions that the hon. member has tabled so that I don't shortchange this response and then err in my judgment.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Municipal Financing

Mr. Benito: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Cities like Edmonton and Calgary are saying that they need the education property taxes for their budgetary needs. Can the minister please tell us if this is being considered?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Danyluk: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. No. Education taxes are for education. This revenue is to help ensure that Albertans' basic education system continues to be the best in the world and for the demands in the cost increases. Property taxes only comprise 31 per cent of education taxes; 69 per cent are from government revenue. Alberta has collected \$1.6 billion in education taxes through taxation.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Benito: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also for the Minister of Municipal Affairs: if that's the case, how can municipalities acquire further taxation revenue?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, Mr. Speaker, of course, municipalities have the traditional taxation, but they also have access to franchise agreements, development levies, local improvement tax, business taxes, bylaw powers, taxation agreements, business revitalization zone tax, community revitalization tax levy, well drilling equipment tax, community aggregate payment levy. Municipalities do have avenues to expand if they have extenuating circumstances.

Mr. Benito: My final supplemental is to the same minister. Is the government considering an increase in provincial grants to municipalities?

Mr. Danyluk: Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what this government did. The Premier has brought forward a support program for municipalities of \$11.3 billion over 10 years to help support municipalities in sustainability and predictability. Those municipalities have the ability and have the autonomy to decide where that funding can and should go.

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

Grizzly Bear Management

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Most recent grizzly bear data show that there are only 230 bears counted so far in the province, with the total number unlikely to rise to 400. The grizzly population is clearly in crisis, yet the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development disbanded the Grizzly Bear Recovery Team. To the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development: given the crisis state of the grizzly population, will the minister act to reinstate the Grizzly Bear Recovery Team?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity would spend more time reviewing question period from last year. If he did, he'd be reminded of the fact that we

accepted the report of the grizzly bear recovery committee. We've already implemented their BearSmart program, suspended the hunt for grizzly for another year, and are continuing with the DNA population study. This year we've already finished with the mapping of core grizzly habitat, we're continuing the grizzly population study, and we're appointing another committee, a research advisory committee, that will guide our future work in this area.

Mr. Chase: Well, by that answer it sounds like there are more committee members out there in the forest than bears.

Department officials have noted that the population targets for grizzlies in this province will likely end up being similar to the current numbers. With the numbers so low and the department's targets so low, why has the grizzly bear not been listed as an endangered species? Solve the problem.

Dr. Morton: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity is just playing with numbers again. There's no target number out there from our department yet. The reference to the 1997 study: like all studies it was based on a model. It was less scientific than the study we're doing now, which again, though, is a model and based on projection. I know the opposition is always in a hurry for something different to happen, but we're going to stick with our plan. We'll finish our DNA count, we'll continue to suspend the hunt of the grizzly bear, and when all the facts and figures are in, we'll make a sober decision.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. I'm pleased that the decision will be sober.

Given the low count of bears, will the minister commit to suspending the grizzly hunt indefinitely, past its 2009 end date? We've had models. We've had counts. It's time. Just do it.

Dr. Morton: Mr. Speaker, most members of this Assembly would be aware of the fact that just in this month we've suffered another grizzly fatality in this province. That's the third grizzly attack west of Calgary in less than 12 months: two of them fatal, one nonfatal.

We'll proceed, again, in a responsible manner when all the facts and figures are in.

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

Compensation for Victims of Crime

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Another sobering issue is the growing concern about gang activity in Alberta. The cost of crime both emotionally and financially, of course, falls upon the victims of the crime. Worse yet, I get calls from the perception of individuals that criminals get off scot-free or that we're light on criminals. My question to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General: what is the government doing to address the business side of organized crime?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Redford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is of paramount concern to this government. It's of paramount concern to this Premier. Last month we implemented the victims restitution and compensation act, which will allow prosecutors to ask the courts to seize property, that can then be used to compensate victims of crime.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Denis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: how can individual Alberta citizens believe that this victims restitution and compensation act addresses the issue adequately?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Redford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a first step. There are also other discussions that are going on at the federal level and the provincial level with respect to other pieces of provincial legislation that we are going to consider over the next six months which will make it even more difficult for organized crime to do business in this province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Denis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Finally, to the Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security: what are we doing to seize property, specifically vehicles that are involved in organized crime?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're always looking at new and better ways to reduce crime in our communities. Police currently have the power to seize certain property, such as illegal or restricted firearms or improperly stored firearms. They can also seize vehicles to collect evidence as part of their ongoing investigations or from johns who solicit street prostitutes. We are also working with Alberta Justice and the Attorney General on legislation that would allow the seizure of instruments of crime, including vehicles used to deliver drugs or private residences used to house illegal activities.

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

Mr. Hehr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since we adjourned, many individuals expressed concern to me regarding the administration of the victims of crime fund. I was pleased to hear that Neto Ribeiro, an unfortunate victim of gun violence in downtown Calgary, will be receiving compensation from the fund for his injuries. To the Solicitor General: can you give me an update on the status of the surplus of the victims of crime compensation fund available for distribution?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Lindsay: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In regard to the victims of crime fund we actually have increased payments to a number of agencies, including victims as well as police-led victims of crime jurisdictions and communities around our province. In that regard we've increased that funding substantially.

Mr. Hehr: Well, thank you for that non-answer.

Can you tell me if the victims of crime fund is also receiving funds from the additional 160,000-some violation tickets written by sheriffs since the sheriffs have been incepted, as of September 2, 2008?

Mr. Lindsay: Mr. Speaker, fine revenue, whether it's collected by sheriffs or other policing agencies across the province, does go into

this fund. Yes, some of the funds that have been collected by sheriffs are now part of that fund.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hehr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the recent spate of gang and gun violence plaguing the province, what plans, if any, does the department have to utilize the surplus in the crime fund for crime reduction measures?

Mr. Lindsay: Mr. Speaker, the funds that are in that particular area are not used to fight crime in the province. They're used in regard to groups and communities who sometimes do part of that work, but they're also used to help offset the injuries that occur to victims of crime. We do have a great plan in this province through the safe communities task force. We have committed \$453 million to fight gang violence in this province. Some of those initiatives are already put forward, and we continue to move along in that regard.

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

Library Funding

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know how valuable libraries are to the residents of my constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie and all Albertans, for that matter. My constituents have expressed concerns about the lack of provincial support for Alberta libraries. My questions are to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. What has Municipal Affairs been doing to address this concern?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Danyluk: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government is very committed to a strong, sustainable, province-wide library system. In fact, during the summer break we established a committee that travelled through 10 communities throughout Alberta. I want to say to you that at the end we need to help libraries support citizens of this province. That is exactly what we're trying to do.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what is the focus of these stakeholder consultations?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, Mr. Speaker, they do have three themes, if I can say: the first one, of course, being to enhance basic library services; the second one is how to help encourage collaboration and innovation; and the third is how we can maximize – and I suggest to you again: maximize – the technology that we have available today.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplementary to the same minister: does the province intend to provide support for library infrastructure?

Mr. Danyluk: Mr. Speaker, as we heard earlier today, the municipal sustainability initiative provides new money for municipalities to help with community infrastructure priorities. Those municipalities have the ability, have the autonomy to make those choices on what they believe is the most important in their community. Referring to your direction, the city of Edmonton is getting \$2.1 billion over 10 years of MSI funding, and they can use that funding to help support

libraries. They can also acquire \$280 million from the major facilities funding plus the community facilities initiative.

Thank you very much.

2:40

The Speaker: That was 106 questions and responses.

Hon. members, before we move on in the Routine, I would just like to make mention to you that starting today we have 10 new pages in this Assembly. I will say more about them in the next number of days, but just to advise you that there are new faces in here. They're all looking forward with great interest and have been extremely well trained. They're all excited about doing their duty in this Assembly.

In 30 seconds from now I'll call upon the next member to participate in Members' Statements.

Members' Statements

(continued)

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

Hockey Night in Canada Theme Song

Mr. Rogers: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize and celebrate a constituent who this weekend made a place for himself and the town of Beaumont in Canadian history. I'm referring to Colin Oberst of Beaumont, whose song *Canadian Gold* was chosen by a vote among Canadians to be the next theme song for CBC's *Hockey Night in Canada*. *Canadian Gold* was one of the five finalists chosen from among the nearly 15,000 submissions sent to the CBC to replace the theme that had for the past 40 years announced Saturday night hockey and was considered by many as Canada's unofficial second national anthem.

Mr. Speaker, to replace such an iconic song was a bold undertaking, and consequently the anthem challenge attracted both amateur and professional musicians from across the country, including Canadian legends Randy Bachman and Christian St. Roche, who wrote the theme for the 1976 Montreal Olympics. *Canadian Gold* was one of the five entries submitted to the contest by Mr. Oberst. Producer Bob Rock, who was involved with choosing the finalists in the competition, said that *Canadian Gold* possessed a Celtic flavour which was unique and memorable. The opening of the fully orchestrated version features bagpipes and a jubilant shout of "hey!". Mr. Oberst has said that when he composed the theme, he tried to capture the excitement and joy that he felt as a hockey fan when the Edmonton Oilers ruled the NHL in the 1980s.

Mr. Oberst, who lives in Beaumont, teaches music to elementary school students in Edmonton. He is also a member of the Edmonton band The Surgents, for which he sings and writes music.

As an Albertan and a hockey fan, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of Colin's accomplishments and his contribution to our national sport. I would like to ask all members to join me in celebrating Colin Oberst and *Canadian Gold*.

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

German Unification Day

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I rise today to acknowledge German Unification Day, which was celebrated by people of German descent all across the world on October 3, many of whom are in my constituency. As many of you know, October 3, 1990, was the day the German Democratic Republic joined the Federal Republic of Germany to become a unified German state.

I'm proud to be among the estimated 679,000 hard-working Albertans of German descent. Throughout history we have seen people of German descent at the forefront of Alberta's society. In 1901 Ray Gaetz was elected mayor of Red Deer, and Stephan Swoboda became the first mayor of Wetaskiwin in 1906. These are two examples of Albertans of German descent who have been community leaders throughout our history.

We've all just returned to the Legislature after many of us enjoyed a Thanksgiving feast. It is important to note that German settlers as well as Germans who came through other countries to Canada were amongst some of the first in Alberta to found our proud province. It is also important to note the message of German Unification Day: in 1990 two German governments and the German people as a whole were able to put aside their extreme ideological differences to unite and become a stronger nation. I urge Albertans and members of this Assembly to take a page out of Germany's book and recognize the importance of working together despite ideological differences.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to stand up and recognize this important day, and congratulations to all of those who celebrate this momentous landmark in world history.

Guten Tag.

Resource Revenue Dependency

Mr. Chase: Mr. Speaker, rushing to recession, deregulation delusions. This past Wednesday the members of the Public Accounts Committee attended a recital of the Alberta Treasury Branches' CEO choir singing old Tory con song favourites, including Don't Worry, Be Happy; Alberta the Beautiful; Yesterday; We Did it to You Our Way; Put Your Funds in the Hands of Our Management; Asset the Positive, Deregulate the Negative; and We've Got Friends in High Places. Their performance might have been more plausible when trying to pin past mismanagement woes on their former colleagues had they not been members of the same government-appointed team that awarded themselves million dollar bonuses despite drastic losses of over a billion dollars from the ATB, the Alberta taxpayers' bank, through risky investments in asset-backed commercial paper. Their theme of an Alberta insulated from the financial follies of the rest of the world brought back bad memories of Stephen Harper's firewall proposal that would prevent those, to quote Ralph Klein, eastern creeps and bums from getting their hands on Alberta's assets. Another bad fiscal memory that came flashing back was the former loss of \$2 billion of investments from the heritage trust fund in 2001, which further contradicts the notion that Alberta's fortunes are somehow immune to what happens outside our borders.

As Halloween approaches, the ATB board of directors, Stephen Harper, our Premier, and ministers of the Treasury Board and Finance would be well advised to read Edgar Allan Poe's short story *The Masque of the Red Death*, which tells a relevant tale of aristocratic arrogance, opulence, and ignorance. While the rest of the population suffered from the ravages of the plague, the nobility thought they could insulate themselves behind the closed walls and doors of their castle. The result, as is frequently the case when decisions are made behind closed doors without democratic oversight, was disastrous.

Unless the provincial government recognizes our vulnerability to the volatility of the global pricing of our one-trick pony nonrenewable resource dependency, takes its foot off the gas, and grasps the steering wheel, as other laissez-faire governments have been forced to do, it will be more than just our Alberta assets that get burned.

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

Communities in Bloom National Awards

Mr. Weadick: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to speak to the House about an event this past September that put the city of Lethbridge in the national spotlight. No, I'm not talking about Theo Tams winning *Canadian Idol*. I'm talking about Lethbridge proudly hosting the 2008 Communities in Bloom symposium and awards gala in September on the long weekend. The city welcomed some 450 delegates from almost every major community in Canada and as far away as Europe and Japan. While they were in Lethbridge, the delegates took time to tour the city's beautiful parks, including Henderson Lake, Galt Gardens in the heart of downtown, and the world renowned Nikka Yuko Japanese Garden.

I'm proud to say that Lethbridge is very serious when it comes to Communities in Bloom, not just as a host but as a member. We have a strong group of people who put in hundreds of hours organizing this symposium, who dedicate hundreds more hours during the rest of the year making sure Lethbridge is as green, lush, and attractive as a prairie city can be.

I would like to encourage my fellow members to applaud the efforts of their own Communities in Bloom committees in contributing to the quality of life here in Alberta. Fifteen Alberta communities made the national finals for Communities in Bloom, with numerous winners. Division winners included 4 Wing Cold Lake, Calmar, and Brooks. The highest award of five blooms was awarded to Edmonton, Wood Buffalo, Grande Prairie, Lloydminster, Leduc, Hinton, Stettler, Pincher Creek, Sundre, and Viking. These wonderful communities help this province put on its best face for Albertans and visitors from around the world each and every day. They deserve our appreciation.

Thank you very much, and let's applaud all of these communities.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay.

Canada's Citizenship Week

Ms Woo-Paw: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to recognize Citizenship Week in Canada. It's a time not only to value citizenship and immigration but to reflect on how we can better promote active citizenship, a shared identity, and a sense of belonging.

Immigrants continue to benefit and contribute to Alberta and Canada in many ways. In addition to enriching our social fabric, they also contribute in terms of transfer of capital funds, a total transfer of over \$1,000 million in the year 2000. That same year the amount immigrants contributed to the income tax base exceeded the social assistance and EI benefits they received. They also serve to help raise the average educational level of our workforce, with 35 per cent of our immigrants having a university degree, and established immigrants make charitable donations above the national average.

The government of Canada projects that immigration will account for all labour force growth in Canada by 2011. Our immigration patterns have changed dramatically over the past 30 years. After the 1960s immigrants to Canada generally come from Asia, Middle Eastern, and African countries. As the context changes, so do the issues faced by our new citizens and our institutions.

I would like to highlight some of the policies and considerations proposed by various groups today. In 2005 the Canada West Foundation identified recognition of skills of immigrants and allowing opportunity for immigrants to work at proper levels as priority issues. It also referred to negative attitudes towards immigrants in Alberta as a barrier to attracting and retaining immigrants. In 2006 the foundation's publication, *Dialogues*,

highlighted that "adaptive policies lie in the areas of public education, employment equity, fostering an open society, and political participation." It also stressed that "integration, however, is a two way street. Newcomers must adapt to Canada and Canadian society, but Canadians and their institutions must also adapt to make space for newcomers."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2:50

Calendar of Special Events

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we move on, as several of the hon. members alluded to either various days or weeks, perhaps it's opportune to bring hon. members up to date with respect to where we are in October of 2008. October is International School Library Month, International Walk to School Month, Islamic History Month in Canada, Learning Disabilities Awareness Month, Lupus Awareness Month, National Occupational Therapy Month, Psoriasis Awareness Month, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Awareness Month, and Women's History Month in Canada. September 29 to October 26 is Canada's Healthy Workplace Month, and of course it's also Id al-Fitr, the Muslim holiday marking Ramadan.

October 1 was the International Day of Older Persons. October 1 to 7 was Mental Illness Awareness Week. October 2 was International Day of Non-Violence. October 4 to 10 was World Animal Week as it was World Space Week. October 5 was World Teachers' Day. October 5 to 11 was Animal Health Week as it was National Family Week as it was Fire Prevention Week. October 6 was World Architecture Day as it was World Habitat Day. October 6 to 12 was National Family Week. October 8 was International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction. October 9 was World Post Day, World Sight Day, and Yom Kippur. October 10 was World Mental Health Day. October 11 was World Hospice and Palliative Care Day. October 12 was World Arthritis Day. October 12 to 18 is both National Co-op Week and YWCA Week Without Violence. October 13, as we all celebrated yesterday, was Thanksgiving.

This week, as has already been alluded to by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay, is Citizenship Week. October 15 is World Rural Women's Day. October 16 is Credit Union Day and also World Food Day. October 17 is International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. October 17 to 23 is National School Safety Week. October 18 is both Persons Day and World Menopause Day. October 19 is the National Psoriasis Walk. October 19 to 25 is National Block Parent Week, National Massage Therapy Awareness Week, Foster Family Week, and Waste Reduction Week. October 20 is World Osteoporosis Day. October 20 to 24 is National Infection Control Week. October 22 is International Stuttering Awareness Day. October 24 is United Nations Day and World Development Information Day. October 24 to 30 is Disarmament Week. October 25 to 31 is Cervical Cancer Awareness Week. October 28 will be Diwali, the festival of lights for both the Hindu and the Sikh. October 29 is World Psoriasis Day. October 31 is Halloween, as it is Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF campaign day.

Presenting Petitions

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased, given my long history with this issue, to rise and present a petition signed by several hundred Albertans asking the government to "implement pre-, peri- and postnatal Midwife service as a core health care coverage under Alberta Health and Wellness for all Albertans."

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 207 Young Albertans' Advisory Council Act

Mr. Fawcett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave today to introduce Bill 207, the Young Albertans' Advisory Council Act.

Bill 207 will create a panel of young Albertans between the ages of 25 to 35 to advise the government on matters directly and indirectly related to a new generation of Albertans, providing a voice that will ensure valuable input into policy-making.

Thank you.

The Speaker: For all of us in that age group.

[Motion carried; Bill 207 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Ms Tarchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have two tablings. First, I'm pleased to table the appropriate number of copies of the annual reports of the Child and Youth Advocate for the years 2005-06, 2006-07, and 2007-08. The work of the advocate is extremely important in providing children and youth in our care with a voice.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to table the appropriate number of copies of a document which outlines the actions taken by the government in addressing the issues contained in these reports. I am pleased to report that all of the issues have either been or are being addressed through ministry programs or policies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think this is my final submission from a number of my constituents, including Cathy Potter, Chris Poole, Catherine Greene, Janet Gibbens, Tiffany Meirlaen, Fernelly Perdomo, Michelle Yeomans, Dale Chrapko, Sharon Murphy, and Deborah Taylor, all of them raising issues around labour laws and looking for significant changes, which, of course, were certainly not met with Bill 46, so they continue to look for some modern updating of the labour laws that is more worker friendly.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter from Aramark Remote Services to Chief Bernard Ominayak of the Lubicon Lake Indian Nation, which I referred to today in Oral Question Period. The letter is evidence that TransCanada PipeLines already had subcontracts in place well before it received regulatory approval for a pipeline through Lubicon land.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three sets of tablings on the theme of accessible and affordable housing. The first tabling, entitled *Voices from the Street*, prepared by the Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre, details the dramatic rise in our homeless

population, including women and children. These people can't wait for the government's 10 years to end homelessness initiative. They need help now.

My second tabling comes from the students' union of the University of Calgary, located in Calgary-Varsity. It's a report entitled *Finding Solutions to Affordable Accommodations for Students*, of whom less than 8 per cent can currently be accommodated on campus in decrepit dorms.

My third tabling, the 2008 annual report of the Calgary Society for Persons with Disabilities, adds accessible, affordable housing to the growing list of problems faced by persons with disabilities, including insufficient living allowance subsidies and high support staff turnover, which places unnecessarily insurmountable burdens on the individuals and their families.

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to section 46(2) of the Conflicts of Interest Act I'm pleased to table with the Assembly the annual report of the Ethics Commissioner covering the period April 1, 2007, to March 31, 2008, and pursuant to Standing Order 55.01 this report now stands referred to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Renner, Minister of Environment, pursuant to the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act the environmental protection and security fund annual report April 1, 2007, to March 31, 2008; the response to a question raised by Dr. Taft, hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, during Oral Question Period on May 28, 2008, concerning oil sands tailings; the response to a question raised by Dr. Swann, hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, during Oral Question Period on May 29, 2008, concerning oil sands tailings and groundwater monitoring.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Knight, Minister of Energy, the return to order of the Assembly MR 4, asked for by Ms Blakeman on behalf of Dr. Taft on May 26, 2008.

On behalf of the hon. Mrs. Fritz, Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs, responses to questions raised by Mr. Taylor, hon. Member for Calgary-Currie; Ms Notley, hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona; and Mr. Chase, hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, on May 20, 2008, Department of Housing and Urban Affairs 2008-2009 main estimates debate.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Snelgrove, President of the Treasury Board, responses to questions raised by Ms Blakeman, hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, on May 21, 2008, Treasury Board 2008-2009 main estimates debate.

3:00

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 25

Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2008

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

Ms Redford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to move Bill 25, *Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2008*, for second reading. The act is very straightforward. It is miscellaneous statutes that typically contain a number of provisions that are noncontentious. I'll just briefly list those acts which are affected by this bill: the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Community Governance

Act, the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities Act, and the Police Act. I'd ask the Assembly to approve it for second reading.

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

Ms Blakeman: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In tradition with the precedents set out before us in this Assembly, the opposition is granted the opportunity to examine what is put forward in Miscellaneous Statutes, and with our approval those statutes are presented to the Assembly and generally go through on a vote without debate.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. minister to close the debate?
Shall I call the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 25 read a second time]

Bill 11 Insurance Amendment Act, 2008

[Adjourned debate May 27: Mr. Snelgrove]

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise and respond to the opening statements made by the President of the Treasury Board on behalf of the minister of finance. In fact, this bill was introduced May 27, 2008, and we have not had an opportunity, with the summer recess, to be able to come back to it, so this is my first opportunity to speak to the bill. Of course, in second reading we're speaking essentially in favour or against the principle of what is being presented in the act. This is Bill 11, the Insurance Amendment Act, 2008.

I've always found the prospect of insurance really interesting because essentially you're betting, or rather you're hedging your bets. I'm betting that things will go wrong, and therefore I'm going to purchase insurance to try to help me when those things go wrong. The insurance company is betting that things are going to go right, and they won't have to pay out to me, and they will be able to pocket the profit. Thus we move forward in insurance.

In certain circumstances we have very specific requirements of the public. For example, in this province it is required that you carry PL/PD insurance. Therefore, the government is also under an equal obligation to make sure that insurance is affordable and is accessible to those people. In other cases it's more of an option, or at least it's an option in the eyes of government, although it may not be an option in the eyes of, let's say, your apartment owner, who requires you to have renter's insurance to cover any damage to your belongings if there was a fire or a flood or any kind of theft or damage to the contents of your apartment.

Insurance usually engenders some pretty strong feelings from just about everybody because, really, we'd all prefer not to have it. But I think many of us are grateful that it is, in fact, available to us, the idea being that if things go wrong, you have purchased on some sort of an instalment basis some protection and would expect to be getting back some sort of coverage if you are injured or if you have lost or have damaged property.

One of the interesting and not often highlighted aspects of insurance is that insurance companies – remember, I was talking about that I bet things will go wrong, and therefore I'll get coverage,

and insurance companies bet that things will go right, and they won't have to pay out. But they also deserve credit for working very hard to make sure that things do go right. Insurance companies are at the forefront of trying to improve how automobiles are made, for example, and are largely responsible for campaigning for things like airbags and other safety features to reduce the severity of injury that people may have in traffic collisions. As I'm sure my colleagues on the government side can attest, they also get lobbied by the insurance industry in trying to have better roads, lower speed limits, better markings, and that sort of thing to again reduce the severity and frequency of traffic collisions. That's true in a number of other sectors that are covered by insurance.

What we have in front of us is a major updating of insurance legislation. This comes to us from more or less two different places. In 2001 Alberta Finance did start to review the Insurance Act in order to modernize it. I would say that in looking through this, they've been fairly successful in doing that, and I'll come back later to some of the things that they've put in place here.

This was essentially a twoparter. One was the changes that were made in 2003. Now, that has resulted in the cap on the soft tissue injury payout, which is quite controversial and, in fact, is still somewhere in the middle of the courts because it was deemed to be unconstitutional in that it separated out a particular class of individuals who had suffered an injury, those that had suffered a soft tissue injury as compared to those that had broken bones, for example, and deemed that their injuries would only be eligible for a \$4,000 cap, a maximum of \$4,000 on their injury. That, if I'm still following this, I think is now being appealed by our very own government, so that one is still in the works. That was the 2003 version of this.

Now we come to the 2008 version, and they're essentially looking at everything else that's covered under the Insurance Act there. There's very little of what's being changed here or adjusted here that refers back to automobiles, but there's still some stuff in it.

The second piece of what happened is that in 2003 the Supreme Court had a ruling that has rippled out into Canadian society and has required a response. Essentially this was a court case around KP Pacific Holdings versus Guardian Insurance Company. It came into being because there was a disagreement on the interpretation of the time frame for when a claim could be filed. There was a dispute about whether it had to be filed within a year or whether an update had to be within a year from the date of filing the proof of the loss. That ended up going to court.

One thing led to another. In the Supreme Court we ended up with a ruling saying that the Insurance Act had been fundamentally unchanged since being created. It needed a serious review, and the Supreme Court did ask that there be a serious review and that clauses be brought in line with current insurance practices and generally accepted principles, which is perfectly reasonable. Specifically, the main case was that "the outmoded category-based Act contains rules based on the old classes of insurance," and they felt further that this would result in "continued uncertainty about what rules apply."

That brings me to the second part of what's going on here. We all know we're supposed to read the fine print. Not very many of us do. The other part of what's happened here is that in some cases the fine print was not available for us to read. Some of the changes that are being contemplated here really are about consumer protection but also about increased access of consumers to information that they need to know in order to understand their policies. Generally, people don't read their policy until it's too late. Something bad has already happened, and now you're trying to figure out if you're covered for the bad thing that just happened. We really all need to try to read it in advance, but human nature being what it is.

There are a number of changes that are being brought in with this act specifically under, let's call it, transparency, which I think is the way the President of the Treasury Board talked about it. I tend to talk about it as consumer protection. It is there to make sure that the fine print is there and that folks get to read it.

3:10

I talked a little earlier about the time limits, and that is flowing directly out of that court decision. What we get out of that is that there are two years to react rather than one, and that actually is bringing it in line with the Limitations Act that we have here in Alberta, which is pretty standard at two years. So it's bringing that into line. It is requiring that companies disclose the existence of a limitation period. They hadn't been required to tell you that before, so if you didn't know, basically, you had no way of finding that out unless you did read the fine print, which, as we said, is human nature not to.

It also allowed for a 30-day late payment and talked about what was a maximum amount of interest that insurance companies could charge you on that late payment. Those are the situations where they tell you that your insurance is expiring at the end of October. In some cases it's – what do they call it? – negative billing, where if you don't do anything, they continue, but in other cases you needed to do something and you forgot. Now you're in the middle of November, and something goes wrong. But you've had an insurance policy forever. It allows you make that payment late and still have your coverage, but it also allows the companies to charge you interest on that money that they were owed and did not get for that period of time, but a reasonable amount of interest.

It talks about costs that may be awarded, court costs. One of the major factors now in people going to court or not going to court is whether or not they can get their legal fees paid. That had not been included before in awards from insurance companies. Now you can petition to have what they call court costs, which is essentially your legal fees, your lawyer fees, included or added on to the amount of the settlement that you would be getting.

As I said, you do now get the ability to read the fine print. I know how excited we all are about that, but you didn't have that before, so we should be excited we have it now.

It also requires that we're informed of a dispute process where the appraisals are contested, and that was not available to us before. There was no dispute mechanism process for you to say: "Well, I disagree. You say my couch is worth \$200. I say it's worth a thousand." There was no process through which to take that, and that's now available.

The printing is too small.

Dr. Taft: It's the fine print.

Ms Blakeman: It's that fine print.

The new owners are responsible for the errors in the policy, so if the company is sold, one insurance company sells to another insurance company, and if in transferring the people's information over they make a mistake on your policy, it's the fault of the new owners, not your fault. That was what was happening previously. Again, that's another consumer protection item that is available there.

Now, there's a whole other series of things that fall under a category I'm calling office of the superintendent. Essentially the industry is going to pay for the expenses of that office of the superintendent of insurance, and that office will have wider influence in appeals and disputes and things like that.

The final piece of the changes that are being made here is

modernization. It's offering a framework for the contracts. It's allowing the use of electronic messaging. Knowing how many of my colleagues now have surgical implants with their BlackBerrys, I'm sure they'll be just thrilled to hear that. But it will allow for electronic ways of communicating, which of course is including e-mail and faxes, and that had not been allowed before.

Also, plain language. What a concept: plain language to be used in insurance. I can't tell you how excited I am about that, Mr. Speaker, because it acknowledges that our citizens for the most part are intelligent, well-thought, curious individuals who, given half a chance, will use their good common sense and look after themselves. As I say, I've mentioned a number of places where they did not have access to information previously. Now they do, and even better, it's written in plain language. Thank you so much. All of those, I think, are a step forward. I don't have any objection to them, and in principle I'm certainly willing to support this.

There are two things that I don't like. This bill is meant to line up with the B.C. bill – the TILMA word comes up – because basically B.C. and Alberta agreed that they would align their two insurance systems. Now, interestingly – and I'm assuming we're going to hear from somebody on that side about an update about what's happening – the B.C. Legislature introduced their version of this bill actually before we did, on April 30. As I said, we introduced ours on May 27. But the B.C. Legislature did not pass it in the spring, and they have suspended their fall sitting, so their bill is going to die on the Order Paper because they won't be back in time to deal with it. So we're not lining up with them anymore. I also have some questions about whether they're going to change their bill beyond what we thought they were going to do. This was supposed to get everybody to line up.

Now, I'm on the record repeatedly, as are my colleagues, with deep concerns about that whole process of that agreement, of TILMA, as it's called. I won't go into it again except to register that this is one of the pieces that's now coming forward. But you know what? We get to debate this in the Legislature. That's why I'm not going on too much about TILMA: because we actually get to talk about this act here, unlike all the other parts of that agreement of TILMA, which we were not allowed to talk about.

The second piece that I never like is moving things out of legislation and into regulations. I have had this reinforced to me so many times by members of the public, people that work in not-for-profit groups and in service organizations and in umbrella organizations for companies, associations. They come forward and say: you're absolutely right, Laurie; it is hard to find those regulations. It's much easier to find the legislation online, and you can read the debate about what was intended or not intended in the *Hansard*. But with regulations you've got to know what you're doing. You've got to hunt them down, and you've got to be persistent in getting them. So I never like to see items moved out of legislation and into regulations.

The other thing is that the regulations get no debate in this Assembly, and there's some question about whether they're allowed to get debate in the policy field committees. Now, the original policy field committee standing orders, in fact, allowed for that and recognized it in a number of places, but I've now been to two or three of those policy field committees in which government members have adamantly said that they were not allowed to be discussed. So that one is up in the air, and I think that's another reason why we don't want to see deciding factors put in regulations rather than in the actual legislation.

One really nice thing, that I really like, that doesn't outweigh TILMA but goes a long way towards it, is what is happening around reciprocating insurance exchanges, which is allowing larger groups

like municipalities to offer insurance coverage through their own funding to NGO and volunteer-driven charitable organizations. This has been a huge issue in the NGO and volunteer charitable sector over the last six or seven years. About that far back all of a sudden we started to get calls from community leagues saying: "What's happening? Our insurance for our little community league building, where, you know, we turn the temperature down every night and hardly use the building at all, has gone from \$800 a year to \$3,000 a year. What are we going to do? We don't have that money. We use that money for our programming."

It was everybody. It was the community league buildings; it was children's recreation and leisure activities; it was theatres and dance companies that had buildings. The insurance just went crazy, and nobody could help. We did work really hard to try to find some insurance groups that would cover off these small organizations, but for the most part there was no help. I remember having an ongoing and rather bitter exchange with the then Treasurer, who, of course, has always had a great fondness for ag societies, and her best recommendation was to somehow, you know, be like the ag societies and all band together and somehow self-insure that way. But that just was not realistic for most of the groups we deal with.

3:20

That NGO sector right now is under such strain. I cannot emphasize enough how difficult it is for them right now. Having a clause in this amending act that would allow what they call reciprocating insurance exchanges to happen is a very small but very, very important piece for a sector that's very important to us. This government likes to talk like the only important sector is the business sector – and God knows that I love my small and medium-sized businesses in downtown Edmonton – but we have a huge sector called the public service and the public sector here, which covers all of your social service groups and helping agencies, children's agencies, arts and culture, leisure, youth. All of those groups are part of our society. They're an important part of our economic society but also make it possible for us to have a nice place to live. Those groups have really been struggling, mostly with the cost of their human resources right now because they can't keep up to what's being offered in the private sector and in the government sector. I'll talk about that in another debate. This little piece in here should really help them and should help very basic community-level organizations like your local community leagues.

As the critic for this area I'm very happy to speak in second reading to recommend to my colleagues that they should support this bill in principle. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Additional speakers? The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the parts of this bill that, while I support it, I find somewhat amusing – and it was referred to a little bit earlier by my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Centre – is the game of insurance leapfrog that we're playing with British Columbia. She mentioned the fact that TILMA was first debated in the B.C. Legislature, and then about a year and a half later we finally got to have some discussion and debate on TILMA. Then they approved part of this, which is basically a joint insurance act, back in April, and now we're trying to approve it, but they're not sitting. You know, if two provinces can't get together over the phone and co-ordinate their acts, then how are we going to extend this western concept?

Speaking of another bit of sort of confusion and what I see as comedy, is the fact that the organization that we want to get together

with to a greater extent with regard to our insurance and our trade and labour mobility, our goods and services, et cetera, is a public insurer. Here we have British Columbia on one side that has a public insurance mandate which is able to produce considerably reduced costs by offering it to all B.C. individuals and then us in Alberta, despite our former Premier's claim that we'll undersell anyone else, and then while there's been a government change to the other side of us, to the east – it's now a Conservative government – they haven't rushed to abandon what has worked so well for them in the past, and that's a public insurance program. Here we are in what you might want to refer to as a socialist sandwich, but we're still clinging hard to private, for-profit insurance.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre also talked about some of the difficulties of receiving fair compensation in this province when injured. It concerns me greatly that the Alberta government has basically taken the side of the insurance companies and questioned the judge's decision on compensation for soft-tissue injuries. The fact that Albertans do not have the opportunity to address their concerns in court is a loss of what I consider to be a Charter of Rights privilege. With the soft-tissue injury unresolved and the fact that the B.C. Legislature isn't meeting this fall, we still have to co-ordinate our BlackBerrys and get our scheduling done.

There's something else that I find somewhat surprising. It goes back to a very good piece of legislation that we all supported, and that was Bill 39, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2005. One of the amendments that I was trying to get the mover of the act, Richard Magnus, to put forward was the idea of increasing the fines for those people who are driving without insurance. My belief was that by increasing that fine to a point that was considerably above what the insurance itself would cost, then people who are gambling that they aren't going to get caught might actually be forced to purchase that insurance rather than putting not only themselves at risk financially but the people with whom they had the accident at great financial risk because they had no insurance to bail them out.

As the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffer pointed out or tried to find out in his questions today in question period, the compensation for victims of crime or victims of an accident when it's determined that it was based on alcohol or careless driving, which is, in fact, a crime: that fund has gone to over \$42 million. It's kind of like the federal government's employment insurance: it seems to be just another tax as opposed to any benefits received.

The types of sort of skirting around the Canada Health Act and health insurance in general come to mind also, and that is the government's tolerance to the point of almost promotion of the private Copeman clinic in Calgary. Basically, what people are being advised is that by laying out approximately \$4,000, they can ensure that they will receive faster service through this private clinic. They will not only get nutrition information, but the Copeman clinic suggests that they will be treated in a much faster manner than would normally be the case.

To some extent they're right because a number of the people working in the Copeman clinic are former medical practitioners who provided public service. Of course, we all know that in Calgary over the last year we lost 41 general practitioners because, like everyone else affected by high rents, they could no longer afford their leases. So a number of these individuals basically abandoned their public patients and signed up for the umbrella organization that the Copeman clinic offers, and now we have thousands more Calgarians unable to access public health, whereas the so-called Copeman clinic individuals have the assurance, if not the insurance, from Copeman that they'll magically get to the front of the line faster than those waiting in our health system.

Now, my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Centre also brought up the idea of regulation versus legislation. This is a concern that I

continue to have. I am extremely grateful for the nonpartisan participation in standing policy committees. I think that is a major improvement. I thank the government. That's one of the few transparency and accountability promises that they've actually lived up to. But I've participated in two different committees that are actually moving from legislation back to suggested regulations to solve their problems. One committee, for example, that I sat in on, is the Committee on the Economy, that is currently trying to work on Bill 204 that was proposed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

3:30

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays sent us an addendum last Monday trying to not necessarily resurrect the cellphone legislation, Bill 204, and provide a safety network type of driving enforced insurance plan for individuals. I think the hon. member was just proposing hand-helds as opposed to the distraction that is equally caused by the discussions whether it's held in the hand or just simply hands-free. But he suggested to the committee that instead of losing his intent of Bill 204 into an omnibus form of distracted driving regulation, he urged us to put the distracted driving regulation into his Bill 204 legislation. I agree, and I fully support the hon. member's intention because eating a hamburger or slapping on some lipstick or, you know, checking in the mirror kind of thing is far less distracting than the engagement of talking on the phone. Therefore, I fully support the hon. member's attempt.

We know in terms of assurance/insurance safety that the emergency physicians – several companies have gone that route. But the committee, when we last left them – it's like a serial – on Monday had suggested, not unanimously it's important to note: the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie and myself had concerns about the legislation to regulation aspects of the move. Where it's at now is that it's going back to the Ministry of Transportation.

While we have a wonderful Minister of Transportation, the fact that that legislation could get lost in his regulations, never to see the light of day, is of great concern to me. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview first introduced a cellphone ban back in 2001, and here we are, eight years later, and we're potentially losing his initiative to the regulatory generosity or lack thereof of our hon. Minister of Transportation. So that's an example of where legislation gets lost to regulation.

Now, another committee that I'm proud to be a member of – I was just sitting in on the committee on the economy – is the Community Services Committee. Right now we have before us Bill 18, a piece of legislation. In that piece of legislation we're talking about taking the opportunity for recognized arts groups of the federal government and so on, the oversight demonstrated by people in the trade, to make film recommendations. Now, Bill 18 I didn't believe was controversial at first, but what it's doing is that it's taking away the transparency and the accountability of legislation and again putting it at the whim of the minister of arts and culture to decide on the ratings of films and their potential distribution.

The Speaker: Hon. member, please.

Mr. Chase: Yes.

Speaker's Ruling Relevance

The Speaker: The chair listens very attentively to what the hon. member says. For much of the last five to six minutes the chair has had a great difficulty trying to find the relationship between a member utilizing a cellphone or a member putting on pantyhose while driving or a member talking about arts policies and Bill 11, the

Insurance Amendment Act. Try and whip it all into one – okay? – so we can really follow this, please. Thank you.

Mr. Chase: I would be glad to. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre also noted, you know, the pantyhose circumstance but more appropriate for the Speaker and myself: the shaving reference. She pointed to me for the shaving reference, so I did want to make sure that . . .

The Speaker: I'm sorry, but in benefit and protection of the integrity of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, we will not refer to her shaving habits, please.

Continue.

Mr. Chase: My goodness. I think, Mr. Speaker, we had better be taking out Assembly insurance if this discussion continues to descend to habits.

Debate Continued

Mr. Chase: To get back to Bill 11, we appreciate the idea of co-ordinating all the information, updating it. As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre noted, the transparency and the accountability that this bill provides is what we're looking for. That's why, despite concerns about the connection and the getting together with British Columbia, we support Bill 11 in principle. One of the major reasons we support it is the connection of the open nature, the transparency, the kinds of things that are lost when legislation is converted to regulation.

I appreciate your patience, Mr. Speaker. In general, this is a good bill. It's needed, and when it comes to the vote, we will be supporting it. Hopefully we can co-ordinate our activities with British Columbia and then, as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview pointed out, take our insurance co-ordination on the road along with our economy to Saskatchewan as part of the western tiger concept.

The Speaker: Additional participants? The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: A clarification, Mr. Speaker: are we now moving on in debate, or is this Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

The Speaker: Oh, I'm sorry. Yes. We do have an opportunity for that standing order. Absolutely.

Mr. Taylor: Okay. I'll sit down until you've dealt with that.

The Speaker: Thank you very much for bringing that back to my attention. We have five minutes now for questions and responses. Ten seconds having gone by, no questions or responses.

Shall I now call on the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie to continue the debate?

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I must say that I really thought somebody was going to take advantage of Standing Order 29(2)(a) there.

The Speaker: Maybe it'll come. It may be coming.

Mr. Taylor: I guess there was a run on hose.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise and speak in second reading to Bill 11, the Insurance Amendment Act, 2008. I'm not going to go on at great length about this. I don't think I'll use all of my allotted time. The Member for Calgary-Varsity has certainly spoken to our shared concerns, I think, over doing in regulation what should be

done in legislation on the floor of this House. So I won't go on at length about that, just to register my own personal concern yet again, as it seems that I've done a number of times and my colleagues have done a number of times on this side of the House over the last four years, about this government's distressing tendency to do in regulation what we believe should be done on the floor of the Legislature.

If it's done here, it's done openly, with transparency, with an opportunity for all members of the House, if they should be so moved, to debate the issues that are in the public interest. As a rule, with very, very few exceptions, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, we should be enacting legislation, making law here as elected representatives of the people of Alberta on the floor of the Legislature and not doing behind closed doors what can be done in full view of the people.

The other concern that I have – well, I guess I have couple, really. One is that we are trying to create Bill 11 in concert with British Columbia, and of course that's quite impossible now that British Columbia has cancelled its fall sitting of the Legislature. They cannot deal with their companion legislation to this until the spring of 2009 at the earliest.

3:40

I think it's probably more of a procedural concern than anything else because I don't see the need for us to wait for other provinces to catch up with us when we're on a good idea. Nevertheless, if the intention all along has been to harmonize insurance laws between Alberta and British Columbia, it would've been nice to move forward in concert. It was British Columbia's decision to cancel its fall sitting of the Legislature, so ultimately I guess this rests at their feet primarily rather than ours. I'm not suggesting that we put this off until they go back into session by any stretch of the imagination. I think we should move ahead. But it just makes me wonder if we're going to be able to harmonize things as effortlessly and smoothly as we thought we would with this delay built in.

The other thing that I wanted to register, Mr. Speaker, is just the notion that this bill does enhance consumer protection measures, does work on the language of insurance contracts. My colleague from Edmonton-Centre pointed out that we should all read the fine print, and very few of us do, and there's a very good reason for that. When you get an insurance contract, it is page after page after page after page of fine print. Written in very small print, it just goes on and on and on, like some of the speeches in this House sometimes, I guess, except in very legalistic terms, and it's enough to make the eyes of everyone but a seasoned lawyer glaze over, I think.

That's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, because I believe that I have seen, certainly, in my life way too many instances of conflict between the insured and the insurer, where the insured ends up apparently not having the coverage that they thought they had or apparently being convinced that they didn't have the coverage that they thought they had. I think, without going into great detail about this, that if we did all sit down and read the fine print in our insurance contracts, we would find out that those contracts, as indecipherable as they are from time to time, actually work even as they sit now to the benefit of the insured more often than not except that the way in which they're written precludes the insured from really knowing that because it's hard to stay awake for them, let alone translate what's written there into English or French or the official language of any part of this country. As a result the insured is from time to time taken advantage of by their insurer. I think that that's very unfair. I think that's very wrong. I think it's very unjust.

While I think that Bill 11, the Insurance Amendment Act, 2008, represents what I would call a good start down the road of enhancing

consumer protection measures, improving coverage, improving access to contract information, and improving dispute resolution mechanisms, it is my hope that all parties in this Legislature recognize that it is just a start, and in fact we need to go farther. We need clarity around our insurance legislation. It is something that we are required by law to carry in the case of automobiles and required in many cases – by the bank that holds our mortgage, the landlord that holds our lease, et cetera, et cetera – to carry on our contents, on our personal property, and so on. With that requirement I think there needs to be a requirement put into effect by this Legislature in the public interest, again, that insurance actually operate in the public interest.

To refer to what my colleague from Edmonton-Centre said before, it is a gamble. The insured is betting that something is going to go wrong, and if and when it does, she will be covered. The insurer is betting that nothing is going to go wrong and they will be able to pocket the profits. There is a degree of uncertainty, a degree of risk, a degree of gamble in all this. But a degree of gamble is one thing; an opportunity to take advantage of the situation I think is something else entirely.

We will be supporting in principle Bill 11 on this side of the House – at least the Official Opposition will; I can't speak for the third party – but we do have some questions going forward and would hope that this is just the beginning of the process, not the end.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. In terms of public versus private insurance have you any concerns that we might go the way in Alberta that America has gone? You know, in America the figure is around 50 million Americans who don't have public insurance. Is this a concern that Bill 11 might have brought to your attention or that you have in general about losing our public health equivalent of insurance?

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to clarify, the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity was asking about my concerns, if any, around public health insurance under the Canada Health Act and not specifically about anything in Bill 11.

An Hon. Member: Part of the leadership platform?

Mr. Taylor: Was that a heckle?

The Speaker: Others? The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition on . . .

Dr. Taft: On 29(2)(a).

The Speaker: I have to recognize first the hon. Member for St. Albert, then the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Allred: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I heard the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre mention reciprocal insurance, and I fail to find anything in Bill 11 with regard to reciprocal insurance. Perhaps her debate was on the need for addressing reciprocal insurance.

I have some experience with reciprocal insurance. I was the chairman of the Professional Liability Insurance Committee for the Canadian Council of Land Surveyors for, I guess, about 10 years and

a member for about 20. Due to the escalating costs of professional liability insurance we found it necessary to try and see if we could get a reciprocal insurance program so that we could transfer some of the cost. Instead of paying all the cost to the insurers, we could partially self-insure. We found it wasn't a big problem to do that within a province, but when we tried to develop a national program, the cost of the fees from each particular jurisdiction became prohibitive. I think it's really interesting that we're dealing with British Columbia and the TILMA now, and hopefully some of those costs will disappear.

I think one of the things with reciprocal insurance is that we need to do that on a national basis because most professional groups are so small that within a province they can't afford to establish a professional liability insurance program on their own, so they need to look nationally. The biggest problem, as I found, was the fees that were charged by each different province. I must say that Alberta was one of the least expensive of them all, but some of the eastern provinces, in particular, charged very exorbitant fees, that really made it prohibitive to put together a national program for a reciprocal insurance agency.

I think, really, that it would be nice if the minister would investigate the concept of including a better plan for reciprocal insurance and particularly negotiating with other provinces to see if we could have a reciprocal agreement where we could waive the fees across provinces. Once you establish in a province – you've done all the legwork and got the legal agreements in place – it's really, basically, a rubber stamp to transfer it across the country. The problem is that the administrative fees that the other provinces charge make it prohibitive.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much. To the member: I did get your note, and I was looking for the reference in the act. As you know, this act is also good for improving your biceps. It's quite a thick document. I did contact the minister, and we're both looking for the exact reference for you. I can tell you that I picked the reference up on page 991 of *Hansard* on May 27 in which our esteemed President of the Treasury Board was laying that particular issue out. There's one reference for you to start with, and I will get you the other.

The Speaker: Additional questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Then the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise here, and I appreciated the comments just immediately preceding me concerning reciprocal insurance because I was going to reference those myself. I look forward to how that develops because it is a crucial issue. As many of us will know, there are all kinds of organizations who, in their sense at least, got unfairly burdened by the current insurance system, so if this act would correct that, that would be a very good thing. I won't dwell on that unless some of the members want me to, which probably they don't. I don't hear an overwhelming cheer there.

3:50

I was also pleased and I'd like to just commend the government on this issue: our information is that there was pretty good consultation on this bill with the Insurance Brokers Association of Alberta. They're a significant stakeholder in this, so that's a good thing. I

need to take this opportunity, because there is a good example here, to urge the government to follow this good example in consulting with the Insurance Brokers Association of Alberta on the status of credit unions in Alberta and B.C. and their ability to sell insurance and the concerns that insurance brokers of Alberta have on that issue. I know they've been very vocal, or they've been trying to be vocal. They're not feeling heard, although I think that maybe the government is beginning to pay attention. I just want to reiterate for people how important it is to consult with stakeholders on these particular issues.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I'm going to just raise a question here in light of global events of the last few weeks on the world financial markets and a concern that I've had. As I look through the bill, my concern grows although I'm not a lawyer and I'm not an insurance specialist and I'm not a finance specialist. But I am concerned that insurance companies can become as vulnerable as other financial institutions in this global financial crisis. While we've been spared, certainly, the worst of this in Canada, we are seeing in other countries insurance companies of various types struggle badly to even survive. One of the biggest examples is the AIG group, while out of the U.S. really a global corporation.

There are various concerns I have here. A question I have is: what about protection for policyholders of companies that may go bankrupt? Let's say you're insured by company X. You've been paying for a long time, and somewhere in the course of events, whether it's just before you need the insurance or maybe while a claim is trying to be settled, which can take a long time, that company goes under. What happens then? What kind of consumer protection is there then? I think that if we're talking about consumer protection, we need to protect consumers all the way along, not just from the moment that they're considering buying it or negotiating it or changing it but, frankly, from the other side of it. What happens if the insurance company itself goes into receivership and all those people who have been depending on that insurance or, as I say, might be in the middle of a claim suddenly are dealing with a company that has no assets?

I had that in mind as I was looking through the bill a few minutes ago. I came to what is section 20 of Bill 11, and I'm going to just read it here. It says on debt obligations, 115(1):

A provincial life company shall not, and shall not permit its prescribed subsidiaries to, enter into a debt obligation or issue any share, other than a common share, if as a result the aggregate of the total debt obligations and the book value of the prescribed shares of the company and its prescribed subsidiaries would exceed 20% of the total assets of the company and its prescribed subsidiaries.

This is a kind of formula that I think is fairly common in insurance circles to ensure that an insurance company doesn't take on so much debt that it can't meet its liabilities, but when there is a global financial hurricane, as we're experiencing right now, the book value of an insurance company can plummet 30 or 40 per cent in a matter of a couple of weeks. Suddenly, then, this formula creates a real challenge, if not a real problem. I just want to repeat this. I'm reading from Bill 11:

... if as a result the aggregate of the total debt obligations [of the insurance company] and the book value of the prescribed shares of the company and its ... subsidiaries would exceed 20% of the total assets.

So what can happen here is that in a sudden drop of book value you can actually force an insurance company into a crisis in order for it to meet the letter of the law because suddenly its book value is way down. As a result, the debt it's carrying is more than 20 per cent.

A month ago maybe it was only 15 per cent of the book value, but if the book value plummets, proportionately the debt goes up, and then we have a company breaking the law. Then what does the company have to do? Then the company has to take sometimes dramatic steps to dump its debt. It can't meet those requirements, and it ends up in a crisis. Then it steamrolls or snowballs or whatever you want to call it into a crisis for all the policyholders.

I don't know who's responsible for considering issues related to this bill, but I would suggest that that one be carefully thought through in light of the global developments of the last number of weeks and perhaps be reconsidered because we could end up creating a real problem inadvertently for insurance companies and all their policyholders and investors.

That's one point. In general I'd like to drive home to the Minister of Finance and Enterprise, who's responsible for this legislation, also to her officials and to the cabinet committee and the policy field committee who are responsible for this to consider taking this bill back to the drawing board, at least some sections of it, in light of current global events because you could be building in a tripwire there that nobody's intending to, that could actually compound a global crisis. I would want to make that point here on the floor of the Assembly.

I also can't resist doing this. This bill is brought forward, as has been noted any number of times, through the TILMA process with B.C. We're trying to line up our insurance schemes between the two provinces. Although this bill has apparently bitten the dust in B.C., we'll see what the upcoming provincial election there may mean for follow-up on this bill.

I would like to think that the day comes when we're debating a subsequent bill to this bill on insurance and on co-ordinating insurance between the two provinces, and that would be a bill to bring in public auto insurance in Alberta and bring Alberta's auto insurance system more specifically in line with B.C.'s so that Alberta joins the other western provinces and actually has public auto insurance. Then an awful lot of these issues simply dissolve because you have an insurance system governed and controlled by the very people who are being insured and not being governed and controlled by investors from New York or London or Toronto. I would hope that the day comes when we see that kind of legislation here.

Mr. Speaker, in particular, I see the minister is here. If I can draw her attention to my comments concerning debt obligations and what that might entail for companies – I haven't gone through this whole bill; I just opened to that page and read it – I think that would be wise. I offer that just as sober second thought on an issue that none of us would have foreseen a few months ago.

With those comments I would like to move adjournment of debate on Bill 11. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**4:00 Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole**

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: I'd like to call the committee to order.

**Bill 19
First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects
Repatriation Amendment Act, 2008**

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Minister of Culture and Community Spirit.

Mr. Blakett: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure and an honour to begin debate in Committee of the Whole on Bill 19, the First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Amendment Act, 2008. The traditions and practices of our aboriginal peoples are an important part of our province's cultural heritage. Alberta's cultural policy recognizes that in our aboriginal communities culture embraces not only dance, music, games, and traditional dress but also values, beliefs, and deep spiritual relationships with the land, and sacred objects play a key role in the sharing of cultural values and beliefs. The proposed amendments for Bill 19 request a formal repatriation of 15 long-term loans between the Blackfoot First Nations and the Royal Alberta Museum between June 1998 and August 2001. These loans were made to assist the Blackfoot First Nations by returning sacred objects for traditional ceremonies.

In 2000 the First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Act was enacted to allow certain ceremonial objects to be repatriated from the Glenbow Museum to the Blood, Peigan, and Siksika nations as part of the Blackfoot agreement. Mr. Chairman, the regulation came into effect in 2004, and it sets out the application process that Blackfoot First Nations have had to follow since then. However, the act and regulation only apply to objects loaned from the Glenbow Museum and to new applications for repatriation after enactment. They do not apply retroactively to the objects covered by the 15 long-term loans from the Royal Alberta Museum.

I'm proposing an amendment to include these objects loaned out to the Blackfoot First Nations from the Royal Alberta Museum. The amendment will achieve the goal of deeming ownership of these objects to rest with First Nations without requiring further action by the band members. This is in keeping with our initial loan intent, the intent of the act, and with our government's cultural policy.

I ask for support for this Assembly to go forward with this amendment to include these sacred objects from the Royal Alberta Museum as part of the Blackfoot agreement.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to be able to rise and join the debate in second reading of Bill 19, the First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Amendment Act, 2008. This has been an interesting journey. I guess, if you stay elected long enough, you start to see stuff coming around again. I went back in my notes and looked at the comments that were raised by some of my colleagues in 2000, when we were debating second reading of the original First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Act.

I was very fortunate to serve in this Assembly with Sue Olsen, who was then the member for Edmonton-Norwood and a First Nation woman. Her comments were very interesting and very poignant because she talked about how important it was to recognize that for anyone that practises a faith, there are articles or items that usually are involved with that faith. They represent things, and they have great meaning attached to them. We had a group of people here in our country, and for the large part we had removed those objects of faith from them and were using them for purposes other than what they had been made for or had been passed between generations for. Essentially, we took them, and we put them in museums. We studied them. In some cases people just collected them privately. But it was taking somebody's faith articles, objects. It took them away from those groups and took away their ability in some cases to engage in their faith.

Sue talked about how important it was for young people to be engaged in their faith communities and how difficult it was for First

Nation and Métis communities to do that when they didn't have those objects available to them. She talked about going back to their traditional practices and introducing their young people to those practices.

It really struck me at the time, Mr. Chairman, and I'm awfully glad she raised those points. Frankly, I'm very grateful that we've had Sue Olsen and a number of other members that are still sitting who are members of First Nation and Métis settlement communities in this House to help us understand some of these and to be at the table and to speak from their hearts about this.

One of the things that Sue did keep raising as part of this debate was her consternation over having a number of things put into regulations, and in fact she even introduced a number of amendments that would have sent the regulations to the then Standing Committee on Law and Regulations. In the subsequent years, of course, the government has seen fit to disband that committee completely, and we've lost our ability to examine those regulations and debate them in the House.

When I looked back at my original notes on this bill, I was talking about another version of the same thing, which was the decision to remove the marble friezes from the Parthenon and take them back to Britain. The Earl of Elgin, that was, so those are the Elgin Marbles, of course. Ever since then those marbles have been at the centre of some pretty impassioned arguments about who should have them. Is it appropriate to take somebody else's representations and just collect them, just have them so that you can look at them privately or, as one step better, put them in a public museum and allow other people to come?

There's a strong argument there that that helps us all understand each other better and makes for a better world. Yes, I agree; that's certainly the truth. But I don't know that we need to have the actual items in our museums. I think we should be able to create items that are a reasonable enough facsimile that we're still allowed to have the discussion.

What we're doing in this act, which is the 2008 version, is just adding a couple of schedules to what we had. It's just adding new agreements to the act where additional First Nation objects can be repatriated to their home communities. Certainly, we see some communities struggling and fighting hard to regain control of their culture and customs and trying to find some way for themselves to move forward in a pretty turbulent society. We know there are a number of communities that are really struggling with drug and alcohol and violence issues. There are also a number of very strong elders who are constantly trying to help people find ways through that by using their faith.

4:10

So I do believe in this. I believe at a really basic level that especially faith communities, religious communities, churches, synagogues, temples should have control of their own objects. Certainly, it's very kind of them if they'll lend them to institutions of learning, but again we should be able in this day and age to recreate something close enough that we can use it for the purposes of study or observation and return the original to those communities.

The last thing, Mr. Chair, was that I know at the time there was a real concern, not really spoken but a real concern, that if these items were returned to First Nation and Métis communities, somehow they wouldn't be properly cared for, that organizations didn't have the ability to be able to house these articles appropriately. For those of you that have had any association with a museum movement, or galleries for that matter, there are a lot of issues around humidity control and dust and how clean the air is and bacteria availability in the air and all kinds of things because, in fact, that does destroy the

articles themselves over time, and you need to be careful about that. I would argue that that, in fact, has not happened, that those communities who have had those objects repatriated to them have been very careful with the objects that they've received and have treated them with all of the reverence that I would have expected them to. I know that that was a real issue at the time. People didn't want to talk about it on the record and out loud, but it was certainly an underlying current of the discussion at that time. I would argue that that has not been the case.

Of course, the last group that's involved in this – it's a three-way agreement between the museums, including the Glenbow and the Royal Alberta Museum, the government, and the particular tribes and First Nations that are named. I'll just put in one more plug here for adequate funding and support by the government for our great museums because they, too, have requirements if they're going to be exhibiting articles that they have, perhaps in other contexts.

We've had just a terrible time here in Edmonton, where we had a wonderful design for the Royal Alberta Museum. Now we don't know where this is coming from – and I don't think it's coming from an MLA because I'm sure an MLA would have been out front, saying: it's me – but there's a push coming from somewhere to now have two museums and to sort of downsize both of them. So we would have the Royal Alberta Museum on its current site but not substantially changed from what it is now, and then a second one that would be concentrating on, I think, human anthropology would be, I believe, somewhere here on the Legislature site. Certainly, the concern about that is that we're going to end up with, you know, two halves not making a whole.

A big piece of this is around funding and support for our large and small museums. I was able to attend and audit some of the sessions from the Alberta museums conference that was held here in Edmonton at the university Lister hall conference centre a couple of weeks ago. It's a real concern for them in their ability to do a good job and to get the support they need from the government. Let's face it. If that support doesn't come from government, it's not coming from anybody else. I think one of the responsibilities that government has is to be able to protect our heritage and to allow it to be presented in a way that's useful to new generations. Certainly, that is what's being anticipated here with the First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Amendment Act.

Certainly, as the critic for this area I'm happy to support what is contemplated in the amending act. It's adding on a couple of other schedules. As I say, for all the reasons I've outlined, I think this is a good idea, and I'm very willing to support it. I notice there's some pretty enthusiastic support from my colleagues as well, so I will take my seat and let them join in the discussion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Aboriginal Relations.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. In my capacity as Minister of Aboriginal Relations and as a strong supporter of our First Nations it is my great pleasure to add my full support to Bill 19 and its passage, that being the First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Amendment Act, 2008. I want to begin by sincerely congratulating and thanking our hon. Minister of Culture and Community Spirit for having brought it forward, and I do so very humbly as an honorary member of the Blackfoot Nation. I recall having worked with the Blackfoot Nation back in 1982, '83, '84 on this very point, repatriation of a medicine bundle, which I was privileged to be able to open for purposes of photographing and including in an education kit at that time.

It's important to note, Mr. Chairman, that back in the 1960s and 1970s the government of Alberta came into possession of a number

of Blackfoot sacred ceremonial objects. At that time traditional Blackfoot lifestyles were facing major challenges, and many members of the younger generation had in fact not shown as keen an interest in learning their traditional ways as was hoped for. I recall elders and other First Nation ceremonial leaders fearing that these objects would be lost through the sale to private collectors throughout the world, a major concern of theirs, to be sure. However, through various means these sacred ceremonial objects ended up in the care of the Glenbow Museum in Calgary and/or in the care of the Royal Alberta Museum in Edmonton for purposes of preservation and safekeeping. In fact, in some cases these sacred objects were ceremonially transferred to members of the staff working in those museums to ensure their safety and preservation on a very personal level.

As we all know, Blackfoot traditional life has always continued in spite of the very active absence of these ceremonial objects. In more recent years the Blackfoot have seen more and more young people starting to take renewed interest in their own heritage and in their traditions, and that is truly great news, Mr. Chairman. Having young people turn their attention to traditional culture helps strengthen aboriginal communities. It also creates a stronger connection between young people and the significant role that their cultural heritage can have in their future growth.

Mr. Chairman, we've really, truly come full circle now. Today the Blackfoot Nation stands ever ready and very well equipped, as always, to properly care for and preserve these special objects. In fact, just last Saturday I was privileged to attend the Thunder medicine pipe bundle ceremony, an opening bundle ceremony, and I saw once again the importance of these sacred ceremonial objects and just how fragile most of them are. I also saw the great care and attention that was given to these objects by members of the Piikani tribe, who are using them for ceremonial purposes now, the very purposes for which they were in fact created.

I participated in this very rare and special ceremony, which was led by Allan Pard and Jerry Potts, and I was delighted by the number of young people who were there and who also took a very active role in the ceremony. Numerous songs and dances and stories unfolded, and all of them were so integrally linked to that special ceremony. All of this was made possible because they had the actual medicine bundle in their presence, right there. It was a repatriated bundle from the museum in Ottawa. It was a very special, unique moment and a very exciting one.

In fact, the amendments in Bill 19 address these exciting times. With the passage of Bill 19 these sacred objects can be used and passed on amongst other Blackfoot people. In the past, as we know, these objects have been put on display or kept in museum cabinets, rather inactively, I should say. However, they are of great spiritual importance and significance to the Blackfoot people, and they play an important role in the well-being of the entire community because they bring the Blackfoot culture to life in a very spiritual and unique way. Strong and vibrant First Nation communities are an important part of our province's heritage and of our province's future.

4:20

The government of Alberta is very supportive of First Nations people and their quest to maintain sacred ceremonial traditions. In fact, on September 21 I was humbled to attend the beaver bundle opening ceremony hosted by the Blood tribe. I was also deeply honoured to receive a Blackfoot name at that time, Makh Kooyeeo Makh Kah, which is Running Wolf, and to be presented with a ceremonial headdress from Elder Art Calling Last at this very culturally significant and emotional sacred ceremony. Tsee Okhtakh Seetahki, which is a Blackfoot way of saying: "Thank you. I am honoured, and it is a good feeling."

It should be noted that between 1997 and 2001 a number of these objects were returned to the Blackfoot people and returned to active ceremonial life. I was pleased to play an active role in that first repatriation and to work with my colleague from Lesser Slave Lake, who led the initiative to successful conclusion.

These loans that we speak of today and which the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit referenced in his opening remarks occurred before that First Nations repatriation came into effect. Mr. Chairman, I'm very supportive of Bill 19 and of these amendments to include the sacred objects from the Royal Alberta Museum as part of the Blackfoot agreement. I know that Treaty 7 Grand Chief Charles Weaselhead, who is also chief of the Blood tribe, is very supportive, and I know that Chief Leroy Good Eagle from the Siksika Nation and Chief Reg Crowshoe from the Piikani Nation are also very welcoming of this official repatriation of items that until now have been on loan to the Blackfoot Nation.

Mr. Chair, I want to conclude just by saying that the Blackfoot Confederacy Advisory Committee on Museum Relations, which included Blackfoot First Nations members, was instrumental in helping bring this along and supporting our minister in bringing it to a successful passage, we hope, in the House today.

I also want to just remind members here that without these sacred ceremonial objects so many of the important and integral aspects of ceremonial lifestyle among the Blackfoot Nation could not occur. When you have the actual medicine bundle there and the actual sacred ceremonial items that are included in it, that gives rise to the fundamental of their oral tradition of passing along the values and the cultural traditions to the next generation.

I've personally witnessed three of these openings, and they are filled with all kinds of singing of special ceremonial songs, which are, again, part of the oral tradition, and they're passed on in that way to the next generation, and with dances and other very special acts. There's a way to open the bundle in a sacred ceremonial, spiritual way. There's a way to close it, to replace it if necessary with fresher items because they are fragile items. All of that is so integral to the lifestyle that is being fought to be maintained and preserved.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I hope we will have unanimous consent to embrace this particular motion. It sounds like we're going to have that, and for that we're very grateful. Thank you for this opportunity, and thank you to our minister once again for bringing forward this important bill.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mitakawye O'Yasin is a Sioux proverb that translates as "We're all related." Some of the relationships we've had with First Nations over our historical time frame have not been very positive. Bill 19 gives us an opportunity in a very small way to address some of the shortcomings.

One of the most moving experiences I've had in my teaching life was an opportunity at a teachers' convention years ago in Calgary to hear a guest speaker, Douglas Cardinal, a terrific Alberta and Canadian architect, talk about the spiritualism behind his architecture. One of the things he talked about was a church that he built in New Mexico. He had built the walls of this church, but while building the walls of the church, he didn't have a plan for how the ceiling would be held in place. He took his inspiration from a spiderweb, so cross-cables were used very similar to the way the Saddledome roof is attached.

All my life I've been inspired by the history and the co-operative nature of tribal wisdom and the support within the tribe for the elderly and those with disabilities, so I asked Douglas Cardinal if he could provide me with examples of First Nations wise individuals.

It was his recommendation of a famous Sioux writer of the late 19th, early 20th century, Black Elk, that gave me my first taste of First Nations wisdom and philosophy. From the reading of Black Elk, I went on to read several other books of the Sioux Nation. Then I thought: well, having familiarized myself to a large extent with a number of the Sioux customs, I should move back up north and again follow up with the Blackfoot, the Cree, the Peigan.

One of the connections that I again made with First Nations was this past spring, heading into the early summer, where Prime Minister Harper made his official apology to the First Nations for the incredible hardships that they had experienced during our residential schools. While Bill 19 can't possibly erase those negative memories, it is a start. What Canada and Alberta need is the equivalent of what took place in South Africa with the healing through truth and reconciliation. Until we look at our past history and make amends, we're going to be continuing to bear that cross.

One of the things that doesn't get celebrated sufficiently is the actual successes at Hobbema. Hobbema gets an awful lot of negative news about gang activities and shootings, but one of the few things that gets celebrated about Hobbema, which I first had an opportunity to visit years ago at a powwow ceremony and saw some incredible dancing and costuming, is that right now there are over 200 young people involved in the Hobbema cadet corps. A number of elders and representatives of the First Nations forces and also the local RCMP are working with the youth of Hobbema to connect them positively to a cadet corps drilling group. This positive story needs to be brought out to a greater extent.

Another First Nations success that is also significant is the fact that the attendance at the school on the Morley reserve has blossomed and almost doubled because of a literature program that's being offered that the kids want to connect to. It's causing a reverse problem in that the school lacks the infrastructure for it's practically doubling in population.

Very recently the Member for Edmonton-Riverview, the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, and the Member for Calgary-Mountain View had an opportunity along with our chief of staff, Judy Wilson, to go out and visit with elders and be a part of a welcoming ceremony at the Enoch reserve. The Enoch elders have done tremendous work of late in terms of providing affordable housing for the members of their tribe.

In Calgary in terms of First Nations successes and restoring relationships, it's the ring road, the hope for 41 years, and I know the hon. Minister of Transportation and the Premier are looking forward to the final signing. This will be a result of years of working with the First Nations to not only benefit the Tsuu T'ina but also benefit all Calgarians by having a route to the southern part of Calgary without having to drive around the reservoir.

4:30

Another opportunity to follow up on the intention of Bill 19 in terms of restoring artifacts – and by restoring artifacts, we're also restoring faith – would be the idea of pursuing the Andy Russell I'tai Sah Kòp park. I'tai Sah Kòp is a Peigan or Piikani word which means meeting place. This was a park that was actually part of the Waterton national park which in the late '30s for some reason was taken out. The restoring of the 1,600 square kilometres of protected status to this park would be of great benefit to the Peigan nation and also to southern Albertans and Albertans as a whole because of the protection offered to it.

Another First Nations connection that I have is the fact that in 1971 I began at the Jerry Potts school that the minister referred to. I, too, had an opportunity to speak with Jerry Potts' grandson, who spoke at the 35th anniversary of the opening of Jerry Potts school. This getting together, the appreciation of culture, and recognizing historical contributions is what Bill 19 is all about.

With regard to the concern over preservation a number of First Nations – I'm referring now specifically to the west coast. When the totem poles were carved, they were never intended to just be museum pieces; they were intended to be religious symbols and basically tribal monuments and family badges. The idea was that nature would have its way, and they would return to the nature from which they initially came, and in their decay would spring new life.

The ideas of preservation, while important – and that's the role museums play – have to respect the traditions of the First Nations. I'm pleased, as a previous speaker indicated, that a number of these traditional items – medicine bundles, pipes, and so on – were presented as part of a ceremony initially to the museums as opposed to actually having been aggressively bought or stolen, as has been the case in so many other parts of the world where aboriginals have been treated as second-class citizens, that these are being returned to their rightful owners. The need for the restoration of pride is very much a part of what First Nations are trying to instill amongst their youth – the pride of community, the pride of involvement, the wisdom of the elders – and Bill 19 is a small step in giving back that pride.

Alberta has a terrific opportunity in that within the next five years we will have in the city of Edmonton the largest First Nations population, taking over from Winnipeg. The First Nations have an opportunity to add to the Alberta advantage, and the recognition of their history, the recognition of their spirit, their pride, and their capacity to be a part of a modern Alberta solution without giving up their customs or without assimilation is extremely important.

Therefore, supporting Bill 19 is an absolutely natural beginning. It is a start, and we must work forward to make sure that First Nations individuals have an opportunity to succeed in this province, which, basically, they founded.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is my great pleasure to rise in Committee of the Whole for Bill 19, the First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Amendment Act, 2008. This proposal requests the formal repatriation of 15 long-term loans between the Blackfoot First Nations and the Royal Alberta Museum between June 1998 and August 2001.

The sacred bundles loaned to the Blackfoot First Nations are of the utmost importance. These bundles are the very heart of the tradition of the Blackfoot spiritual life. The sacred objects held in these bundles are used in traditional Blackfoot ceremonies, such as the beaver bundle ceremony and the medicine pipe ceremony and the sun dance. These ceremonies are spiritual and sacred in nature and are of great benefit to aboriginal communities across Alberta. The return of these bundles to active ceremonial use is playing an important role in community healing and in the revitalization of traditional spiritual life. The history and the heritage of our province are linked to the aboriginal peoples who inhabited this land long before the European settlers arrived.

Mr. Chairman, I'm very pleased that the Ministry of Culture and Community Spirit is committed to supporting and celebrating that history and heritage. We want the transfer of the ownership of these cultural items to be seamless. The amendment will achieve the goal of deeming ownership of these objects to rest with the First Nations without requiring further action by the band members. In fact, in effect the amendment completes the process begun when these bundles were placed with communities on a loan basis. It completes the process of bringing the bundles home. These amendments will greatly benefit the awareness among aboriginal communities in Alberta of their vast cultural heritage and the importance of passing

this knowledge on to future generations. It will show our Alberta government's commitment to our past, our heritage, and our future.

Mr. Chairman and hon. members, I would like to take this opportunity to share with you a situation that has been permanently impressed on me personally. A number of years ago the Minister of Education asked me to chair the review of the Northland school district to find out the causes and the solutions for the low high school completion rate in the school district. We held many community meetings with local residents, who are predominantly people of the First Nations. In one of the meetings a lady elder looked at me and said: "Mister, if you lose your Chinese culture here, you still have the Chinese culture in China with hundreds of millions of people. If we lose our aboriginal culture here, it won't be found anywhere in the world. It'll be gone forever." This lady elder's statement has opened my mind and my heart to the need for protection of the culture of the First Nations people in particular and the culture of humanity in general.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion I must say that out of respect not just for the Blackfoot First Nations but for all First Nations people it is my recommendation that the First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Amendment Act, 2008, be passed by this House. Thank you very much.

4:40

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. It's great to see so many participants in this debate on this bill and to see so much support for it. It's an important bill, and I think also the support in this Assembly reflects changing awareness and values in our broader society.

I find it's sometimes difficult to explain to people who haven't given this much thought what the value and importance is of a medicine bundle or of another sacred object, such as the ones we're discussing here. Like a number of members here I've had some exposure to various First Nations, including the Piikani and some of the people who were instrumental in getting the first version of this bill implemented.

I've given it a bit of thought, and I think an easy way for somebody who isn't connected in any way to an aboriginal community to understand the power of these objects is to relate it to their own world. If they are Catholic, these bundles and these objects are equivalent to First Nations in the same way that some of the most sacred items in the Vatican would be of great, great spiritual value to Catholics. The image of Christ on the cross: you think of the incredible power of that to Christians. In the same kind of way these objects have that kind of power for First Nations people. If you think of Muslims and perhaps the remarkable power of places and objects in a place like Mecca, these are the same kinds of things in terms of the value and power to our First Nations culture.

I think all of us can well understand that there are people around the world, great numbers of people who would give their lives or who would go to war or would give almost anything to protect those fundamental sacred objects of their culture and their religion. That's what we're talking about here, and I think that's why it touches many of us here with that great power.

We can all imagine the power of symbols. We're surrounded by them in this Assembly. There's the Canadian flag there, Mr. Chairman. Who among us hasn't on some occasion or another had a spine-tingling experience? Maybe after a Canadian gold medal at the Olympics or maybe when you're travelling out of the country and you haven't been home for a while and you see the Canadian flag, you can feel the emotion of that and how that affects you. Again, that's the same kind of feeling, the same power that we're talking about when we talk about the sacred objects of First Nations.

I appreciated very much the comment from the Member for Calgary-Fort when he was contrasting First Nations culture with Chinese culture, that if Chinese culture loses some of its foundation in Canada, it doesn't threaten the fundamentals of Chinese culture because there is a whole, vast nation of people supporting that culture, but as we threaten our First Nations culture here, there is no other place for it to exist. I thought that was an outstanding point made by the Member for Calgary-Fort. I think, again, that's why this bill resonates with so many of us here.

This bill is about keeping a culture alive, a culture that has been very nearly broken but not quite. There's an organization in my constituency called the Bent Arrow society, and their work is with urban aboriginal people. They named themselves Bent Arrow because the arrow is bent, but it's not broken, and it can therefore be straightened and salvaged and repaired. In the same way, what we're doing here is a small step in keeping those cultures from being completely broken and giving them a chance to regenerate and repair.

The value of that, I think, is profound. Again, it's hard to communicate this sometimes, but each of us live our lives through a whole series of stories, whether those are stories about what we'll do when we grow up or what we'll do when we become MLAs or what we imagine we'll do when we get into cabinet or what we'll do when we retire or the much simpler stories or more immediate stories: what are we going to do this Christmas? How do we imagine our holiday? How are we going to treat our kids? How are we going to treat our family? All those stories come together to form us as individuals. The source of those stories is a culture. Of course, it's a symbiotic relationship because those stories don't just create us; we then use those stories to re-create our cultures.

But if you were to take away all that culture – imagine if you were to take away our religion and our economic basis and our justice system and our nationhood and all the rest of it – what is left? Remove our arts, remove everything from Shakespeare to *CSI*, you know, remove our sports: what's left of us as Europeans, as whites, or as Canadians? Well, not very much. Then we become adrift not just as a culture but as individuals.

That's the kind of experience that's happened to members of our First Nations. They've had just about everything removed from their culture. As a result, as individuals they're lost. Sadly, we see that too often in the problems that First Nations people demonstrate, whether they're in the school system or the justice system or the child welfare system. They're people who are struggling because they've lost their culture. That's why, again, this is such an important piece of legislation.

I think that maybe one of the reasons our dominant culture is a bit ambivalent about this kind of legislation, at least it has been historically, is that if we recognize this part of aboriginal culture, we might then be challenged to recognize other parts of aboriginal culture, not just their medicine bundles, which, frankly, can be easily put away, out of sight from us, but perhaps beyond that maybe their land claims, maybe their values towards land and nature. I think, then, it's a healthy sign that we are accepting this because it challenges us to be open to other aspects of First Nations culture which historically we've been very closed to.

This is an opening of a door, of a cultural door. That's just a little crack, but we might see it open more and more, and we might through that continually challenge ourselves. If we can recognize the value of our First Nations' sacred objects, then maybe we will recognize the value of their language or the value of their land claims or the value of their family structures. In doing that, we breathe new life into their culture and their lives, and we can also enrich our own.

I need to note in here a disappointment. Perhaps the minister can help me on this. This legislation, as I read it, deals exclusively with Blackfoot sacred objects. I might be wrong, and I hope I'm wrong, but I don't see any reference to other First Nations groups in Alberta. Particularly I'm thinking of Cree, to a much smaller degree Dene. Historically Alberta's territory was controlled through the 1800s by the Blackfoot and the Cree and to a much, much smaller extent by other bands, including the Dene. But the Cree, really, controlled roughly the north two-thirds of Alberta's land. They had a very long tradition of trading with the fur traders. They were much more of a trading band than the Blackfoot, which tended to take a more confrontational attitude to western culture.

4:50

But I know every bit as much as the Blackfoot have struggled with their cultural identity and fought to preserve their language and their sacred objects, the Cree face the same challenges. I'm wondering, to the minister, if there are any initiatives under way concerning sacred objects of the Cree or perhaps the Dene and if there were, if there's an opportunity under this legislation for those at some point in the future to be brought under this act because I think it's terrifically important that we facilitate the same process and recognize the same importance of the sacred objects for all First Nations groups. I'd ask that of the minister.

I was up fishing north of Fort Chip in very late August. When I was out fishing on a lake – my wife and our two boys and I were the only people on the lake for a whole week – we didn't see much wildlife, but we saw one large, long, narrow, brown-furred animal that looked kind of like an otter, but we'd never seen it before. On the way out we passed through Fort Chip and ended up at a camp of elders and youth, which the Cree up there – the Mikisew Cree, in fact – had brought together to keep the culture alive and to give the elders an opportunity to teach the youth about surviving in the bush and about some of their own values and lore.

We ended up chatting with an old trapper. We asked him about this animal, and he asked a few questions. He said: "Well, come with me." He walked us over to his pickup truck, and he went to the back of his truck. He reached over the tailgate, and he pulled out this brown, furry hide. It was a dead animal. He said: "Well, did the animal you saw look like this?" I said: "No, no, no." "Well," he said, "that's a wolverine. I guess it wasn't a wolverine." Then he reached in his truck and pulled out something else. He said: "Well, did it look like this?" We said: "No, no, no." He said: "Well, that's a mink. I guess it wasn't a mink." He pulled out something else, and it was a beaver. I said: "No, no. It wasn't a beaver." "Well, then," he said, "it must have been a fisher because that's the only thing I don't have here, and what you described looked like a fisher." What he was doing there was teaching us in the same way that he was teaching the Cree youth about the culture of living in the woods, living off the land, living with nature.

I would urge the minister and I would urge this government to seek out opportunities for other objects from other bands, including particularly in Alberta the Cree, to bring them under the same legislation so that we can help those cultures repair themselves and regenerate and renew and gain strength. As those cultures gain strength, their members gain strength, and as their members gain strength, we all benefit because we have stronger citizens of our society.

I don't know if the minister would be prepared in this debate in committee to indicate whether there's anything in the works for the Cree. I understand that one of the meteorites at the museum – I think it's the iron meteorite at the museum that many of us have seen many times over the years – is claimed by the Cree. I don't know if there's an opportunity to expand this legislation to include that, but if there is, I know I would certainly support the minister in that.

With those comments, Mr. Chairman, I want to congratulate the government for a good piece of legislation and urge them to go further in the same direction. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Any other members wish to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to pick up on some of the thoughts expressed by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, also with a nod to the Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek for his comments, a nod to the Member for Calgary-Fort. This has been a fascinating hour's worth of discussion or thereabouts to sit back and listen to thus far. I think it was the Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek who suggested that he hoped that this bill would get unanimous consent in the House, and I for one certainly won't stand in the way of that, but this is just a start. We kid ourselves if we think that this solves things. This is just a step down the path.

There's something, I think, that needs to be said here in regard to what we're doing in the House right now and how we are feeling about it largely, not exclusively, as a bunch of white folk, most of us whose ancestors trace back to continents other than this one. Most of us are not indigenous to the North American continent. We feel good about doing this, and I think we should feel good about doing this, but we shouldn't feel too good about doing this because when you feel good about these sorts of things, there's always the tendency to stereotype again. Oh, we would think that this was a positive stereotype as opposed to the negative stereotypes of First Nations peoples that we and our ancestors have held for so many decades, centuries, but we must remember that people are individuals. Whether they are First Nations, whether they're European, whether they're African, whether they're Asian, people are individuals, and we must treat them as such. I point that out because we need to keep that in mind when we're debating and passing legislation like this.

I sat at Thanksgiving dinner on Sunday with my brother-in-law and his wife and her brother and their kids and my wife and my mother-in-law. We were all at my brother-in-law's place at an acreage just north of Stony Plain, and my brother-in-law's wife and her family, her brother, are Ojibwa on their mother's side and Nova Scotian on their father's side. For the first time – oh, gosh, I think it's 20 years – since my brother-in-law and sister-in-law's wedding I had the opportunity to sit and talk with her brother, who teaches in Fort Chip.

An Hon. Member: Really?

Mr. Taylor: Yes, he does. In fact, the interesting conversation started out with a little bit of discussion about the teaching experience in Fort Chip and how Steven – that's his name – was seeing the number of students that he had starting to fall off already, and here we are in October. He teaches high school math, as I recall, science possibly – I'm not sure; I think he said that he teaches science – and some shop as well. So we explored that a little bit.

He teaches grade 10 and 11 and 12. There aren't a lot of students, of course, because Fort Chip is a pretty small community although, as he said, you know, if everyone who belonged to families in Fort Chip were to move back from the various places that they're scattered to throughout this province, Fort Chip, which is about a thousand people, would probably be 5,000 or 6,000 or maybe 8,000. That's worth keeping in mind, too. He doesn't have that many students to begin with. I think he said there were about a dozen in grade 10. By the time you get to grade 11, you're down to maybe six or seven or eight. By the time you get to grade 12, you're down to four, and you're lucky to have one every couple of years who goes on to university, on to postsecondary, that sort of thing.

We got to talking a little bit about the reasons for that, the causes for that, and what you might do about that, and he said something that really stuck in my mind. He said: remember, this a multiheaded dragon. Remember, this is a multiheaded dragon. I think we have to keep that in mind.

5:00

What we're doing here with Bill 19 is important, but, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition alluded to, it's really just part of what we need to do. By returning and honouring the sacred objects of one group of First Nations, the Blackfoot First Nations, the Blackfoot peoples, we should open the door – we should open the door – to the consideration of honouring, returning the secular objects, the culture, the language. But we have to do it in a way that I think more than anything else is based on us, we descendants of the settlers, the Europeans, spending most of our time listening rather than talking and proposing solutions.

I think we have tried since Confederation. I think we've tried since perhaps before Confederation. Well, some would trace it back to shortly after the British conquest of New France because New France had a pretty good working relationship and living relationship with the Iroquois nations and the other First Nations in Quebec. But we've tried since almost the history of Anglo-Saxons in Canada, in British North America anyway, to solve the Indian problem.

You know, first we wanted to assimilate them, then we wanted to tuck them away somehow, and so on and so forth. Now we want to save them. We can't save them, but they can save themselves. We can help. We can facilitate. We can do things like we're proposing to do here.

We can do this and much, much more if we're willing to listen and if we're willing to remember that just like when we lumped them all together when we decided that somehow Europeans were superior to First Nations people, just like when we decided that somehow if we took all the kids and put them in residential schools and taught them English or French, they would grow up Canadian, quote, unquote, if we decide now that we have the solutions – well, we'll just give them back stuff, right, or whatever it is that we're proposing as a solution – we are still stereotyping them. We are still looking at them as some kind of homogeneous group, you know, and they're not.

They're individuals. Some of them have horrendous problems, horrendous issues, multigenerational issues that they're dealing with. Some, an increasing number every year, really, are proving – again, by white standards, if you will – successful. They're finishing school. They're starting businesses. They're giving back to not only the First Nations communities that they came from but to the wider community of the province of Alberta, the people of Alberta.

We need to allow First Nations people to lead us down the path that they need to go on. We will be there to help in any way we can, but we need to listen and let them take the lead because they know and they will know in increasing numbers and they will know far better than we could ever possibly understand coming from our cultural paradigm what they need. It's a multiheaded dragon. This maybe addresses one head.

It's not just a multiheaded dragon. It's also a multifaceted opportunity. So let's do this together, and let's focus on successes and solutions, and let's make it happen. Bill 19 certainly has my vote.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: Any other members wish to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you. I'll be very brief as I know we are looking for the question. The reason why I wanted to speak in favour of this is the fact that what this piece of legislation does is acknowledge the fact that we live in a society where we have done wrongs and where we are bold enough to say that all people are included in this Canadian mosaic, all people have access to the dreams that we all dream, all people are Canadian regardless of race, religion, or other background. This is an opportunity for us to say: be proud of who you are, be proud of your history, be proud of what makes you so special, and at the same time embrace all that is so great about being Canadian. This is just as important to a Sikh man from Calgary as it is to our Blackfoot citizens.

Mr. Chair, I just want to express that this is one of those profound moments that makes you very proud to be an Albertan and a Canadian. This is one small step, I think, that we need to take to ensure that we live in a society where we see beyond differences. Actually, this may be a profound step in encouraging the government of England one day to return the Koh-i-Noor diamond to the people of Punjab, so well done.

The Deputy Chair: Are you ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[The clauses of Bill 19 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Bill 20

Agriculture Statutes Repeal Act, 2008

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments and questions or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to rise in Committee of the Whole to present Bill 20. I appreciate the support that the bill received in second reading.

The Agriculture Statutes Repeal Act, 2008, repeals three acts: the Agricultural Societies Amendment Act, the Gas Distribution Amendment Act, and the Federal-Provincial Farm Assistance Act. The Agricultural Societies Amendment Act was passed in 1978 and was never proclaimed and is no longer needed. As well, the Gas Distribution Amendment Act was passed in 1990 and was never proclaimed into force and, again, has made itself redundant. Finally, the Federal-Provincial Farm Assistance Act was enacted in 1959 and deals with agreements between the federal and provincial government relating to farm and rural development. This act is currently not needed because of provisions in the Government Organization Act which are considered appropriate.

In conclusion, I encourage all members of the House to give support to Bill 20. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. We on this side will support the government in moving this legislation through. There was a very brief, succinct description of it given by the Member for Battle River-Wainwright. I think that covers most of the key parts, but I

must express my one concern, which is the fact that we are dealing here with legislation that was passed through this Assembly and in some cases was never proclaimed. I think there's a principle there that's worrisome. This bill begs comment on it.

This Assembly here is supposed to be the apex of democracy, the apex of government in Alberta. I've always struggled a bit when governments are able to turn their back on this Assembly by not proclaiming legislation that this Assembly in its wisdom, such as it is, passed. Even if this Assembly sometimes makes mistakes – I know that's hard for people to believe, but I'm sure it does occur from time to time – the appropriate response, to me, would be for the government to bring back legislation much sooner than this and have it amended rather than to allow it to just sit for years and years and years and, I think, in some cases decades unproclaimed. I think that's very undemocratic. It's a bit of an insult to this Assembly.

5:10

I need those comments to be on record. I understand that in some ways that's what this bill is about. But my concern, as I say, is that there are times when governments do not proclaim legislation that this Assembly passes, and I for one am very uneasy with that.

With those comments I'll take my chair and commit to supporting this piece of legislation. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Do any other members wish to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Just very briefly for the record, I support the Member for Battle River-Wainwright in bringing forward this repeal legislation and finally getting, basically, our Assembly back in order. It's a historical circumstance that has finally been resolved.

I also want to thank at this time the Member for Battle River-Wainwright for his support of my Motion 511 back in November of 2007. That was unanimously proclaimed as well, but my concern is that it has yet to be acted upon. As I become more and more involved as the critic and shadow minister for youth and family services, I see as great a need as I saw back in November 2007. I see that need even greater when families are appearing before seven different judges over 43 different court appearances and grandparents are laying out sums of \$255,000, \$165,000 to have at least visiting rights to their grandchildren. Then it's extremely important that we speed up the process of proclamation.

Therefore, I support this bill unreservedly, and I would appeal to all members of this Assembly to put Motion 511, the unified family court process, into being.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Do any other members wish to speak?

Are you ready for the question? Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't see. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: I know. Short people.

I just had one question that maybe the member can answer for me. I'm sure he can. I'm just wondering what was in the section on ag societies that's being repealed. I can see him digging underneath his desk looking for the reference documents. Knowing how important ag societies are to rural communities, I'm just wondering what it was that was passed in 2000 that was never brought into place. If the member is able to answer that question for me quickly, that would be very helpful. If he can't lay his hands on the reference documents, maybe he could respond to me at the beginning of third reading.

Okay. Here might be part of the answer: sections regarding requirements under regs to form an agricultural society and to send information from the society's AGM to the minister. That seems to

have been what was in that amending act from 2000, and it never got proclaimed. So where are we at with those requirements, then? It's not the Agricultural Societies Act that we're repealing here; it is the amendment act that we're repealing. I'm just wondering what went wrong there or what never happened.

If I could get a little bit of information on that now, that would be great. If not, then please bring it up at the beginning of third reading. I, like my colleagues, am willing to support this in Committee of the Whole.

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

Mr. Griffiths: Yes. Thank you very much. The Agricultural Societies Amendment Act is what we're repealing. It was passed in 1978, as I said, but wasn't proclaimed. Now, the statute that was enacted under the Agricultural and Recreational Land Ownership Act received royal assent. That included 12 amendments that amended the Agricultural Societies Act, so that made the Agricultural Societies Amendment Act redundant because it was done previously.

Ms Blakeman: Okay.

The Deputy Chair: Are you ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[The clauses of Bill 20 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to at this time move that the committee rise and report Bill 19 and Bill 20.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

Mr. Weadick: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 19 and Bill 20.

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

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the hour and the fact that events are occurring outside this room that members within this room have some interest in, I would like to move that the committee now stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 5:18 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Tuesday, October 14, 2008

In Memoriam	
Colonel Arthur Ryan Smith	1283
Dr. Lawrence (Larry) Ralph Shaben	1283
Mr. Gordon Emil Stromberg	1283
Introduction of Guests	1283
Statement by the Speaker	
Federal Election of October 14, 1935	1284
Members' Statements	
Schizophrenia Society of Alberta	1284
<i>Hockey Night in Canada</i> Theme Song	1293
German Unification Day	1293
Resource Revenue Dependency	1293
Communities in Bloom National Awards	1294
Canada's Citizenship Week	1294
Oral Question Period	
International Financial Crisis	1285
Climate Change	1286
Nuclear Energy	1286
Registered Disability Savings Plan	1287
Provincial Meat Inspection	1287
Arts and Culture Funding	1288
Affordable Housing	1288
Heritage Savings Trust Fund Investments	1289
TransCanada PipeLines North Central Corridor Project	1289
Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Initiative	1290
Pension Plan Investments	1290
Municipal Financing	1291
Grizzly Bear Management	1291
Compensation for Victims of Crime	1291
Library Funding	1292
Calendar of Special Events	1294
Presenting Petitions	1294
Introduction of Bills	
Bill 207 Young Albertans' Advisory Council Act	1295
Tabling Returns and Reports	1295
Tablings to the Clerk	1295
Government Bills and Orders	
Second Reading	
Bill 25 Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2008	1295
Bill 11 Insurance Amendment Act, 2008	1296
Committee of the Whole	
Bill 19 First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Amendment Act, 2008	1302
Bill 20 Agriculture Statutes Repeal Act, 2008	1308

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.

