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The 27th Legislature
First Session

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The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 27th Legislature

First Session

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[Errata, if any, appear inside back cover]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, October 23, 2008

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon and welcome.

Let us pray. We give thanks for Your abundant blessings to our province and to ourselves. We ask for Your guidance with our deliberations in our Chamber and the will to follow them. Amen.

Introduction of Guests

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

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 66 of by far the brightest and the best students in all of Alberta from Christ the King junior-senior high school in the city of Leduc, which is located in my riding of Leduc-Beaumont-Devon. They are accompanied today by parent volunteers and teachers Mrs. Anne Bourassa, Mr. Fernando Guzzo, and Mrs. Mae Michielsen. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Benito: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a group of 24 beautiful students from my constituency's Kameyosek elementary school. The group is led by their teacher, Ms Nova Gould, and a parent volunteer, Mr. Jack Parker. They are in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. First, it is indeed a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a grade 6 class from Sweet Grass elementary school in my constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford. The 24 students from the class are joined today by their teacher, Mrs. Gardner, and parent helper Mrs. Sorochan. I'm sure there are future parliamentarians among them. I'd like to ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members three very special guests. Mr. Russell Williams, president of Canada's Research-Based Pharmaceutical Companies, is first. Mr. Williams is in Edmonton to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the code of conduct for Canada's pharmaceutical industry. Prior to becoming the president of Rx & D, Mr. Williams was a member of the National Assembly of Quebec for 15 years and at one point served as parliamentary assistant to the minister of health. Mr. Williams is joined by Mr. Graham Jobson, president and CEO of Solvay Pharma, and Mr. Michael Lohner, who is a government relations consultant and a former executive assistant to the Member for Rocky Mountain House. These gentlemen are seated in the members' gallery. I'd ask all three to rise and receive our traditional warm welcome.

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

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's probation officers play a crucial role in the justice system, but rarely do we have the opportunity to put names to their faces or express our appreciation for the job they do. It's a pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two of Alberta's many hard-working probation officers, Brad Clark and Deanna Frey. I'm sure they were both happy to learn yesterday that our government is hiring 110 additional probation officers over the next three years to help ease their caseloads. Brad Clark works as a probation officer at the Edmonton Centre community corrections office. Deanna Frey is a senior probation officer at the Edmonton West community corrections office. These probation officers represent more than 200 probation officers province-wide who help to keep Alberta's communities safe by monitoring and supervising offenders in our communities. I would ask that Brad and Deanna rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm just delighted today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some representatives of a very special agency in my fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre. Joining us in the public gallery today are a number of staff and students involved with Terra, a centre for pregnant and parenting teens. I'd like to start out by introducing you to Karen Mottershead. She is one of our superb NGO administrators. We're very lucky to have her working in the sector, and I hope we can keep her there. If you would please rise, Karen. Would the rest of you please join her: Laura Slomp, Cassidy Wallis, Adrean Sveinson, Patty Peel, Robin McClung, and Mauricio Rodas. These people are all joining us from Terra and have come to watch me ask a question on their behalf today. Please join me in welcoming them to the Alberta Assembly.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Waste Reduction Initiatives

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the spirit of Waste Reduction Week the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Environment will be making an announcement later today on Alberta's latest efforts to tackle a large source of waste. Construction and demolition waste is part of a hidden waste stream. Most Albertans don't deal with it or even see it, but the province and municipalities see it, and so do industry members.

In 2006, 860,000 tonnes of construction and demolition materials were sent to Alberta landfills. This accounted for 23 per cent of our waste stream. Building the average home creates five to seven tonnes of waste. Unfortunately, very little building material such as concrete, asphalt, and wood gets recycled.

A construction and demolition program will follow the success of our recycling programs for paint, electronics, used oil, tires, and beverage containers. Alberta has shown national leadership time and time again. Our electronics program is now being duplicated by others. Our tire program recycles almost 5 million tires a year, and this summer we celebrated the milestone of the 50 millionth tire recycled in Alberta since 1992. We launched the paint recycle program this year. We heard yesterday that we will be the first in North America to include all milk containers in a deposit refund system.

These stewardship programs combined with the construction and demolition program will help us come closer to our goal of an 80 per cent recycling rate within the province of Alberta. With our recent and upcoming announcements this week and the focus we've given to reducing waste, we've demonstrated that our government and all Albertans are actively taking action for waste reduction. I encourage every Albertan to continue to build on our success this week and make every week Waste Reduction Week.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Agricultural and Food Industry Exports

Mr. Doerksen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This province is a significant exporter of agriculture and agrifood products, and we make a strong contribution to the economy both here in Alberta and at the national level. As an export-based economy we cannot wait for international opportunities to come to us. To open doors, it is essential that our governments develop and nurture positive relationships with governments and industries in other countries. In particular, the competitiveness of Alberta's agriculture and food industry is highly dependent on the global market, and the success of our grains and livestock sectors are closely tied to international trade. Exports offer the potential of premium prices for specific products and allow us to expand production.

Through my own experience in agriculture and the beef industry I speak with confidence of the high quality and safety of the food products we provide to our customers around the world. Prior to 2003 with access to a diverse group of key markets approximately 30 per cent of Canada's beef exports were marketed outside of the United States, primarily in Mexico and Asia, trade worth more than \$500 million.

The priority at present must be to address barriers to trade and regain full access to key markets. Our government has recognized the importance of agriculture market access. As I speak today, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development is meeting with key officials and industry leaders in China, Hong Kong, and Japan. China's rapidly expanding middle class and its population of more than 1.3 billion people represent a tremendous opportunity for trade in a broad range of agricultural products. Expanding market access to high-value markets in Japan and Hong Kong is vitally important to Alberta's beef and cattle industry.

As a previous chair of Canada's Beef Export Federation I understand what is at stake. The value and importance of international markets to the agricultural economy cannot be overstated, and I applaud our minister's initiative on Albertans' behalf.

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

1:40

A Prayer for Children

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. RESULTS stands for responsibility for ending starvation using legislation, trim-tabbing, and support. The following poem by Ina J. Hughes creatively reflects the goals of RESULTS to make poverty history. Abolissons la pauvreté.

A Prayer for Children

We pray for the children
who sneak popsicles before supper,
who erase holes in math workbooks,
who can never find their shoes.

We pray for children
who stare at photographers from behind barbed wire,
who can't bounce down the street in new sneakers,
who never counted potatoes,
who are born in places we wouldn't be caught dead,
who never go to the circus,
who live in an X-rated world.

We pray for children
who bring us sticky kisses and fists of dandelions,
who hug us in a hurry and forget their lunch money.

We pray for children
who never get dessert,
who have no safe blanket to drag behind them,
who watch their parents watch them die,
who can't find bread to steal,
who don't have any rooms to clean up,
whose pictures aren't on anybody's dresser,
whose monsters are real.

We pray for children
who spend all their allowance before Tuesday,
who throw tantrums in the grocery store and pick at their food,
who like ghost stories,
who shove dirty clothes under the bed,
who get visits from the tooth fairy,
who don't like to be kissed in front of the carpool,
who squirm in church or temple and scream in the phone,
whose tears we sometimes laugh at and
whose smiles can make us cry.

And we pray for those
whose nightmares come in the daytime,
who will never eat anything,
who have never seen a dentist,
who aren't spoiled by anybody,
who go to bed hungry and cry themselves to sleep,
who live and move but have no being.

We pray for the children who want to be carried
and for those who must,
for those we never give up on and for those
who don't get a second chance.

For those we smother and for those who will grab
the hand of anybody kind enough to offer it.

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

United Nations Day

Mr. Cao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to recognize United Nations Day. Tomorrow, October 24, marks United Nations Day, the day that the United Nations Charter came into force.

Canada has played an important role within the United Nations framework, including participating in and leading humanitarian and peacekeeping missions. As we celebrate United Nations Day, let us all celebrate the activities and the accomplishments of the United Nations. Most importantly, let us all be thankful to our Canadian peacekeepers and remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in United Nations peacekeeping missions.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know, in 1945 the representatives of 50 countries met in San Francisco to put the finishing touches on a document with far-reaching consequences, the Charter of the United Nations, the goals of this charter to stop wars between countries and to provide a platform for diplomatic dialogue. Sixty-three years later there are 192 member states, including nearly every recognized independent state in the world. In addition to the six main bodies of

the United Nations, it is comprised of more than 30 organizations, including the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund.

The United Nations has become an important world organization whose stated claims are to facilitate co-operation in international law, international security, economic development, social progress, human rights, and achievement of world peace. The United Nations has taken the lead on many issues which challenge humanity, enacting campaigns against drug trafficking and terrorism and on the fight against AIDS.

Thank you.

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

Alberta Aviation Museum

Mr. Elniski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Sunday, October 19, I was invited to attend the dedication of the second set of memorial stones at the Alberta Aviation Museum in Edmonton. The memorial featured images depicting Canada's aviation pioneers, commercial aviators, and military personnel. It is important to recognize the integral part that all of these individuals played in Alberta's history. This memorial is a celebration and way of remembering those involved in aviation across Alberta. They are the individuals who were responsible for opening up the north and who ensured that Alberta was open for business.

The Alberta Aviation Museum has become one of the many attractions that our province and city has to offer. This new memorial addition comes at an important time. We know that the Edmonton City Centre Airport and the Alberta Aviation Museum have a wonderful past, and we must continue to ensure that they have a wonderful future as well. We need to make certain that memorials such as these are supported and continue to connect Alberta's present to its past.

Thank you.

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

Protection of Children in Care

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week we have been witness to a dark moment in Alberta politics. We have heard from our children's advocate that this government has failed in its primary mandate to care for some of the most vulnerable children in our society. Instead of facing this issue with humility and accountability, we have heard responses in this House that will only serve to silence the very opposition that raised the issue in the first place.

This government has a long history of neglect for the children in its care and, apparently, a long history of assuring the public and this Assembly that everything is fine. We heard today that, because of the shortage of foster care homes, just last night in Edmonton children were staying in homeless shelters. I know about the campaign to increase the number of foster homes, but frankly it is not enough, and it is too late. This system needs to be restructured now. While the same concerns are mentioned again and again, year after year, by the advocate and front-line workers, the minister has done nothing to respond to the issues except now to propose to cloak the format for filing quarterly reports in yet another veil of secrecy.

The assurances of this minister and this government that the children in their care are valued and treated compassionately are empty. The children staying in homeless shelters last night are just one of many damning indictments of this ministry. This government needs to stand up and take action. The children's advocate needs to be arm's length from the government's control. We need a mean-

ingful plan to recruit foster parents with real pay and real support. This government needs to fix the problems instead of treating them like dirty little secrets.

Statement by the Speaker

One-day Passage of Bills in Alberta Legislature

The Speaker: Hon. members, the subject of my vignette today deals with a special day in our past. On Thursday, November 16, 2000, the Alberta Legislative Assembly undertook a very unique procedure for a very special event. It convened at the normal time, 1:30 p.m., heard a prayer, and then the Speaker instructed the Clerk to call Introduction of Bills. The then hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore, now Deputy Premier and Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations, was recognized, and he introduced Bill 26, Holocaust Memorial Day and Genocide Remembrance Act. The Government House Leader then moved that the bill be placed on the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

The Government House Leader then requested unanimous consent to allow second reading debate on the same day the bill received first reading. It was granted. At the conclusion of the debate the motion for second reading was carried unanimously.

The House then proceeded to Committee of the Whole, and the Committee approved the bill. Unanimous request to proceed to third reading was given, and at 4:03 p.m. the Assembly rose after unanimous approval was given the bill at third reading. All stages of the bill were concluded within two and a half hours. Such success was the result of goodwill and positive communications among the caucus leaders.

The Holocaust Memorial Day and Genocide Remembrance Act includes a moving preamble and proclaims Holocaust Memorial Day, Yom ha-Shoah, as a day to remember the victims and survivors of the Holocaust and to honour those who fought to defeat tyranny and genocide. The Canadian House of Commons and all Canadian provinces have enacted similar legislation. Holocaust Memorial Day, Yom ha-Shoah, was commemorated on May 1, 2008, and will be commemorated on April 21, 2009.

Concluding all stages of a bill on the same day is a very rare occurrence. Aside from miscellaneous statutes bills such a procedure has occurred on only two previous occasions in this Assembly since 1905: the first time was March 10, 1982, with the introduction and passage of the Health Services Continuation Act; the second was on September 21, 1992, with the introduction and passage of the Constitutional Referendum Amendment Act, 1992.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Government Spending Controls

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is addicted to spending, and that addiction is becoming a serious problem for Albertans as an economic slowdown forces the government to go into withdrawal. Alberta's spending, believe it or not, is now 23 per cent higher than the Canadian average per capita. More and more people are asking how other provinces deliver so much better value for money. My questions are to the President of the Treasury Board. How can this government spending be sustained?

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Speaker, we've seen in recent months some of the federal campaign events where just magically it comes to some parties that there may be an economic crisis in the future. This

government saw that as a possibility back in 1992, and they said: let's get our debt looked after, let's ask Albertans to take the sacrifice now, so in case we encounter economic downturns down the road, we will be in charge of our economic future. And we are.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 1992 and '93 and '94 and '95 this government brought in legislative caps and controls on spending. This week we've seen two government bills go through this Assembly that terminate legislative accountability and limits on spending and give a blank cheque to cabinet ministers. To the same minister: why is this government systematically dismantling legislative limits on spending and debt?

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Speaker, if you have systems in place that are redundant, systems that simply by the nature of time reappoint or dissolve government agencies and don't allow for the thorough review of not only their spending but are they accomplishing what they were set out to do, it would seem prudent to remove them and fall under a different, ongoing, continually evolving or assessing process for these agencies.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With next year's budget process well under way, to the same minister, is this minister planning to let spending increase forever or continue to rise, or is he planning to bring in cutbacks or get us into debt?

Mr. Snelgrove: Well, forever is probably just past the end of my mandate, Mr. Speaker, but what we're going to continue to do is: we're going to continue to listen to Albertans; we are going to provide and ensure that the health care system in Alberta is exactly the most accessible, probably progressive, and resilient one in the country; we're going to maintain the top-notch education system in Canada; and we're going to continue to provide the infrastructure that Albertans want and deserve.

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

Fiscal Accountability

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Twenty-nine billion dollars' worth of investment in Alberta has been shelved just in the last several weeks, and this government is not prepared. For years experts across the spectrum of all political stripes have told this government to change its course, but the message has been ignored. Spending without getting value for money may be good politics, but it is bad government. To the President of the Treasury Board: why is this government failing to be fiscally responsible?

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Speaker, this government has taken some incredibly positive steps in the past few years to ensure that downturns in the economy or circumstances outside of our control do not affect the very critical delivery of our most important programs by developing a sustainability fund, by ensuring the capital fund has enough money to continue our infrastructure planning. We don't want to budget unnecessarily in times of uncertainty. We wanted to give Albertans tremendous certainty, and we've done that by filling these funds – sustainability funds, capital funds – to address our programs.

Dr. Taft: Well, Mr. Speaker, this government is spending 23 per

cent per capita higher than the Canadian average. You wouldn't know it from the roads. You wouldn't know it from the universities. You wouldn't know it from children's services. What is this minister doing to ensure value for money for the staggering amounts of public money that he's spending? Where's the value for money?

Mr. Snelgrove: You sure wouldn't know it from the Liberals.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, as I travel this province – and I'm so fortunate to be able to do it – I see construction everywhere. I see new schools coming up in every corner of this province, I see health facilities being built that are the envy of the world, I see a workforce developing in world-class educational institutes, and I see Albertans saying, "good job," just like they did last year. "Good job." We believe in a government that's positive, not one who can't seem to understand that the sky is not falling.

Dr. Taft: Well, to the same minister, since we're enjoying this exchange so much: what is the President of the Treasury Board basing his fiscal policy on given that everyone from former Tory Premiers and cabinet ministers to the Canada West Foundation to the Chambers of Commerce disagree?

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Speaker, there is no disagreement that we are facing uncertain economic times, and it would be far more serious if we were like many other provinces with a tremendous debt load to service. Continually our finance minister has sat here and indicated to the opposition and, in fact, all Albertans that we are very aware of the forces that are going to push down our revenues and have an effect on our future ability to spend. So we take the steps from one of confidence in Alberta, one of confidence in the businesses that are investing in Alberta to remain here, the businesses that, like this government, take a long-term view of the opportunities in Alberta and not a defeatist attitude that seems to be running rampant there.

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

Police Officer Funding

Mr. Hehr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In today's *Daily* from Statistics Canada Edmonton had the second-highest murder rate in the nation. Statistics also revealed that handguns were used in approximately two-thirds of all firearm homicides. On Monday I asked the Premier whether more funding for police officers would be forthcoming, and he said no. On Tuesday the Solicitor General said that maybe more funding would be made available. Given that on our city streets bullets are flying and people are dying, can the Solicitor General set the record straight on when or if more police funding can be expected?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that in my answer last week I asked the hon. member to stay tuned because we will be coming forward with some new initiatives. Our initiatives are focused on getting to the root cause of crime, and our announcement yesterday on probation officers got to that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hehr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: as it does not appear that the 500 sheriffs that have been recently hired by

the provincial government can investigate homicides or battle gang violence, why are we pouring more money into the sheriffs' department to write more traffic tickets when it's obviously more necessary to hire real police officers?

Mr. Lindsay: Mr. Speaker, let me set the record straight. In Alberta we have approximately 700 sheriffs. Two hundred of those sheriffs are working on specialized investigative units who assist the police in doing their job. We have another 400 sheriffs who work in our correctional facilities transporting prisoners and court security, which also frees up police officers to do their job of reducing crime. We also have 105 sheriffs who work on our highways to make our highways safe. Perhaps we need law enforcement 101 so those members understand the difference between a peace officer and a police officer.

Mr. Hehr: Mr. Speaker, I've been pushing the minister for some time on the gun issue. Can he tell us exactly what he's doing to get handguns off Alberta's streets?

Mr. Lindsay: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, we have specialized units who are tracking organized crime and gangs in this province. They're making great success working in collaboration and co-operation with our police officers. We are working very successfully on that, and we'll continue to do so.

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

2:00 Protection of Children in Care

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Today the *Calgary Herald* joined the chorus demanding that the Minister of Children and Youth Services resign. Just yesterday she stood in this House again saying that all was well. It's not. Last night eight foster children in Edmonton were forced to stay in a motel because this government has failed them, and still the minister refuses to resign. To the minister: why will she not resign?

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, as the Premier has indicated throughout this week, the Minister of Children and Youth Services has the interests of these children at heart, and indeed she will not be resigning.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, a child who is taken from his home, perhaps because his parents might have a problem with alcohol, may face a choice between spending the night at the George Spady Centre or in a mental institution. For some Alberta children the system that was supposed to protect them has become a gulag, and still the minister refuses to resign. Why will she not resign?

Mr. Stevens: Well, throughout this week the members opposite, particularly the members in the ND opposition, have been asking questions with respect to annual reports from the Child and Youth Advocate, quarterly reports that were internal in nature that were provided to the minister and, ultimately, FOIPed and made available. The answers from the Premier and from the minister throughout the week have indicated that we are prepared to share the information with the opposition. They need to deal with a confidentiality agreement to protect the privacy of these people, but if they want the information, it is available to them. They just have to step up.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is clearly a dodge on the part of government. We asked for those documents, and we were told that they have not yet been prepared. They are simply being used as an excuse not to answer questions this week.

On any given night 38 Edmonton youth in government care are forced to stay in shelters and hostels. This is a pattern that has gone on for years. The government does not care or would have fixed the system years ago, and still the minister refuses to resign. Why does the minister refuse to resign?

Mr. Stevens: You know who has done the honourable thing, Mr. Speaker, is the critic for the Liberals. Yesterday the critic was in the House when this offer was made to both parties. They stood up and said: we are prepared to go forward in that. I believe that the document, the confidentiality agreement, that was referred to yesterday is available. I believe it has been provided to the member opposite, and I believe it has also been provided to those people.*

Mr. Mason: It was not given to us. It's not true. You are not telling the truth.

Mr. Stevens: It is there. You can look at it, and you can sign it if you're interested in finding out.

Mr. Mason: You are misleading this House.

The Speaker: I take it, hon. member, there's a point of order?

Mr. Mason: A point of privilege. The Deputy Premier has misled the House.

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

Southeast Calgary Ring Road

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The southeast leg of the Calgary ring road will transect the largest and the busiest industrial area in Calgary, which badly needs the transportation improvement. The business activity in this area contributes greatly to the economy of Calgary and Alberta. My question today on behalf of my constituents is to the Minister of Transportation. What is the status of the southeast leg of the Calgary ring road?

Mr. Ouellette: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have completed the overall functional planning for this section and could go on to the design phase at any time. We are also in the middle of an access management study for the parts around 84th Street SE and the industrial areas that the member is mentioning in his question. I can't tell the hon. member today exactly when construction on this leg will start or be completed, but I can tell him that our goal still is to have all the ring roads in Calgary completed by 2015.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that concern has been raised over the limited number of interchanges planned for the southeast ring road and the planned closure of the existing road, what is being done to alleviate these concerns?

Mr. Ouellette: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my first answer, we are doing an access management study to address the concerns the member speaks about. The member is correct that

*See p. 1515, right col., para. 11

there is only a limited number of interchanges planned for that ring road. We have design standards for minimum spacing between those interchanges so that traffic can flow efficiently. I want to remind the hon. member that front and foremost for this ministry is the safety of all Albertans on those roads.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: when the northeast leg of the ring road is completed, how will its traffic be handled in the southeast while the southeast leg is being planned?

Mr. Ouellette: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in the previous answer, most of the planning has already been done for that southeast portion. Once we move to the construction phase, we will try to carry out construction with as little disruption and inconvenience to motorists as possible. I might remind the hon. member that this is a brand new road. It shouldn't inconvenience anybody because it's a brand new road. There's none there now.

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

Funding for Human Services Agencies

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Agencies like the Terra centre for pregnant and parenting teens in my constituency have been trying to get the government to understand the consequences of systemic low funding to the human services sector. These organizations are contracted for the essential services the government is mandated to provide. My questions are to the minister of children's services. Given that the \$11 million funding injected this year had a real effect of less than \$1,000 per Terra staff member per year, what specific plans does the government or the minister have to deal with the 30 to 40 per cent differential in salary for Terra and all the other organizations in that sector?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an excellent question. I was pleased to see that you had introduced members from Terra here in the House today because they offer an excellent service. I know the Children and Youth Services minister has spoken to this issue before and how she has addressed the gap in wages for employees. I will take that question under advisement for the minister, and we will be getting back to you, hon. member.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. To the same minister: with a 30 per cent worker loss in the human services sector and considerable energy being redirected from programming to recruit and train new workers, what are the strategies or plans that the minister or the government has to implement to alleviate this situation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated, I will take that question under advisement for the minister, and she will address that for you, hon. member. As you've indicated, it's operational funding, but it is also going to a good cause in what will be beneficial to the workers overall. We will be responding soon.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. To the same minister. Let me give a very real situation to put this in context. How does the minister plan to mitigate the situation of Terra, for whom the Bon Ton Bakery raised \$50,000 to pay for a second child care space? A wonderful space. A lot of hard work went into that, and Terra cannot afford to pay someone to open that new space. They are recruiting, but they cannot find the people to open the space. So the space is not open. What exactly is the government going to do to alleviate this situation and other ones like it?

Mrs. Fritz: Mr. Speaker, I can hear the frustration with this occurring, especially when a good organization has raised funding to assist with the child care spaces. I know that the members who are actually right here and listening know that the Minister of Children and Youth Services will look into this situation, will do that very quickly, and will get back to you, hon. member.

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

South Calgary Health Campus

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Construction of the south Calgary health campus began in August 2007, some 15 months ago. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Wellness. I would like to know as this project was so crucial to my constituents' health care: is it on schedule?

2:10

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, anyone who drives down the Deerfoot Trail in south Calgary today can look off to the right and see that there are some four cranes working and a whole bunch of folks. I can assure the hon. member that the south Calgary hospital construction is on schedule. It's scheduled to open, I guess, just about three years from now. The first phase of the south Calgary hospital will have some 228 much-needed beds. But probably as equally important is that it will have a newer way of delivering ambulatory care to south Calgary residents.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the current health workforce shortages there is concern that there will not be enough staff for the new facility. Can the minister explain what action is being taken to ensure that there will be enough staff for this new health care facility to operate?

Mr. Liepert: Well, there's no question, Mr. Speaker, that the health workforce is an issue. This government has made a number of initiatives towards addressing that. As I said, the new facility won't be open for another three years, but about that time due to the initiatives of this government we'll have some 650 additional nurses graduating annually by 2012. We'll also have some 350 LPNs, increased spaces for lab and MRI techs. I think that in this particular case, since it's three years away, we should hopefully have many of those workforce issues addressed.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question to the same minister: since the south Calgary health campus will be opened in phases, can the minister explain what services will be offered in phase 1?

Mr. Liepert: Well, as I mentioned, the hospital is an acute care centre, with some 228 beds scheduled for phase 1. More importantly, it's a different way of delivering health care: through an ambulatory model as well as acute care.

I think it's also important to note, Mr. Speaker, that there'll be some 30 beds addressed specifically for mental health. We've also got a number of beds as part of that ambulatory care for emergency treatment, and I think something like 11 operating rooms and surgery suites. So this will be a state-of-the-art facility when done.

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

Health Care Funding

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The public health care system is again under attack by this Conservative government. The patient-focused scheme that they are proposing is nothing more than a Conservative privatization blueprint. The minister may laugh, but he knows it's true. Two Conservative words, patient focused, really mean private health care. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: how will the patient-focused privatization scheme that this government wants to introduce guarantee rapid access to medically necessary hospital care when people in Alberta need it?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can guarantee you one thing: we won't have a patient-focused system if we continue to do things the way the opposition wants us to do it, which is the old way of doing things. We have taken a number of initiatives, and more action will be happening over the coming months which will ensure that when a patient actually enters the health care system, they're not consistently running into barriers, into constant referrals.

I give you an example of an initiative that we've taken: the patient navigator system in the cardiac care centre, which is being really well received by heart patients in the province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: how will the government's patient-focused privatization scheme ensure the highest quality of care possible when the treatment is based on the type and the volume of service provided?

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, for the last two days I've been trying to give the hon. member a hint that he doesn't know what he's talking about when he talks about the funding of our health care system. This member has been talking about block funding for hospitals. I recognize that that's what happens in the province where he came from, but that doesn't happen in Alberta. We have global funding for health care in the province, and that will continue going forward.

Mr. MacDonald: Again, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: how will the government guarantee that the costs to our publicly funded health care system are not inflated by profit-making at the expense of the public good and the public health care system?

Mr. Liepert: Well, I'm not sure how we can compare that, Mr. Speaker, because we have a publicly funded health care system. The only way I guess you could do it is compare it to, maybe, the U.S., which has primarily a privately delivered health care system. I've said in this House on numerous occasions and the Premier has said on numerous occasions that we are not moving to a U.S.-style health care system because we have a better one.

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

First Nations Economic Development

Mr. Berger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Relations. The unemployment rate of aboriginal people living off reserve is significantly higher than for other Albertans, as is the on-reserve unemployment rate in double digits, as can be witnessed in my own constituency of Livingstone-Macleod. What is the Department of Aboriginal Relations doing to deal with the high unemployment rates of our aboriginal people?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Zwozdesky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's, indeed, a very good question and a particularly sensitive one right now given Alberta's skilled labour and trades shortage. My ministry is doing a great deal of things to help alleviate the problem and to ensure that as many aboriginal people as possible can participate fully in the social and economic life of our province. Specifically, we have a new strategy with the Ministry of Employment and Immigration to help increase the aboriginal workforce participation by about 4,000 people within the next two years. That's specific to off reserve. With respect to on-reserve employment opportunities, as soon as we know who the new IAC minister is, I'll be in there talking to him or her about that as quickly as possible.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Berger: Thank you. My second question is also to the same minister. Can the minister tell us how he is working with aboriginal communities to enhance economic development and partnerships?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to inform the House that we have a partnership program called FNEPI, which stands for First Nations economic partnerships initiative. This provides about \$5 million to the aboriginal community throughout the province to help encourage their members to strengthen their own private-sector involvement, to better diversify their own employment opportunities. In total we have about 116 of these tremendously successful news stories that impact our aboriginal community in very, very positive ways. We're going to continue working in that respect to make sure that their economic capacity is maximized to the full. That will in turn help fill our skilled labour shortages as well.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Berger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the same minister. What specific programs or projects are available for aboriginal people in my riding of Livingstone-Macleod?

Mr. Zwozdesky: Mr. Speaker, the constituency referred to is very active and very fortunate to have a very large number of people from the aboriginal sector there. We've helped the Blood tribe, for example, in your area with one of their major retrofit programs of their industry building. We helped the Piikani Nation with their particular irrigation projects in that area. We have another strategy with the Piikani as well, which will be an economic development model that we're working on with them so that they can better be able to help themselves. In the end economic self-sufficiency, I think, is where we need to go, and that's where they are going as well.

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

Confidentiality of Child and Youth Advocate Reports

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To set the record straight, I have received no documentation from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

Yesterday in a note to the minister in this House I indicated my willingness to meet with the minister and to protect the privacy of specific children's files, not government ineptitude. The Minister of Children and Youth Services has inferred that the dreadful accusations made in the quarterly reports were unsubstantiated. However, the public has no way of distinguishing daydreams from actual nightmares. Can the minister explain why the Child and Youth Advocate's quarterly reports are not directly shared with front-line workers . . .

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As has been indicated by the hon. Minister of Children and Youth Services in this Assembly, quarterly reports are internal to the department and are provided to the minister for internal purposes. As has been indicated by the minister in this House, there is follow-up with respect to the allegations contained in those particular reports. That has been said, and the offer that has been made to the opposition is to allow them to review the specifics of the matters that are referred to in those quarterly reports.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. What is missing is the feedback to the front-line workers. They pass along the information; they never hear back.

My second question, to whoever is going to field it: how long does the ministry take to follow up or intervene on behalf of vulnerable children? Who's in charge?

2:20

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, I indicated that I believe that the documentation that was available relative to the confidentiality matter had been sent to the opposition. The reason I say that is that I've got copies of it in front of me. I can tell you that the oath of confidentiality is necessary in order to protect the privacy within those files. The fact is that it will allow the hon. member and the ND critic to review the specifics and determine for themselves that there is the follow-up and whatnot relative to the matters that are particularly referred to in the quarterly reports.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. I'm not on a witch hunt; I'm on a hunt to protect children's services and the values of children.

Will the minister table the statistics surrounding the number of youth who have been dropped off at homeless shelters in the last three years? How many other kids has the ministry simply abandoned to the streets, as was the case of the 15-year-old who recently appeared before Judge Reilly in Canmore?

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Children and Youth Services indicated with respect to these quarterly reports that there was follow-up, that the matters have been dealt with. What we are saying to the opposition is: satisfy yourself, but you are not going to be able to refer to the specifics of these cases; that is, the names

behind them. But satisfy yourselves with respect to that, and then when you stand up in this House and raise the matter again, we will be able to talk about the results in general.

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

Protection of Children in Care

(continued)

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, to carry on with this, as we know, yesterday the minister for children dodged our questions about kids at risk by inviting me to a secret meeting. Now, there is no legal reason why that minister cannot discuss these issues with the same level of detail we have already discussed in this House this week, and everybody over there knows it. To the minister: if she won't stop hiding behind trumped-up secrecy excuses, will she resign so that someone, anyone over there will address this crisis in an open way?

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, I know that this member is relatively new to the House but not so new that she doesn't know that FOIP applies to this matter, that the issue with respect to youth has incredible privacy matters associated with it. There is nothing secret about it. It was in this House that the offer was made. There's nothing secret about that. What is offered to this hon. member and the critic for the Liberals is an opportunity to look at the files, to look at the specifics before, at the time of the report, and after to satisfy yourself that the matters were dealt with. That is all being discussed and offered in this particular House. All that's necessary is that you sign a confidentiality agreement so that you protect the privacy.

Ms Notley: More secrecy is not what Alberta's children need. I'm not going to sign on to more secrecy.

For over a decade independent experts have called for the child advocate to be an independent officer. Your boss says that he'll consider the idea, but he's already had more than 10 years to do that. Will you admit today that the time for consideration is done and that Alberta needs a child advocate reporting directly to the Legislature now?

Mr. Stevens: Mr. Speaker, it is quite true that the Premier has asked the Minister of Children and Youth Services to do further work on this matter. In particular, the Premier has asked the minister to do research around legislation that other provinces have for their advocates, to determine how their advocates report to the Legislature. The results of that research will be provided to the Premier soon, and we will have a thorough discussion about next steps.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, telling Albertans that this matter, quote, will be reviewed is code for, quote: we have no answers for the current crisis, and we're looking for a way to distract your attention until you get onto a new issue.

Why should Albertans have any faith that these issues won't be swept under the rug yet again and that children won't continue to suffer at the hand of your government's indifference as they have for decades?

Mr. Stevens: You know, Mr. Speaker, from my perspective the crisis that this hon. member refers to is one that is self-imposed by her in the sense that she is referring to quarterly reports which the hon. minister has very clearly indicated are only part of the story. We have indicated to the opposition that the full story can be told,

but privacy matters have to be dealt with. The offer is there, and the fact of the matter is that if you want to find out the entire story, then you can.

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

Insulin Pump Therapy

Mr. Fawcett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Almost all other provinces have started to cover in one form or another insulin pump therapy for people with type 1 diabetes. Insulin pump therapy has proven to deal with the complications of diabetes, such as decreasing amputation, heart attack, visual loss, or kidney disease. My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Given that the economic and medical evidence suggests insulin pump technology is a logical option for those with type 1 diabetes, why is Alberta not covering the cost for Albertans to access this innovation?

Mr. Liepert: Well, I guess the short answer, Mr. Speaker, is that I don't want to prove the Leader of the Official Opposition correct, who says that this government is addicted to spending. We can't supply everything to everybody. I will tell you – and I'm sure the hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports would be happy to elaborate – that we do ensure that those who cannot afford the insulin pumps are looked after. We also have to recognize that we've done a significant amount of work through our primary care networks to ensure that diabetes treatment is part of our primary care networks. Finally, we are, in Alberta, the largest free-standing diabetes research centre in Canada.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Fawcett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Okay. My second question is to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. Are you providing assistance to seniors or low-income Albertans with diabetes who need help paying for these insulin pumps?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a very important question, especially for low-income Albertans and seniors with diabetes. My department focuses its assistance to those who are most in need. Low-income seniors can receive help with their diabetic supplies through the special-needs assistance for seniors programs, and assured income for the severely handicapped, or AISH, clients are eligible to receive assistance with essential diabetic supplies. There's other government assistance for diabetic supplies through the Alberta monitoring for health, Alberta Works, Learners, and Alberta child health benefits programs.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Fawcett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. While the Health and Wellness budget continues to grow exponentially in a way that's not sustainable, does the minister have a strategy to increase access for sometimes expensive medical treatments, with the goal of decreasing long-term demands and costs on our health care system?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, we could go on for some time in this Assembly, but I've only got 30 seconds or 45 or whatever it is to talk about health care sustainability. Clearly, it is an issue that this government is going to address, and we will be bringing forward

soon a sustainability plan that I hope that all members of this House endorse because, unlike the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, we want to ensure that we preserve this publicly funded health care system and not read from a five-year-old document, that I understand he's reading from.

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

Class Sizes

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. I and our NDP colleagues respect children and families' privacy. On an almost weekly basis I hear from parents and grandparents whose children have been taken into custody and subsequently put at risk by this government.

To the Minister of Education: will the minister commit to using per-school targets for class sizes as opposed to jurisdictional averages, which hide cases of larger class sizes?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A very interesting bait-and-switch approach there with the preamble to the question. Nonetheless, we can be proud of the work that's been done on the class size initiative in this province. This government has devoted considerable targeted dollars to the class size initiative across the jurisdictions in this province. We've met the targets at the high school level and the junior high level, and we're getting very close to reaching them at the elementary level. A lot of work and a lot of resources have been put in. A lot of new teachers have been hired. Good work has been done in that area, but you cannot impose a class size rule on a single school because that creates real anomalies. Rules are for when brains run out. You have to have the flexibility to operate the system in an intelligent way.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. At least you can report it and realize that class sizes aren't being reduced to the extent and the speed that they should be.

Given that numerous studies have shown that children learning in smaller classes, with more one-on-one time with teachers, leads to more successful students, higher graduation rates, and subsequently lower levels of crime and cost to the health care system, does the minister recognize the return from investing more into reducing class sizes throughout the province? Is it ongoing?

2:30

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that it's a policy of this government to meet the class size initiative that was proposed in the Alberta Commission on Learning report, certainly. In fact, there are a number of good reasons why we should monitor class size and make sure the class size is appropriate. But I would take some issue with the hon. member when he says that all the studies – he didn't say: all the studies – show that small class sizes are always making the difference. There are lots of things that contribute to making that difference, and we need to be able to look at the whole scope of how we deliver education and make sure every child has an opportunity to be successful. But we have a policy for small class sizes, and we're initiating it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given the

importance of positive early learning experiences for future successes, the most important jurisdiction for small class sizes is kindergarten to grade 3. Can the minister explain why the government is still behind on guidelines for this jurisdiction, and when will he meet them? I'm talking about full-day kindergarten and half-day junior kindergarten optionally.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Hancock: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question is quite confusing, actually. The small class size guidelines are quite different from the funding for full-day and partial-day kindergarten, those sorts of issues, so two separate issues in that question. I have said and I will continue to say that we have devoted considerable resources at all levels, targeted resources to school districts so that they can implement the class size guidelines that have been put in place. They've done a very good job of achieving those at most levels. There's still work to be done at the K to 3 level, and the resources are being provided so that they can do it.

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

Aids to Daily Living Program

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All Albertans pride themselves on being able to do and go wherever they want to and whenever they want. Being independent is important to all of us, but sometimes we need a little help due to many reasons. My questions are to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. Is there any assistance available to help Albertans get the supplies they need to be able to be as independent as possible?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, in the last few months I've had the opportunity to spend some time with the people in our department who deliver these programs to Albertans and to experience first-hand their passion and commitment. One of these programs that I'm especially proud of is the Alberta Aids to Daily Living program. This program helps over 80,000 Albertans a year to maintain their independence in their homes. It helps them pay for medical equipment and supplies that meet their clinically assessed needs, supplies such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, and oxygen.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental to the same minister: what about those Albertans who are on limited or fixed incomes? What if they can't afford the cost-shared portion?

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, Aids to Daily Living is available to all Albertans regardless of income. Clients above the income thresholds pay for only a portion of the benefits. They pay 25 per cent of the benefit cost to a maximum of \$500 per individual or family per benefit year. Low-income Albertans receiving income assistance such as AISH, income support, or seniors' benefits are exempt from the cost-shared portion.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question to the

same minister: do you have any evidence this program is actually helping to keep Albertans in their homes?

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, Aids to Daily Living makes a big difference in the lives of many Albertans. Some of the situations that I experienced when I spent some time with people in this program left me speechless. With some of the aids that we provide, people go from not being able to walk to putting on an aid and being able to walk by themselves. Under this program individuals with wheelchairs can receive grants of up to \$5,000 to make modifications to their homes such as building an entrance ramp. The 2008 AADL client satisfaction survey indicated a 95 per cent satisfaction rating with the program, and 90 per cent of the clients reported that Aids to Daily Living helped maintain their independence in the home.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Police and Peace Officer Training Centre

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta police college in Fort Macleod has become a chilling parallel to Sarah Palin's bridge to nowhere. It has cost a pretty penny for all those who submitted proposals in addition to the follow-up presentations yet has led to nowhere. To the Solicitor General. This police college has been approved. Do we know how much public money has already been put towards it?

Mr. Lindsay: Mr. Speaker, I don't have the exact number of dollars that have been put towards the college. Obviously, we're still working on the funding model to move it forward. As the hon. member knows, we went out for an expression of interest on this college last spring, and it has resulted in more work that's required, and we're continuing on with that.

Ms Pastoor: A nice piece of information but not quite the answer to the question.

The decision to use a P3 model has resulted in delays, and costs continue to rise. This government is taking in large amounts of dollars in speeding fines. Heaven knows, I've contributed. When will the Solicitor General commit to fund this project directly rather than through a subcontract?

Mr. Lindsay: First of all, Mr. Speaker, sorry to hear that the hon. member got caught doing something illegal.

Aside from that, as I indicated, we are working on a funding model, and we hope to be able to move forward with this project when we get that result.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. To the minister: do we have either a start date or a completion date in our future?

Mr. Lindsay: Mr. Speaker, we won't have a start date or a completion date until such time as we go out for request for proposals, but what I will say is that there is still a need for this college. We still need to replace a thousand police officers every year due to additions and attrition. We still need to recertify our police officers, and we also need to update them. So there's still a need for the facility, and we plan on moving forward as fast as we can.

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

Construction and Demolition Waste Disposal

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Media reports indicate and I've been advised that the Minister of Municipal Affairs may be considering a recycling program of sorts for our construction and demolition industry. My question is to the Minister of Environment. Is the minister indeed considering a program, and is this program warranted in the province of Alberta at this time?

Mr. Renner: Yes, Mr. Speaker, it certainly is warranted. As a matter of fact, industrial, commercial, and institutional waste is a significant amount of our waste stream, and approximately 33 per cent of that waste stream, the nonresidential waste stream, consists of construction and demolition waste. In 2006, which is the last year that the statistics are available for, 860,000 tonnes of construction material ended up in our landfills. It's a hidden waste stream for most Albertans. We don't see it going in there. But I can assure you that municipalities and, most importantly, the construction industry recognize the tremendous volume of waste material that's available and the opportunities that there are for recycling of this material.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A lot of this material is already recycled by responsible stakeholders and construction companies. How will this particular program differ from what we already have in place within the construction and demolition industry?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, as you know, there are already in place programs for recycling of oil, recycling of paint, recycling of tires. This would address the material that would not already be recovered, like concrete, asphalt, wood, drywall. All of this has been discussed at great length with industry – it's included in our Too Good to Waste strategy – because all of these materials that I just talked about have opportunities for recycling and reuse. It will allow us to get much closer to that 80 per cent recycle and 20 per cent landfill, which is opposite to what we have today.

Mr. Lukaszuk: I thank you for that answer. Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my second question, a lot of the industry already participates in some form of recycling of materials. Now, will this new program, when announced, be voluntary, or will industry stakeholders be compelled to participate in some structured program?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, what we intend to do is put in place initially a voluntary program, but industry has told us that if we want this program to be successful in the long term, there may be a need to expand that program beyond voluntary because you don't want to have a situation that creates costs for one group of contractors not incurred by others. Initially we need to learn a lot. We need to learn how to put the program together, and most importantly we have to assure ourselves that collecting the material will actually result in it being reused or recycled.

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

2:40

Food Banks

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Kraft Dinner is not a comfort food for those obliged to eat it. So says the Alberta

Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, whose August report shows that Albertans forced to rely on the nonperishable items available at food banks suffer from food insecurity, the inability to obtain sufficient nutritious food through normal channels. My questions are to the minister of health. Does the minister recognize that the reliance of poor Albertans on the processed food available through food banks creates conditions that burden the health care system?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, there's no question that healthy eating is part of healthy living, but the government is not responsible for what each one of 3.2 million Albertans eats.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. Again to the same minister: given that 30 per cent of Albertans using food banks have jobs and still have to rely on one of over a hundred food banks in Alberta and given the increasing economic turmoil, how does this government plan to address the growing gap between the haves, those who have access to food, and the have-nots, those who don't, in this province?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a number of programs that I'm sure the hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports would be happy to talk about, but at the end of the day this is a province that has opportunity for everyone, and we're proud of that.

Ms Blakeman: Well, to the same minister: will the government follow the advice of its own report and create a fund to support the efforts of the Alberta Food Bank Network and the Calgary Inter-faith Food Bank to ensure that Albertans in need have access to fresh, perishable food and not just mac and cheese?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of accusations in all of those preambles to the questions, and I would have a look at what the hon. member is talking about relative to the document and see how it can be worked into such things as our nutritional guidelines for schools.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that was 102 questions and responses.

During the question period the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood advised the members of the Assembly that he would rise on a point of privilege at the conclusion of the Routine. Since that time I've had an opportunity to look at certain things. I'm now going to invite the hon. Deputy Premier to supplement his remarks, add additional comments, which will allow the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood to ask an additional question on this matter. Perhaps this matter may be dealt with.

Protection of Children in Care

(continued)

Mr. Stevens: Yes. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. During the answer to one of the questions I indicated that it was my belief that copies of the confidentiality agreements had been provided. I have copies of the confidentiality agreement as part of the material in front of me. I have been advised by my office that that was not such, that in fact the NDs received it via fax this afternoon at 2:15, which I believe was subsequent to my response here in the House.*

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, if you have an additional question.

Mr. Mason: No. I'm not interested in an additional question. I want to know if the Deputy Premier will apologize.

*See p.1509, right col., para. 3

The Speaker: I think it was almost inherent in what was said there, but go ahead.

Mr. Stevens: As I indicated, Mr. Speaker, I had a certain state of belief based on the information in front of me. My office advised me afterwards that I was in error. The document was with me, but it had not been provided to the NDs. They have now received it. But the fact remains that the document is with the NDs, and it will make available to them, should they wish, the information with respect to the quarterly reports.

Mr. Mason: I wish to proceed with my point of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. Fair game. That will be recognized at the conclusion of the Routine.

Mr. Mason: Thank you.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

Mr. Mitzel: Mr. Speaker, as chair of the Standing Committee on Leg. Offices I would like to table the requisite five copies of the committee's report recommending the reappointment of Mr. G.B. (Gord) Button as Ombudsman for the province of Alberta.

Presenting Petitions

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm adding another 34 signatures to the growing number petitioning the Legislative Assembly to "pass legislation that will prohibit emotional bullying and psychological harassment in the workplace."

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(3.1) to advise the House that on Monday, October 27, 2008, written questions 21, 22, 23, and 24 will be dealt with. There being no additional written questions appearing on the Order Paper, there are none to stand and retain their places.

I further wish to give notice that on Monday, October 27, 2008, Motion for a Return 18 will be accepted, and motions for returns 19, 20, 21, and 22 will be dealt with. There being no additional motions for returns appearing on the Order Paper, there are none to stand and retain their places.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings, all having to do with the theme of Results Canada. The first is the poem that I shared with the Assembly, A Prayer for Children, by Ina J. Hughs.

The second is a short pamphlet, Results Résultats Canada: "In a world with abundant wealth, resources, and knowledge, why do millions of people still live in desperate poverty? What's missing?"

The third is a little coiled booklet entitled Result:Ed: "Result:Ed Educational Fund is a registered Canadian charity. Result:Ed

Educational Fund builds awareness about the challenges of global poverty and highlights proven solutions through education, research and outreach."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. They're both centred around patient-focused care. The first tabling is from a medical centre in the United States on what constitutes the concept of patient-focused care.

The second tabling is from the same medical centre in the United States. It's the patient services guide. I would note to all hon. members of this Assembly the last page, which helps you understand your hospital bill.

Thank you.

Projected Government Business

Ms Blakeman: Under Standing Order 7(6), if the Government House Leader would share the projected government business for the week commencing October 27.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Depending on progress today, we would anticipate that on Monday, October 27, at 8:30 under Government Bills and Orders for second reading bills 10, 18, 23, and 24 as recently reported back from our policy field committees to the House I believe yesterday. Bills 33, 34, 36, 38, and 39 would also be available. In Committee of the Whole bills 29, 31, 32, and 35, and for third reading bills 28 and 30. Obviously, we won't cover all of that, so it will depend on which ones people are available to speak to.

On Tuesday, October 28, in the afternoon for second reading the same bills – bills 10, 18, 23, 24 – and bills 27 and 33, depending on progress on Monday night; in Committee of the Whole bills 29, 31, 34, 36, 38, and 39, again depending on progress previously; for third reading bills 32 and 35, and as per the Order Paper. In the evening the same bills would be available for progress.

Then on Wednesday, October 29, in the afternoon bills 23, 24, 33, 40, 41, and 42; in Committee of the Whole bills 10, 18, 27, 38, and 39; for third reading bills 29, 31, 34, 36, and as per the Order Paper. Obviously, again that depends on earlier progress. In the evening at 7:30 the same bills would be anticipated for second reading, and the same bills would be anticipated for third reading, again depending on progress.

2:50

On Thursday, October 30, pending discussions with all parties as to how we deal with it, we would anticipate dealing with Bill 37, the Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act, and depending on progress bills 40, 41, and 42 and in committee bills 23, 24, 33, 38, and 39.

Bill 37 went on notice last night, Mr. Speaker. We're in discussions with the opposition with respect to how we might proceed with that bill. The bill may be scheduled in accordance with that discussion.

The Speaker: Hon. members, during question period the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood advised the members of the Assembly that he wanted to rise on a point of privilege at the conclusion of this section of the Routine. A point of privilege is the

most dramatic, I guess, interjection that a member may make with respect to the feeling of his own privileges in the Assembly. It's dealt with very, very seriously by this chair, and it has severe repercussions if it goes beyond this Chamber.

Beauchesne can be referred to, essentially pages 28 through to 30. For more information chapter 3 in the book *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* contains a large number of pages with respect to privileges. The question of privilege is in our standing orders; Standing Order 15 contains information with respect to the procedure as well.

This question will now be heard, and if in the chair's view there is not enough time to deal with this matter today or if can't be dealt with today, then it'll be held over to Monday.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is a seasoned veteran of this Assembly, so he understands the procedures and he understands what the complaint of a breach of privilege must entail, including a suggestion for some action. Let's go forward, hon. member.

Privilege Misleading the House

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to this issue I have been advised that the Blues are not yet available. I wanted to review those, and I also would like a little bit more time to prepare the case. I'm prepared to proceed now, albeit at a disadvantage, if that's how you so rule. Quite clearly, I'm prepared to make the case that my ability to do my job as a member of this Legislature has been interfered with by the Deputy Premier and his failure to apologize.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I'll accept that. I'm going to read this into the Blues because it strikes me that this is a pretty major misunderstanding and should be able to be dealt with, if I understand the concerns of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. The hon. Deputy Premier in responding to a question from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood said the following:

You know who has done the honourable thing, Mr. Speaker, is the critic for the Liberals. Yesterday the critic was in the House when this offer was made to both parties. They stood up and said: we are prepared to go forward in that. I believe that the document, the confidentiality agreement, that was referred to yesterday is available. I believe it has been provided to the member opposite, and I believe it has also been provided to those people. . . . It is there, and you can look at it, and you can sign it if you are interested in finding out.

I believe that at that point the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood had an interjection.

Now, on my notes for the question period today this statement occurred somewhere between one minute after 2 and three minutes after 2. I then subsequently received a note from the hon. Deputy Premier, and you heard him say it in the House later:

I thought the opposition had the confidentiality agreement. I have copies. Apparently my belief was in error @ the time of my comment. The document(s) were sent via fax to the NDs @ 2:15. I believe Libs @ same time but don't have written confirmation.

In essence, the Deputy Premier made these comments between one minute after 2 and three minutes after 2, but apparently the documents were not sent until 2:15. I do believe from that little crux – but I don't want to rule on this pending an invite to the Government House Leader – that, quite frankly, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood clearly didn't have these documents. So if his point of privilege has to do with somebody misleading the House or saying that he had something he didn't have, you don't have to do much research because it becomes pretty clear to me.

Is there a comment from the hon. Government House Leader on this point?

Mr. Hancock: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier made it perfectly clear. In response to the question he said – and the exchange of questions is about some information, and it's been clear that this is all based on very sensitive issues with respect to specific children. The quarterly reports identify certain things that have gone wrong, and the Minister of Children and Youth Services has said: you really need to know the rest of the story, but I can't tell you the rest of the story on these specific suggestions of cases that have gone wrong because it involves personal and private information; therefore, we need you to sign a confidentiality agreement, and then we'll let you know exactly what's happened so you can have the full story.

The hon. Deputy Premier in response to the question today indicated that he believed that a process had been engaged and that the confidentiality agreement had been provided. He later informed the House that he was in error in that process. So if there was any misleading of the House in an inadvertent way by the Deputy Premier, he's cleared that up. I don't see where the question of privilege would come. If it's about something different than that, then I'd be happy to hear about it and respond to it.

The Speaker: Do you still wish to proceed, hon. member?

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, I just want to add one small piece of information. I still would like a chance to prepare this. I had clearly said earlier in the set of questions that we had not received this. The Deputy Premier in making that allegation – it was a pretty serious thing for him to have said. I think this thing could be resolved if the Deputy Premier was prepared to come into the House and apologize for what he said.

The Speaker: Okay. The Blues are available now. By Monday *Hansard* will be there and the comments where the Deputy Premier said "I believe" twice in there. I've heard the comments and clarification. I'll invite the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood to participate in raising a point of privilege if he so chooses at the conclusion of the Routine on Monday next.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Ethics Commissioner Appointment

19. Mr. Hancock moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly concur in the report of the Select Special Ethics Commissioner Search Committee and recommend that Neil Wilkinson be appointed as Ethics Commissioner for the province of Alberta.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Tuesday of this week the chair of the Select Special Ethics Commissioner Search Committee tabled a report recommending that Neil Wilkinson be appointed as the Ethics Commissioner for the province of Alberta. To put that report into effect requires a government motion.

Mr. Speaker, I will let the chair of that committee speak to the processes and the recommendations that they made. I would suggest to the House that the work of the committee has been diligent. They've done good work on behalf of this House and made a stellar recommendation.

The gentleman who is being recommended for the position is someone who I know to have the highest ethical standards, someone

who has demonstrated capacity to take on very, very difficult assignments. As chair of the Capital health authority for a significant number of years, I believe since 1996 until this year, he handled one of the most complex challenges available and did it by all accounts very, very well. He also served in the capacity as a board member with the Canadian Blood Services from 1998 to 2006 and again in that capacity showed considerable talent and ability and, as well, served as president of Toastmasters International, an organization where he was able to demonstrate his talent and ability.

Now, I'm sure those and many more attributes were taken into account through the processes of the select special committee search.

3:00

In selecting a person to be Ethics Commissioner, to take on any role that requires this level of talent and ability and sense of ethic, you always have to look for people who have not only the capacity but an understanding of how that role might impact. It's very difficult. I don't want to prejudge what others might say in debate, but certainly I was questioned outside the House about this earlier. Some may say: well, this gentleman might have ties that are close to the government. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that as you search for talented people and choose people who are going to know and understand the role of members in this House and know and understand how the Ethics Commissioner role impacts on that, you need to have somebody who is very conversant with public policy and how public policy is made, who has those capacities. It would be very unlikely that you would find somebody who had those capacities who hadn't in some way been connected to these types of processes and served in these types of capacities. Those should not be in any way a detractor from a person's ability to put their name forward, to have their name judged on their merits, and to be recommended for this job.

I'm absolutely satisfied that that's what the select special committee has done. I'm absolutely satisfied that the person that they've selected and recommended to the House not only has the stellar capacity to do the job, as demonstrated by the roles that he's served in our community in the past, but that he also has the ability to understand that the role he's taking on, in the same way as somebody who takes on the role of a returning officer or Chief Electoral Officer, is a role in which he would know and understand the absolute nonpartisan nature of the office and that in accepting the role, he would be able to take on that nonpartisan nature and do it in a stellar capacity.

This is a person who has exceptional talent and is offering that talent, once again, to the people of Alberta. I believe we should take him up on it.

The Speaker: This is a debatable motion, hon. members. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and participate in the debate on Government Motion 19 this afternoon. For the first time in my time in the Legislative Assembly I had an opportunity to sit on one of these select special search committees. I certainly found it very interesting and informative. As the process unfolded, certainly the candidate that is named in this motion was high on my list of candidates.

I have known Mr. Wilkinson for a very long period of time. Any encounters I've had with him have been respectful. Certainly, we've had conversations in the past. He is a very fine individual with a wide range of expertise. In fact, hon. Minister of Education, Government House Leader, I wish he was still chair of the Capital health authority. I really, really do. However, he's not.

As this process unfolded, I did have reservations around his appointment to this office. When the case was made to me that this individual has ties to the government party, the Progressive Conservative Party, and has made donations in the past, has made donations to the recent leadership campaign, I became uneasy about this appointment. I'm not so sure now, hon. members, that this is in the best interest of this Legislative Assembly.

Now, if we have a look at the Conflicts of Interest Act at the Ethics Commissioner's office – and it's an office of the Legislative Assembly – the Ethics Commissioner may recommend any one of the following sanctions against any member of this Assembly:

- (a) that the Member be reprimanded;
- (b) that a penalty be imposed on the Member in an amount recommended by the Ethics Commissioner;
- (c) that the Member's right to sit and vote in the Legislative Assembly be suspended for a stated period or until the fulfillment of a condition;
- (d) that the Member be expelled from membership of the Legislative Assembly.

It goes on here with recommendations of a lesser sanction.

It is a very, very important office, and we have to ensure that everyone has confidence in it. The only sanction that I can remember, really, is that the former Member for Battle River-Wainwright left the Assembly as a result of an investigation by the office of the Ethics Commissioner. That goes back, I believe, to 2002. The Ethics Commissioner can act on any number of matters, and the sanctions can be severe for any one of us who acts out of line.

When we look at not only the Conflicts of Interest Act but how we're expanding this and are going to have a lobbyist registry – and we're going to have any number of issues to deal with regarding the commissioning of the lobbyist registry and policing it – this is an office that has to be beyond reproach. I am at this time uneasy, and I have reservations about this appointment, but if my past experience with Mr. Wilkinson is a guide to me, Mr. Speaker, I think that he is a man of fine character. Hopefully, we will be served very well by this individual for the term of this appointment.

Thank you.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak against acceptance of Government Motion 19. Now, I was appointed as an opposition member to the select special committee to advertise, recruit, interview, and make a recommendation to the Legislative Assembly on a new Ethics Commissioner. I attended every meeting in person.

This is a difficult situation for me. At the first long list of names that was offered to us, I raised the issue that the individual in question who has been recommended by the committee had in fact made a cash donation to the party in power. I also noted several others who had done that. I was taken to task by other members of the committee and, in fact, heckled fairly persistently by one particular individual for most of the rest of the meeting for having done this. To me it was important because to me all-party committees and legislative officers need to be neutral. I need to believe as a member of this Assembly that I will be treated the same as any other member would be. I do not have that faith in this particular circumstance, and I'm saddened.

I did raise the close partisan ties of this particular individual. I also raised and noted during the meetings the general public perception, which I was aware of just from moving around in Edmonton circles, that this individual had very close party ties, if they weren't actually a card-carrying member. In fact, at a separate

meeting I also raised and had in my hand proof of donations to two different leadership campaigns that were made by this individual. So I'd been pretty clear with the committee. But this is what happens when almost every committee where it's possible to go in camera goes in camera because, of course, no notes are kept of anything, and it's easy to deny after the fact that I did this. But I know I did it, and I know I had the information in my hand at the time. That's the way I usually do things.

3:10

Mr. Speaker, my integrity is important to me. As my hon. colleague has said, the Ethics Commissioner has sweeping powers that they can effect upon a member whom they find to be in violation of one of the ethics codes. As a member of this Assembly I have to uphold those rules. The standing orders: even if I don't agree with them, I have to uphold those standing orders and work with them. I have to uphold any number of rules. One of the things that I have to uphold as an MLA are those ethics and conflict-of-interest rules even if I don't agree with them, even if I spoke against them over and over again when they were in debate. I have to uphold them.

You know, as an individual, Mr. Speaker, I'm a nice, middle-class gal. I obey rules. I never saw myself as a particular rebel. [interjection] Please don't heckle me. This is very difficult.

I obey rules even when I don't like them, and I keep obeying those rules until I see that they are being implemented in a way that I think is unfair to me or to others, and then I will fight them. I will fight them with all the rules that are available for me to fight them with. I will fight them legally – I always have – and no one can say that I don't. So I've objected. Every opportunity in this committee, every vote, I objected to what was happening here.

I am extremely uneasy about having my intimate personal details disclosed to an individual who is not neutral and not only is not neutral, but he's closely aligned with a governing party that has a tremendous amount of input on my very livelihood and how I am seen in the community. I feel helpless. I feel frightened. That sounds like a dramatic statement to make, and it is. I feel the process failed me.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Mr. Lukaszuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to tell you that I am sad that the Member for Edmonton-Centre feels the way she feels. I am by no means in a position to validate her feelings by what I'm going to say; I'm simply sad that she feels the way she feels. In no way am I questioning that her feelings are genuine. Those are her feelings, and she's entitled to them.

I guess what makes me equally sad is the fact that she would feel this way to begin with, that she would be so emotionally vested in something that hasn't even been established, in an assumption that someone will somehow prejudice her privileges and rights and all the decorum that comes with the privilege of being elected to this House, someone who hasn't even had a chance to show that, someone who actually has shown to the contrary.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has just indicated that based on his experience with Mr. Neil Wilkinson, he's willing to give him a chance because our collective legislative experience here with Mr. Wilkinson, I would say, was positive. I don't recall an incident or instance where he would have treated members of the opposition in any different way than he would have treated members of government. In the limited capacity that we had interfacing with him – as chair of the Capital health region he would advise us on the policy developments and directions of this particular authority – I am not aware of any such issues.

What really troubles me is that we would prejudice someone prior to him or her, whoever it is, even having a chance to show us what they can do. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that when I first ran for office in 2001, I walked into this Legislature, and I was stuck with an Ethics Commissioner who was in place prior to my being elected. Now, I did not fear him. I did not have a choice in who he was. Frankly, that wasn't even part of my consideration in running or not running for office because there he or she was. When you appear before a judge, I hope you don't do a history check on the judge: what party he has ever donated to or not donated to. Here is that person in a position of justice. Society, lawmakers deem that person to be capable of carrying out that role, and we simply submit ourselves to that person's competence and their ability to carry out their role in good faith.

If there was a situation that this member can rise and say, "Look, here it is; I told you; I told you he's going to favour government members," I would be the first one to stand up and say: I take back everything I'm about to say right now and everything I said up to this moment, and let's review his role. But how can we do that? This man has never even had a chance to show what he can or cannot do.

Mr. Speaker, since I was a member of that committee, I was privileged to some of this type of commentary prior, so I did look into some of the excerpts. As you know, Mr. Wilkinson was the chair of the Capital health authority, and we can go back to *Hansard* and show that when he was appointed the chair of the health authority, members of the opposition were upset with the government, saying: "Nothing but a Tory patronage appointment. Why would you appoint this guy? What does he know about health care?" Now, a few years later, when he no longer is in that position, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar would say: I wish he was still there; he has proven himself right.

Well, I'll give you some more, Mr. Speaker. I'll give you some quotes from *Hansard*. October 20, 2008, not too long ago, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, Leader of the Opposition, says: "Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Health and Wellness. The Capital health region was widely regarded as the best in Canada and in some circles as one of the best in the world," and it goes on and on. That's under the leadership of Mr. Wilkinson. Also from *Hansard*, the Member for Edmonton-Riverview: "To the same minister: can the minister now publicly address the concerns of Edmonton's charitable foundations, who helped Capital health become a world leader," again, under the leadership of Mr. Wilkinson.

The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar goes to say in a press release that the Liberal opposition released on October 1, 2008: "Thanks to the work of Capital Health, Edmonton has become a world leader in a wide variety of health care fields, particularly leading-edge research, teaching and children's care." Again, going back to the Leader of the Opposition, from Edmonton-Riverview, in his interview with the *Edmonton Journal* on July 22, 2008, he is quoted as saying, "The people who led Capital Health to such heights have no place within the government's new health-care structure," and it's advocated that Mr. Wilkinson should remain in one capacity or another as part of our Capital region health system.

This man was heckled before and now has proven himself to be able to do the job. Why would we not allow him to do that? He has proven himself, that he can pull a team not only of board members from all walks of life but a team of health care providers and develop, arguably, the best health care system in Canada, if not in the world, as the opposition would claim. His record has been checked from a criminal perspective and financial perspective; as I understand, it came back flawless.

But it goes further, Mr. Speaker, about partisanship. I'm not sure if the opposition knows that, but Mr. Wilkinson has been appointed by the Hon. Allan Rock. Now, for those of you who don't remember that name, Allan Rock was the Liberal Health minister for Canada, so a Liberal Health minister appointed Mr. Wilkinson to Canadian Blood Services. Remember when the Red Cross failed and there was a blood scandal in Canada and the Red Cross could no longer collect our blood for donation purposes? They had to have a transitional process, and a new agency was put in place. To put together this new agency that handled what's more important and more precious than our blood, Mr. Neil Wilkinson, all the way from Ottawa, was appointed by Allan Rock. Now, Allan Rock, if anybody doubts he's a Liberal, he ran for the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada. I'm not going to take the time to check, but – who knows? – maybe Mr. Wilkinson has donated to his campaign as well.

3:20

I have also looked at donation records, because now they are available to the public on the Internet, for all the leadership candidates for the Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta. I would challenge the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre to take time one evening – and I know she's busy – to look at the list of last names that appear on the list of donors. She will be disappointed because some of the very vocal Liberal supporters who attend all the leader's dinners for the hon. Leader of the Opposition have donated. Perhaps they didn't expect that this list would become public and be released on the website by our Premier and all the other candidates, but there are some very, very respectable community members who are very outwardly Liberal members who have contributed to campaigns. Does that mean that they're now Tory insiders and they should never be appointed to any government position? I would say, Mr. Speaker, quite to the contrary.

The type of person that participates in the political process, either runs for office or donates money or volunteers on a campaign, usually is the kind of a person who is civic minded, usually is the kind of a person that will lend his time or talent to one organization or another, and usually is the kind of a person who ends up getting appointed by government of any political stripe to positions of authority, which would include the Ethics Commissioner.

As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre knows, the list was extensive, and we have interviewed all members. I think what stood out about Mr. Wilkinson was the fact that he had a proven track record of being able to not only manage an office in the private sector but manage an office in a government setting. He knows what ethics means because in dealing with and managing a health care system, if it isn't about ethics, it's about money. But ethics are the predominant aspect of making decisions on health care policy. Most members on the committee had some knowledge of his great work. Why would we prejudice him right now?

I would go back to the comments of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. We heckled him – when I say “we,” I'm looking at the opposite side – when he was first appointed as chair of the Capital health authority, and a few years later we have proven that he was the right person to appoint. I suggest to you, hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, that perhaps your feelings right now, however strong they may be, will be proven wrong. I hope they will be proven wrong with the passage of time.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I'll be honest with you: I honestly don't care who the Ethics Commissioner is as long as he has the qualifications. I don't go through life as an elected member – and I've been here for almost eight years – thinking about the Ethics Commissioner. Unless I have my hand in the cookie jar, I don't have to worry about it.

I have to meet with him once a year for 15 minutes and, as the hon. member indicated, yes, disclose some aspects of my private life. But when I first ran for office, I accepted the fact that I will be disclosing aspects of my personal life for public consumption. That's what we assumed as members of the Legislature. I have no problem with the Ethics Commissioner and every single constituent knowing which bank I do business with, where I invest money, frankly, how much money I have. That's for public consumption. That's one of the sacrifices we make as Members of the Legislative Assembly. Now, to assume that he's somehow going to misjudge the Member for Edmonton-Centre or any one of us here in this room I think is grossly unfair.

As I indicated, I'm very supportive of this motion. I have no reason to believe Mr. Wilkinson will not do justice to that office, to the Legislative Assembly. If I'm proven wrong, make sure to recognize me, Mr. Speaker, because I would like to be the first one to rise and apologize to the Member for Edmonton-Centre and say: you were right, and I was wrong.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Ethics Commissioner search committee I think it's important to talk about the open process that we evolved and went through over the last few months. The committee held its first meeting on June 3, 2008, and with the assistance of committee support staff and Ms Alayne Stewart, director of executive search with corporate human resources, we developed guidelines for advertising, the position profile we were looking for, a search timetable, and general procedures.

Mr. Speaker, we put advertisements for the position in daily newspapers in Calgary, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Red Deer. We also advertised nationally in the *Globe and Mail* and in the *National Post*. The advertisement and the position profile were also posted on the external committee website.

We received a total of 94 applications for this position, and I'm proud to say that 71 of those applications came from the province of Alberta. Executive search, CHR, completed comprehensive screening reports for each candidate, and the committee reviewed the applications received along with the screening reports to determine a short list for preliminary interviews. Mr. Speaker, at the direction of the committee executive search conducted preliminary interviews with 11 candidates, and the committee then selected four candidates for final interviews, which were held on October 1, 2008. After the interview process was completed, it was the decision of the committee that Neil R. Wilkinson be recommended to the Legislative Assembly as the Ethics Commissioner for the province of Alberta.

I believe that we had open and full discussion about all of the candidates that were put before us. I'm confident in looking at Mr. Wilkinson's resumé that it was impeccable, and probably even more important than his resumé, Mr. Speaker, were the references and the comments we got back from people that either worked with Mr. Wilkinson or knew him personally. I can say, not knowing Mr. Wilkinson myself, that I was very impressed with what they had to say about this individual.

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all the Assembly to support the recommendation that Neil Wilkinson be our next Ethics Commissioner for the province of Alberta. I believe he will serve that office well, and I believe he will serve the province of Alberta well.

Mr. Speaker, just in closing, I'd like to acknowledge the contributions of Ms Alayne Stewart, director of executive search with

Alberta corporate human resources. Ms Stewart's knowledge and expertise in all matters relating to a search of this nature were invaluable to the committee and contributed to the completion of the committee's mandate within a very strict timeline.

Mr. Speaker, again I'd ask all members to support Mr. Wilkinson's appointment. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I listened very attentively to the comments made by the hon. Government House Leader. While I believe the hon. Government House Leader did move this motion, I think that the hon. Government House Leader said that he was also going to rely on you to do it as well. So if you would move the motion, then both of you will be on the record, and we'll all be happy.

Mr. Campbell: Okay. Mr. Speaker, I'd move that Mr. Wilkinson be appointed as the Ethics Commissioner for the province of Alberta.

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

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak against this motion, and I'm pleased with the opportunity to outline my reasons why. I'd like to start just a little bit by talking about what I, with all my seven months of experience, think the role of the Ethics Commissioner is supposed to be. A lot of that is just sort of based on what I've heard in the public sphere.

My understanding is that the reason we have an Ethics Commissioner in this Assembly is in part for members of the Assembly to have a certain trust level with each other – they're following the rules and all that kind of thing – but that it's also an important, critical role for the purposes of assuring the public that members of this Assembly are abiding by the rules, for the purposes of assuring the public that members of this Assembly are not exercising the power that may or may not come to us from this role – I know I have buckets of power, but nonetheless – in a way that compromises the interests of Albertans and also at the same time enhances my personal situation. That's what I understand to be the fundamental, sort of the first, principle of what the Ethics Commissioner is there for.

Now, of course, as we know, going into the last election there was even more talk about how we needed to open up this House and we needed to make the work of this House more transparent to Albertans and we needed as well to enhance and build public faith in the work that is done in this House. So in addition to that initial principle that I outlined, another thing that came forward through this government recently, prior to the election, was the whole concept of the lobbyist registry. The lobbyist registry was put in place, again, to enhance public confidence in the work that we do here, to ensure that those of us who are in positions of power are not, you know, kowtowing to friends or people with whom we have relationships in the public at the expense of the average Albertan or Alberta citizens as a whole.

That's my understanding of what, in general, the role of the Ethics Commissioner is. It's a critical role. It's a linchpin to the democracy in which we all operate, so it has to be taken with tremendous seriousness. We need to truly value the independence of this role. It's not just something we should give lip service to; it is something we should really mean.

3:30

Now going to sort of my own history and my role as well, I was one of the members of this committee that reviewed the applicants

for the role of Ethics Commissioner. Again, as I said, coming to this role with very little history, having only been a member of the Assembly for I think three months at the time that we had our first meeting, I came to it, you know, very, very naively. I thought: "You know, I'm probably not going to know the people that ultimately we interview because I haven't been around long enough, but I'm just going to try and ensure that we hire the best person possible. I'm going to engage in debate about the criteria that we establish that we think need to guide our decisions for who is the best person. Then I am going to as best as possible apply those criteria to the candidates that we review." That's all I was going to do because I didn't expect to know a single soul who we ultimately interviewed. Indeed, I was very correct. I didn't know a single soul who we ultimately interviewed.

Then it simply came down to: who did I think on the basis of those criteria and the basis of my own judgment would make the best Ethics Commissioner? In addition to the criteria that we established, I had in my own mind some ideas that I thought were really important. One of them was that we needed to have someone who had a deep either on paper or, alternatively, very strongly demonstrated experience – demonstrated experience – in the world of ethics and that in so doing, they had to have an understanding of ethics, they had to have a clear understanding of how you analyzed an issue where there were competing interests and competing values, and they also needed to have a strong, demonstrated history of standing up against a majority if that was what they believed was in line with the ethical principles.

Why is that? Because, frankly, 72 members of this House are on one side of the government. If any one of us runs afoul of the rules that we have put in place for ourselves, the odds are 72 out of 83 that it will be a government member. I needed to see an Ethics Commissioner who I knew would not hesitate to point out where any one of us ran up against the rules that we have set for ourselves. I needed to see somebody that I knew had demonstrated that background.

Now, there's been a lot of talk about the tremendous achievements of the candidate who is being put forward by the majority of the select committee for the selection of the Ethics Commissioner. I do not for a moment want to detract from the achievements of the Capital health authority, nor do I want to detract from the role that this particular candidate played as chair of the board in terms of overseeing the work primarily of the executive officers of the Capital health authority in achieving those outcomes. I don't want to. As a chair of a board which oversaw paid staff, he did a very good job. I think all of us agree that Capital health authority had – had, unfortunately – a number of achievements to its credit. I do not, however, believe that that necessarily means that he's automatically qualified to fulfill the duties and the criteria and the expectations that I just outlined. Just because you're good at A doesn't necessarily mean that we can assume that you will be good at B.

The member opposite suggested that we shouldn't prejudge. Well, you know what? Our job was to prejudge. We were put on the committee to select the best person. We were asked to review their qualifications and to prejudge how we thought they would do, so that's what I'm doing.

In terms of some of the criteria that I thought were important, as I said, I wanted to see somebody with a history of standing up against the majority if that was what was required. Unfortunately, I don't see that particularly in this candidate one way or the other. I don't see a training background that would make me confident that, notwithstanding that person not having done it in the past, they would do it in the future based on their education and training.

I also am aware, as other members have already mentioned, that there are demonstrated ties to the governing party. Maybe every-

body that we interviewed had demonstrated ties to the governing party. I don't know. It's certainly possible. A couple of years ago the Auditor General pointed out that most people appointed by either OICs or this Legislature tended to have observable, demonstrable ties to the governing party.

Nonetheless, what we also know is that, for instance, during the last election political parties – we were all in the middle of an election. Governing party members were allowed to access the resources of Capital health as part of a backdrop for a campaign event, and opposition parties were not. The chair of the Capital health authority was also the chair of the board at that time. It raises a concern for me.

Ultimately, this person is a really important person to this Assembly, and I don't want to take away from the qualities that I have no doubt he has. Certainly, he appeared very pleasant and likeable when he appeared before us, but my view is that he simply was not in any way, shape, or form the most qualified candidate. As the newbie, as the naive person I was quite surprised to see the outcome, based on the criteria that we had set out, that this person was the best choice. In my view, notwithstanding that person's many wonderful qualities, he was not anywhere close to being at the top of my list in terms of the person that was most qualified and most demonstrated the type of characteristics that I think we need to look for in this Legislature, not only for our own interests but on behalf of all Albertans, to ensure that they have faith that justice is not only being done but it is being seen to be done. I believe that we have not met that objective through this recommendation. It's for that reason that I cannot support this motion.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Additional speakers? The hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had the good fortune of having the opportunity to serve on the committee. It was a very interesting and challenging process that we went through to select the member. I feel bad that Edmonton-Centre feels as bad as she does about this appointment. I know that she expressed a lot of those same concerns in our committee meeting. We, I thought, tried to comfort her somewhat by the skills that Mr. Wilkinson has and the personality that he has, but I guess that we failed in that effort. But I can assure her that if, like the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs indicated, it turns out that we're wrong and she's right, I'll be the first one to admit it, and I will be the first one to come to her defence.

As far as the conditions as described by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, the criteria and what we were looking for in an individual, I agree with her criteria. But I guess I feel that the person we selected, Mr. Neil Wilkinson, fits those criteria. There were a lot of very good candidates – that's without doubt – but Mr. Wilkinson certainly fit the profile of someone that I was looking for.

I've had the opportunity as Minister of Infrastructure to work with Mr. Wilkinson quite extensively as we were talking about health facilities and the whole issue about research in health and the facilities that are needed for delivering the services, and I was very, very impressed with his abilities. When you look at the Edmonton Capital region, the number of people that they have working in there, their budget, the size of the budget, and the services that they were providing, that was, I thought, a very, very good team with Neil Wilkinson and Sheila Weatherill. It was always interesting as we would discuss projects and discuss needs with them, the two and the respect that they had for one another. Certainly, what that told me was that Neil was very, very much a part of the delivery and the

operation of the Capital health region. We've heard the accolades about the Capital health region under Mr. Wilkinson, I mean, coming from the Liberal opposition, and of course, as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs pointed out, the work of the Capital region was recognized far beyond our boundary.

3:40

I also have had the opportunity to observe Mr. Wilkinson in a number of situations, and quite frankly I was always very impressed with his abilities, with the way he could interact with people and, of course, the respect that people have had for him. All along the public thought a lot of Mr. Wilkinson, and I am very convinced that he's very honest, straightforward but can be strict and will be strict. I'd be very disappointed if I find that I'm wrong in that field. The reason I say that: I watched him deliver a couple of very difficult messages when he was chairman of the Capital Region Board, and he can do it. He can follow it through. I believe that from his business experience he will be thorough in his investigation of any incident or anything that is brought to him as far as business dealings are concerned, which is a very important point, I think, in today's world when you see all of the various ways that members could be involved in business and how that could tie back to government. He, I believe, will do a very thorough job in that field.

I would really urge members of the Assembly to give him a chance. Let's vote for this motion and get him on board around the 3rd of November or thereabouts of 2008.

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

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was not on the committee, and I cannot actually speak in terms of knowing. I'm sure that I've met him several times, but I have never had an extensive conversation about Mr. Wilkinson, so I can't say pro or con. But I was concerned about the Member for Edmonton-Centre and her concerns, and I just wanted to pass on to her that, you know, I have now had experience with two Ethics Commissioners. Now, those Ethics Commissioners were not just donating money to a particular party, but they were actually Members of this Legislative Assembly. The first one was a Liberal member.

Ms Blakeman: No. Socred.

Ms DeLong: Socred? It must be the other way around. One was Liberal, and one was Socred. [interjections] Both Socred? Oh, okay. Anyways, they were not Conservative members, and I thought that both of them were excellent men. They were fair, and even though they were not members of or somehow tied into our party, they did the job that needed to be done, that highly ethical, that attention to detail and the job that needed to be done, even though they were not associated with us. They were associated with another party. So I encourage you to look at it again.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Additional speakers?

Shall I call on the hon. Government House Leader to close the debate? The Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope that all members of the House can put aside any feelings they might have and vote in favour of this motion so that we have an Ethics Commissioner that starts his term with the full support of the House. I understand the concerns that have been raised. I would only say that in raising the concern about previous political support, it should not disqualify

someone who is competent for a job. We want somebody for this job, Ethics Commissioner, who understands the role and function that we play in this House.

Indeed, as the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow has just raised, of the two previous holders of this office the first one, Mr. Bob Clark, was a member of the House as a Socred and was, I believe, the leader of the Socred Party at one time in this House and served in a stellar capacity because he knew and understood the House. It wasn't a question of what party he had belonged to; it was a question of his knowledge of the role and function that we play and how important ethics are to that role and function. The second person, Mr. Don Hamilton, who is now the occupant of the office, had not been a member of the House but was a candidate for the Social Credit Party and, in fact, had a close association with the political process. That's an advantage, not a disadvantage.

The clear obligation of anyone taking on this role is to play the role in a fair and even-handed manner and to understand that the role now puts them in a position where they need to apply the rules even-handedly and fairly. The person taking on this role must be able to do that. I can say with a high degree of confidence, absolutely no problem whatsoever, that the candidate that's being put forward today can do that.

I tried in my opening remarks to say that this is not an unusual situation. When you appoint someone to be a Chief Electoral Officer, they are required to be neutral and to apply the rules fairly, but you want them to have some understanding of the process. In fact, even in the role of Attorney General. The Attorney General is here. I had the honour and privilege of serving as Attorney General in the past. One of the roles and functions of the Attorney General must be to be able to separate themselves from any partisan process for the application of the law. Indeed, if an issue is raised against a member of the House, even against a member of their own caucus, even perhaps a member of their own cabinet – and we've seen this in other jurisdictions where it has been applied – the Attorney General must step out of the role that they play as a member of the caucus or a member of the government and play the role of Attorney General. Now, fortunately, the Ethics Commissioner in this case doesn't have to do that.

Once the Ethics Commissioner is appointed to the office, they perform the functions of that office, and partisanship is aside. Any information that's provided to the Ethics Commissioner is privileged information, which the Ethics Commissioner is not able to share. So no member of this House ought to be concerned about the information they provide to that person regardless of who they might know in the community, who they might be friends with, who they might associate with, who they might have dinner with. That individual that this Legislature appoints is vested with the obligations of that office to carry out that office in an even-handed manner.

The process has been a good one. I wasn't part of the process, but we've heard the description of the process. The committee has made its recommendation. We should endorse that recommendation. We should hire this person to be Ethics Commissioner and allow him to play that role in the even-handed way that we know he can, using the talents and abilities that he has shown and provided to our community in so many other capacities.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that we vote in favour of the motion.

[Government Motion 19 carried]

The Speaker: Mr. Wilkinson will become the new Ethics Commissioner of the province of Alberta and will sit down with me shortly and sign a contract after a very intense negotiation.

3:50

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 35

Government Organization Amendment Act, 2008

[Adjourned debate October 22: Mr. Mason]

The Speaker: Additional speakers? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise in second reading and speak to Bill 35, the Government Organization Amendment Act. I'm aware that a number of my colleagues have spoken to this act and have raised some questions. You know, I'm always interested when the government starts to take away controls, regulations, limitations that have been put in place. I've had the opportunity recently to go back and try to get that sort of 10,000-foot viewpoint of what's happening in this province. Are we about to repeat history?

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I've been looking at our budget process and also the revenue coming in from oil and gas, and those actually run on more or less parallel lines. What's really interesting is that we are coming to a point that almost exactly mirrors the choices the government started to make in the early 1980s. We're 25 years later, but we're repeating history. What started to happen there was that the controls, the limitations that were in place on government spending and how it could do it and, you know, under what circumstances and how much, all of those sort of restrictions that government places on itself to sort of keep itself on the straight and narrow, they started to lift them. I think almost anyone in this House would agree that we saw a period of spending that got quite out of control and then a period of time in which the previous but two Premiers tried to rein it into control. Then there was a period of very steep cuts that happened in the mid-90s under the previous Premier, most of which, by the way, were in the social sector and in the health sector.

How many bills have we had before us this week, Mr. Speaker, in which we've seen a systematic lifting of legislative controls on government spending? A lot is the answer.

Mr. MacDonald: What did Alan Greenspan say today?

Ms Blakeman: He did say something, that this is the very time when we need to be having more restrictions in place, not less.

Yet what this government is doing in this piece of legislation and a number of other ones that have come before the Assembly during this fall session is to lift those limitations, to repeal the sections right out of the act, to take those limitations away. Well, I guess, over history you have many examples of government not paying attention to the historical lessons that they could learn and, in fact, repeating those historical lessons. I guess I'd be content to let the government make fools of themselves except that I'm an Albertan and I'm going to suffer what's going to happen as a result of that along with everybody else. I represent a number of people that live in this very fine and fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre, and I don't want to see them have to suffer because of the decisions that this government is making.

This bill is another one of those places. You know, often what I'm seeing is a phraseology, a series of phrases that are being put in place. If you read most of the bill, you go: "Okay. All right. They've got pretty good limitations in here. They've got everything

under control. I believe that they've got ways of making sure that things are going to be looked after. There are limitations. There are regulations. There are requirements about things here." Then you get some of these phrases. Essentially, the phrase that I've now seen used at least twice in legislation recently is the one that says: and then the government can do anything it wants. Here we go; boy, that didn't take me long to find. It's under item 2 in the amending bill, which is amending schedule 11 in section 10. It's (3)(c): "Under circumstances authorized by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, subject to any conditions that may be imposed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council."

So you can have all the limitations and regulations and prescriptions that you want, and then it can get wiped out because the Lieutenant Governor in Council, which is the cabinet, the front bench, has decided that they don't want to do that. What you get out of that is an order in council. It does get published in the *Gazette*. Fair enough. But, boy, you've got to watch that *Gazette* and make sure that you catch it on the day that it comes out with that particular order in council. Of course, it never actually says what the order in council is. It says, you know, pertaining to something, something. You've got to go get it, phone, or go to the library and actually look it up.

How easy would it be for the front bench to decide that they're going to change their mind on something and override any protections they've put in place? Pretty easy. How long would it take the public or members of the opposition or the media to find out? It could take us a long time. What's the phrase? The horse could be well out of the barn by then.

Ostensibly this act is to change the way government sells public lands, and that is always an issue that the public is very live to. They understand that there's a lot of Crown land.

They changed the wording. They changed the way they talk about that. They call it public land now, not Crown land?

Mr. MacDonald: Sometimes.

Ms Blakeman: Yeah. Sometimes they call it public land. I grew up calling it Crown land.

The government is able to sell that Crown land under certain circumstances. Well, again, there we have the prescriptions and the limitations that we hope are there – right? – but they don't have to be there because now through this act the government is going to give itself permission to, like, wipe that out. "Well, no, we're just not going to apply that this time around. We think it doesn't apply this time or in this particular instance or for this particular sale because we have some reason."

When I look at some of the recent public land sales the government has been involved in where questions were raised about it, very quickly Fort McMurray comes to mind. First of all, there was the government's reluctance – I don't know why – to release that land so that the municipality of Wood Buffalo, essentially the city of Fort McMurray, could get on with preparing and servicing the land to make it available to citizens who wanted to build houses. There was a long delay there, and I'm sure there's a story, but I don't know what it is, Mr. Speaker. Then there were a great deal of questions raised about how the land was actually sold and who got to sell it and what kind of money they made off it.

This is an area that does come under immense public scrutiny and if not scrutiny then speculation. We all get letters from people – sometimes anonymous, sometimes with illegible signatures, sometimes signed outright by people with their proper home addresses – saying, "Oh, this is a scandal; you should look at this particular sale," or whatever. I say that to underline that the public

are very aware that this is an area that they feel the government can make big mistakes on. I know that they would like to be reassured that there are pretty severe limitations and processes in place that the government needs to follow so that we have a fair selling of land.

You know, ultimately, that Crown land, that public land, it belongs to all of us, and we should all be reaping the benefits of that land sale. So if the land is sold for less money, or if it's sold at a time that's inappropriate – I mean, I love the one that happened where for some reason everybody forgot that we were going to build Anthony Henday, and we sold the land for two bucks, and then we had to buy it back for millions later. I love that one. Gee, I shouldn't get off on those tangents.

The point I was trying to make there was that the people really watch that. They want to make sure that the government does have those processes to follow and that land sales are fair and that they get their money's worth out of it as citizens. You know, for most people selling a little piece of land, often these are little kind of odd pieces that are, you know, in between an interchange on the highway and surrounding farmland, and a little chunk of it has been left. Well, that could actually be quite valuable land. If it's sold off because, "Oh, well, heck, it's just a little triangle, and who cares anyway," but it's a prime spot with an off-ramp, well, that becomes pretty valuable commercial land. If it got sold as a deal to somebody who was, you know, a good party member, a good friend, a nice businessperson in that community, that really affects the rest of Albertans. We need to make very sure – I'm getting a little tired of saying this – that not only has a process been done, but it's been seen to be done; not only is it above board, but it's seen to be above board. I think there's a struggle in this.

4:00

I think what I see the government doing is one step forward in putting in some of the regulations that are anticipated in this act and two steps back when they then put in essentially a gigantic out clause, a gigantic "I didn't really mean that" clause, a huge "don't watch for the next couple of minutes while I do this" clause. That's a problem. I think the government is doing itself a huge disservice in doing this. As I stated when I started this debate, we need to be putting more stringent restrictions and controls and processes in place in this day and age.

One of the reasons why we haven't done as badly in Canada as they have in the U.S. and in some other countries is because Canadians tend to be more cautious. We did have stronger regulations and a regulatory regime around our banks and around our lending practices. I'm sure people could argue that they should be more stringent, and I'm sure someone else will, but we didn't do as badly as some others because we had those regulations in place. We have in many cases in this province some pretty good legislation in place, and I am watching a systematic dismantling of that.

I've got to assume, with the number of brains that are over there and the number of experts that they are able to hire, that this is not an accident, that this is a plan, that they are moving forward with this for some specific reason. I don't know what that reason is, and I probably don't need to know what the reason is, but it does really concern me on behalf of my constituents, who may lose out on some things or may not gain as they should, and on behalf of all Albertans. We need those restrictions to be in place. We need those processes to be transparent. I am not seeing that in this bill.

Those are the comments that I wanted to make in second reading of Bill 35. I would ask the government to really consider whether they need to give themselves this out clause. You have other emergency ways of dealing with things that are, you know, incredibly urgent or catastrophic or whatever. You have other acts that you

can call into play if you need to do something for a huge public health emergency or acts of war or civil unrest. You have the ability legislatively to put things in place and override if you really, really need to. I don't think you need to be giving yourself those big out clauses, those big "look the other direction for a couple of seconds" clauses that I keep seeing appearing, and I'm seeing one of them appear in this bill. I would urge the government to go back to the drawing board and to take out that clause that I enumerated.

Thank you for the opportunity to put my concerns on the record. I would urge my colleagues in the Assembly not to support second reading of Bill 35. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, you already spoke.

Mr. Hehr: Oh, I did?

The Deputy Speaker: You did.

Any other member who wishes to speak? We have five minutes; 29(2)(a) allows for five minutes of questions. The hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened very intently to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre. I guess maybe she's been listening too long to her colleague from Edmonton-Gold Bar. I would love if she could give me the example of the land that had been sold for \$2 and then cost millions to recover. The issue is that we purchased land, purchased quarter sections of land on the understanding that a certain amount of acres were going to be taken out of that quarter section and that the remainder would then be provided back to the original owner. We were purchasing land, not selling land. So I wonder if she would care to clarify if it's connected with the Anthony Henday. If it's some other place that she's talking about, then I could stand corrected, but if it's the Anthony Henday, she's wrong; I'm right.

Ms Blakeman: Well, I appreciate the gauntlet being thrown. I know this has been a long-standing dispute for the member, who was then, I believe, Minister of Infrastructure. There were many exchanges between the member, who was then minister, and my colleague for Edmonton-Gold Bar and others. My memory is that there is a suitcase of documents on this one. I will refer him back to those very documents that have been tabled in this House so many times.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other member wants to join in this five minutes?

Seeing none, any other member who wishes to speak on the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Ms Notley: Thank you. I rise to join in the debate and also to speak against this bill. In many cases I'll be mirroring comments already made by other colleagues, so I'll probably end up making it fairly short. I always say that.

There are several concerns with respect to this bill. In fact, this bill is designed, according to my understanding, to facilitate the disposal of Crown lands and to simplify the process by which the government can dispose of Crown lands and to do that in a way that limits the need for it, of course, to go through the Legislature.

It seems that this is a recurring theme in this session. We constantly are talking about new bills that are moving authority to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and taking it from under the watchful eye of a statute or otherwise of this Assembly. That, of

course, is a disturbing trend for a variety of reasons that I'm sure are self-evident to anybody who is listening to what we're talking about today.

In disposing of Crown assets without the opportunity for debate or for a consideration of the priorities or the criteria that are being sought out or adhered to, we lose the opportunity to define a future direction and, heaven forbid, to plan, for there to be public input on that planning. Crown land assets are sort of the mainstay ultimately, I suppose, of government assets, and to see that we are simply going to enhance the sort of behind barely open doors disposal of this particular asset is concerning.

The other thing, of course, is that last night we spoke about the government enhancing its authority to incur liability well beyond previously legislated levels. Now, this is not about incurring liability, of course, but it is the flip side of the same activity, which is disposing of capital assets. Again, strangely, we seem to be moving our money management, our economic management, our asset management to the cabinet table, away from the Legislature, and this is a problem.

4:10

Now, my understanding is that the primary objective behind this particular move is to enhance the minister's flexibility in the course of pursuing P3 opportunities. We have spoken at great length about why we think pursuing development through the P3 mechanism is short-sighted and bad for the people of Alberta both in the short- and long-term situation. Any legislative initiative that is designed to enhance that particular reliance on the P3 is something that we, obviously, oppose.

It's interesting in this particular case – because it has been put to us in some discussions that this is about enhancing P3 development – that on one hand we're disposing of this capital asset through a decision of the cabinet and thus limiting, again, public debate around that, but then many times we will be doing it to pursue P3 development.

As most members know, the minute P3 development strategies are adopted, transparency and accountability in and of themselves begin to disappear as those private-sector players or parties in those P3 arrangements exert their right to keep their business information confidential and use that as an excuse not to clearly account for public funds or the rationale behind public funds or why things are being developed in a certain way. Suddenly the public merges with the private, and often there are arguments made that the private's right to privacy trumps the right of regular citizens to have full access and transparency to a particular process or a particular development strategy. We are concerned that, in effect, what we're doing is kind of doubling the opportunity for transparency to be limited and for accountability to the people of Alberta to be limited through this piece of legislation.

I believe that my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood did outline in more detail, both last night as well as in previous debates, the many, many concerns we have about P3 development, so I won't repeat them at this time.

We cannot support this bill because we absolutely perceive it to be a vehicle for enhancing and increasing the P3 strategy for capital development in this province, and we see that as a very damaging move to the interests of the people of Alberta.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) allows for five minutes of questions and comments. Anybody?

Seeing none, does anybody else want to speak on the bill?

Seeing none, I will call on the Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 35 read a second time]

Bill 31

Financial Administration Amendment Act, 2008

[Adjourned debate October 21: Ms Pastoor]

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

Mr. Hehr: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise and talk about Bill 31, the Financial Administration Amendment Act, 2008. I will be speaking in favour of the amendment with a couple of reservations or more questions as to whether this is going forward at the correct time.

Primarily, my concern is with section 82, which will be repealed at this time by this act. This deals with the discontinuance of provincial agencies. Section 82 stated that all provincial agencies are discontinued “at the end of the last day of each successive 5-year period beginning with the period that begins on January 1, 2004.” This clause “does not apply to a Provincial corporation or Crown-controlled organization incorporated,” and the discontinuance does not relieve any agencies from their liabilities and obligations.

As indicated by that, by repealing this section, there will not be any legislation in place – again, like my friend from Edmonton-Centre says: tell me if there is – that deals with the discontinuance of provincial agencies until the government introduces legislation on a public agencies governance framework.

If we know, like, how much has been distributed on that apparent bill that will at some point in time be coming forward but to this date hasn't appeared in this Legislature – while there has been some assurance from the Treasury Board that this gap will not have any implications since the framework will be introduced in spring, there really is no assurance that this will happen. If we look, for instance, at what's happened to other bills and we see what's happened just here in this Legislature's sitting on Bill 11 – Bill 11 is the Insurance Amendment Act – where we were supposed to be going in lockstep with the B.C. amendments to their same act, which now, because of an election being called in that area and changes to timing, is no longer proceeding, we can see that it's not going to go ahead in the same manner as it was supposed to go forward under TILMA. That gave me some concern in that bill.

This amendment gives me some concern as well because these amendments should be done at a time when all things are accounted for. It looks like this is also at a time where we've had some provincial agencies that have been wound up, ceased to operate, and may have outstanding debts or outstanding issues that need to be dealt with that clearly will not be dealt with with the repeal of this legislation. That gives us some cause for concern that the government is moving ahead maybe a little too expeditiously on this front. Maybe the government should spend some more time getting its actual house in order and making sure that bills are repealed at the proper times and other legislation then goes into effect at certain times when they're actually supposed to. That just gives me some concern on that front.

But, hey, let's look for the positive. Maybe everything will go right and the public agencies governance framework will be ready to go in the spring and there will be no disruptions and things will go smoothly and all the stakeholders will be happy as a clam and we can go from there and everything will be good. So I look forward to the public agencies governance framework coming in the spring. Let's just hope that we're not flying by the seat of our pants here and moving forward too quickly.

Thank you very much. Those are my comments here today.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) allows for five minutes of questions and comments. Anyone?

Seeing none, then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to join the debate.

4:20

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I have found this bill to be quite interesting. Hopefully, during the course of debate my concerns and my issues regarding this bill will be satisfied. I was told that this is a matter of routine housekeeping. We're looking at a number of changes that are supposedly housekeeping in nature. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo said that section 82 of the Financial Administration Act is to be repealed. We carry on, and we see where a schedule is also repealed. We look at the Alberta Economic Development Authority Act and repealing section 7; the Alberta Enterprise Corporation Act. The Child and Family Services Authorities Act is amended in section 22. The Premier's Council of Alberta's Promise Act, the Public Sector Pension Plans Act, the School (Compulsory Attendance) Amendment Act, and the Travel Alberta Act. These are all sort of repeals that supposedly are housekeeping in nature.

Specifically, Mr. Speaker, on section 82 of the Financial Administration Act and the relationship of this to the proposed public agencies governance framework. Now, when we look at the public agencies governance framework, we have to be very careful here. I'm astonished that the public agencies governance framework from February of this year is already used as a legislative authority. It's listed in the memorandum of understanding which sets up this health care privatization that is unfolding as we speak. I in my time around this Legislative Assembly have never seen how a framework – just a framework, whatever that is; perhaps the Conservatives can explain it not only to me but to everyone in the province – of this nature, this public agencies governance framework, can be listed in with statutes as the legislative authority for eliminating the regional health authorities and for setting up this one superboard. We're going to have a bill in a couple of weeks or maybe sooner, depending upon the mood of the government, to legalize this action, this rather rash action by the minister of health and the Premier and officials in the Premier's office.

Section 82, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to have to beg your forgiveness here because I've got to open up the Financial Administration Act not at section 82 but at section 2(5), which tells us a lot. Before I go to section 2(5), in this act we're looking at the definitions of a provincial agency, a provincial committee, a provincial corporation. They're all very, very important because it is yet to be determined, with all due respect to the Ethics Commissioner and the Ethics Commissioner's office, in my view, what these new health authorities or whatever we're going to call them are going to be.

If we look at section 2(5), the Financial Administration Act applies to a lot of different agencies and boards, but there are some sections of this Financial Administration Act that are exempt. They include sections 80 and 81. If we have a look at the act, section 82 has some influence, and section 81 is a discontinuance section. But if we look at the sections that are exempt here and we look at sections 80 and 81, the incorporation and the control of provincial corporation borrowings, now, how is all this going to affect our health delivery services, our programs and deliveries?

Originally I was told that section 82 was just sort of a routine legal function, if I can call it that, where every now and then the hon. President of the Treasury Board could kick over, if I could use that term, every five years the health authorities if they were considered a provincial agency. It was just sort of a procedure. I now find that

whenever we have this bill before the Assembly, my curiosity is raised. Is the repeal of section 82 part and parcel of the health care initiatives that are being orchestrated and planned and plotted by the minister of health?

Now, section 82 within the Financial Administration Act is, as I said before, Mr. Speaker, a discontinuance clause that deals with provincial agencies. This sunset action states that all provincial agencies are discontinued as of January 1, 2009. Some agencies around the Alberta Social Housing Corporation, the teachers' pension plans, special boards, the Utilities Commission are all under something else.

But we need to be very careful with this, and we need an explanation from the government as to why this is happening now. Why is this going on whenever the minister of health is up to his planning for health care? I have consulted individuals, and they have given me the reassurance that there's nothing untoward with this amendment, that it is just a housekeeping measure, and not to worry.

Ms Blakeman: What's that phrase? Don't worry; be happy. It's got to be a theme song.

Mr. MacDonald: Exactly, hon. member.

I'm not convinced of this. I would have to go back to the memorandum of understanding, and for the first time in 10 years in this Legislative Assembly I see where we're using a public agencies governance framework, February 2008, Alberta. This is the first page, Mr. Speaker. It goes on. It has a table of contents. We have an introduction. We have an application for government policy: this policy applies to all agencies. It was never debated, never discussed in this Assembly that I'm aware of. Never. We have definitions of agencies. We have many different government policies set out.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre was talking earlier about how much is now done behind closed doors by this government, outside this Assembly with no public discussion, with no public involvement, and we have this document that is now being used and cited as the legislative authority to set up how we're now going to deal with health care in this province. I believe these two issues are related, and I believe they're related from the fact that we're not sure what the definition is for a provincial agency, a provincial committee, or a provincial corporation and where they fit into what we fondly call the FAA, or the Financial Administration Act.

4:30

I'm very interested in having my questions answered, and hopefully they will be answered because when you look again at the Financial Administration Act – and it's a very important statute in this province – and you look at what section 2(5) states, the application of this act and what is exempted in this act, those exemptions are, again, Mr. Speaker, sections 1, 5, 6, 7, 13(3), 77, 80, and 81. Now, this act does not apply to the Post-secondary Learning Act, the Regional Health Authorities Act, the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, the Mental Health Act, the Cancer Board.

I hope the House can indulge me and understand why I have these concerns and why, before we proceed any further with this bill, we get a definition, we get some clarification on a provincial agency, a provincial committee, and a provincial corporation and what all this means and how it's linked to the minister of health's issues around health care. I hope I explained my concerns in a way that will interest the government and the sponsor of this bill, the President of the Treasury Board, and we can get some answers on this.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) allows for five minutes of questions and comments. Any hon. member?

Going back to the bill, does any hon. member wish to speak on the bill?

Seeing none, then, I'll put the question to the House.

[Motion carried; Bill 31 read a second time]

Bill 32

Meat Inspection Amendment Act, 2008

[Adjourned debate October 22: Ms Notley]

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

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to be able to speak in second reading to Bill 32, the Meat Inspection Amendment Act, 2008. Having consulted with my caucus members, they are indicating to me that they have a willingness to support this bill. But, clearly, based on the number of them that have raised issues prior to me, there are some questions to be answered, so I'm hoping that in Committee of the Whole the sponsor of the bill, who is . . .

Mr. MacDonald: Battle River-Wainwright.

Ms Blakeman: . . . that nice young fellow from Battle River-Wainwright – thank you – will be coming forward with some clarifications and answers.

My understanding is that the major issue on this is the transfer of inspection authority and what that shakes out to really mean. Here's one of the areas that's occurring to me because I can't get a lot of specifics when I start to track this back. One of the sections is replacing the words "police officer" wherever they appear in the act with "peace officer." I hope my diction is good. I wonder what the meaning is behind that because I'm guessing that that would allow for some of the new categories of enforcement personnel. I don't know what to call them because they're not police. At one point there was some sort of proposal for a deputy police or something, and that didn't happen. We have ended up with a couple of new levels of people that have powers, and some of them carry guns and some of them don't, but they seem – some of them, most of them, all of them are able to hand out tickets.

I can't get a really clear definition. What's the criteria for hiring some of these guys that are sheriffs, for example? I would like to be able to get a hold of some of that information because, clearly, what's happening here is that we're moving from having police officers responsible for enforcement and infractions to having a peace officer. I don't know who a peace officer is. I'm assuming here – and I'm happy to be corrected, as usual – that that would include the new definition of sheriffs and other categories that I'm not even aware of yet. There always seem to be new categories.

That may well be happening because we wish police officers to be out on our streets fighting serious crime. Therefore, if we need someone to go in and deal with an infraction in a meat facility, it doesn't need to be a police officer with two years of training and a gun on his belt. Fair enough. But I am wondering about the hiring criteria and the training standards of some of these new areas. I don't want to see any of those individuals placed in a position where they're being asked to do something that they haven't been trained to do because that's a pretty scary position to be placed in by somebody, and that's not clear for me from what's in here.

That replacement clause appears several places. It's in section 8,

which is amending section 8(a). It's also appearing earlier in the bill in the original section 2(k): "peace officer" means a peace officer appointed under the Peace Officer Act." Okay. Again, that is indicating that there's a change in who was expected to perform certain duties under this act.

The section that we're mostly interested in, I think, is section 3, which is repealing the authority of Alberta Health and Wellness to inspect these premises, leaving it to the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, which may well be very reasonable. But, clearly, the answers that I'm looking for are: do we end up with the same number of inspections that are available? If the problem is that we didn't have enough staff in Alberta Health and Wellness to do these inspections, in shifting it to the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, are there sufficient staff there to respond to the demand for them? I would like some information on that.

Transition is always interesting in this province because we end up with the government changing things so often that I find many of the departments are left very quietly shaking their heads saying: I don't know who I'm supposed to report to now, and I don't know what form I'm supposed to fill out because everything changed. So part of what my colleagues were asking for – and I will echo that – is: what are the transition plans in place to move from the Health and Wellness inspectors to the Agriculture and Rural Development inspectors?

The final concern – and I'm pretty sure that the government would have dealt with this, but, you know, give me the information – that consumer protection and a level of consumer information are really important. People are essentially pretty careful if they're given the information to be careful about. If they've been misled or if information is not provided, then we can't fault them if they make mistakes.

4:40

For example, if there is a recall, as we witnessed a massive recall that happened with the cold cuts around the listeria outbreak, you would really have to be severely impaired in some way, in a coma or out of the country, to not have heard the number of recall notices that came out in the newspaper, on the radio, and on the television. They did a massive attempt to tell people: please, please, please be careful with this. You know, I would expect at that point that most people would go to their fridge and try and get rid of it. The people that became ill became ill before the warning was out there.

That's always the concern: what is that level of contingency plan that's available to help consumers find out about it and, more importantly, to protect the consumers before they have the ability to protect themselves? Those are always the issues that only government can do. The private sector is very good at many things, but there are some things that others will not do and that, therefore, it falls to government to do. Consumer protection is one of those. It's the reason that we need regulations and limitations on things. That's the final issue that I wanted to raise: how do we reassure consumers that there is the highest level of safety?

This is an interesting one for me, Mr. Speaker, because I can't eat meat. I'm allergic to red meat protein and have been my adult life. I've only had the children's version of meat dishes. I've never had grown-up, fancy meat dishes. I was saved from McDonald's because I couldn't eat there. When they first opened McDonald's, when I was a teenager, I think, there was nothing I could eat there, so I never went. I never got into it, and I never had the famous french fries. So there I was, saved.

I'm very aware of how frightened people get around food products and food safety. I have relatives in England – and I heard my

colleague from Edmonton-Riverview referring to a similar story – who will not eat any meat product now, this many years past their BSE crisis. My Lord, they've worked hard there to get over that. They've worked hard to prove to people that they were going to be as safe as possible. But there is a population there that will not eat meat, and that would have very serious repercussions for Alberta and Alberta's beef producers.

So even though I can't consume their product, anything I can do to help the government to strengthen consumer – what's the word I'm looking for? – confidence, I am happy to do. I hope that this bill will move that along. I hope to hear some of the answers to the concerns that my colleagues and I have raised in second reading. We are going into Committee of the Whole shortly on this, so I look forward to those concerns being addressed.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lukaszuk: Just a quick question for the Member for Edmonton-Centre on the topic which you were talking about, perhaps not to the bill itself. I heard you again mention our sheriffs and peace officers. It's a bit of a theme, if you notice, that has been going on through the day today, in question period and then following after. I hear this ongoing undermining of our sheriffs and peace officers. That really concerns me because as we're trying to crack down on crime – I know that your colleague to your left is a big advocate of cracking down on crime – and we're having more and more sheriffs on the road, I hear this undermining of peace officers and people wearing guns and not wearing guns: who is a real police officer?

I'm concerned about the message that we're sending out from this Chamber when we're undermining peace officers, particularly those who are appointed under the Peace Officer Act. Can you explain to me where this rationale is coming from and why we are all of a sudden from that side of the aisle undermining peace officers and sending this message out there that there are law enforcers out there but that they're not really law enforcers? You don't have to take them seriously because they're not real police officers. It seems to me rather counterintuitive to what your colleague to your left would be advocating for and what I would be advocating for. How do we expect Albertans to adhere to laws and to respect our law enforcement officers when we have members in this Legislature undermining them and saying: well, they're not real cops; maybe we don't have to take them seriously?

Ms Blakeman: Well, that's an interesting flight of imagination. I asked questions about funding for Terra, a centre for pregnant and parenting teens, and about food banks and perishable and nonperishable food, so I'm not sure where his reference is.

Mr. MacDonald: He has a vivid imagination. You've got to give him that.

Ms Blakeman: He has a vivid imagination.

I don't know where he's getting that from. I was asking for the definition of what a peace officer is and where I would find the criteria for sheriffs. I don't think that indicates in any way, shape, or form that they are somehow not legitimate or valuable. I just asked for the criteria. If we're at the point where asking for something is a bad thing to do, then there's a much bigger issue going on in this Assembly than I thought.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other member?

Going back to the debate on Bill 32, any other member who wishes to speak?

Seeing none, I will put the question to the House.

[Motion carried; Bill 31 read a second time]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Cao in the chair]

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

Bill 28 Jury Amendment Act, 2008

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

Mr. Hehr: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It gives me again great pleasure to rise and speak in favour of the Jury Amendment Act, 2008. If we look at the bill in detail, the act amends the Jury Act in section 4(h) to change the conditions under which a person cannot serve on a jury. Presently a person is excluded from serving on a jury if they "have been convicted of a criminal offence for which a sentence of imprisonment exceeding 12 months could have been imposed." The amendment to this is section 4(h), which excludes any person who has been convicted of any criminal offence that has not yet received a pardon and also any person charged with a criminal offence.

If you look at this bill, what it essentially is doing is saying who can serve on our juries. The jury is one of those very important things in our society that we have come to value and respect as the administration of justice, being the arm of the government that is sort of separate and free from the influence – although being part of the government, it's free from the influence of government. It can administer justice and can deal out sentencing on a whole range of things from criminal offences to civil offences to managing things in our family courts. It's a very important part of the government structure. But if we look at the jury, to be judged by a group of one's peers is essentially a very important privilege and a very important feature of our democracy and one that, although this is an amendment, attention should be paid to, and respect should be given to any changes to the way we have the jury system currently set up.

4:50

In looking at this amendment, I believe it strikes a fair balance. It recognizes that some individuals in our society will be at some point in time charged with a crime and may actually have served some time in jail or may not be ready to serve on a jury, and I think it's fair that we make that judgment. Yet at the same time, this act allows an individual who has been charged with a criminal offence the ability to seek a pardon, you know, sort of one of those things that recognizes that he has not only paid his debt to society but is ready to fully partake in society with all its privileges and advantages. One of those things is serving on juries as it truly is not only a feature of, like I said, our administration of justice but also an honour and a duty and a privilege for citizens to serve on and to be part of.

Just sort of continuing on on the administration of justice, it relates more to the question that was just, actually, given to my

friend from Edmonton-Centre from the member opposite from Edmonton-Castle Downs. If we look at the administration of justice, we can see how the Jury Act, especially in the criminal sense, often deals with charges laid by either police officers and, it looks like now, our sheriffs, at least in terms of drinking and driving offences. Some of the sheriffs may be qualified to do that. I'm not sure if all of them will. Some of the sheriffs may also be qualified to investigate drug houses. I'm not sure if all of them will. You know, I think a lot of what was involved in that question was: what is a peace officer, what is a sheriff, and all that stuff. It's not really undermining them.

I'm sure they can do an excellent job of writing tickets on our highways. I have the utmost confidence in them being able to do that. I really, actually, would prefer them doing that, and I think that's an excellent feature. Where it gets to be a slippery slope is how these organizations – the traditional way we have battled crime in the province of Alberta has been through the RCMP and the police forces that are in our various cities. That has to this day served us relatively well as long as our police forces have been, I guess, supported with enough men or women to do the job. Those certain questions. It's not an undermining. I believe organizations like the Calgary police and the Edmonton police and the RCMP have traditionally done very effective jobs of keeping the public safe. All of a sudden we're now involving a third arm into this under the sheriffs. Hey, it may well be to the good. I'm not sure.

Right now it looks like what we're dealing with here in Alberta is a culture that is changing to gangs, guns, and violence. To me right now the way those affect Calgary and Edmonton is much more dramatic to the everyday citizen in those cities and, indeed, the province, on what impacts their lives and their social well-being or to walk in their streets and communities and their ability to take part in everything that's Alberta. Traditionally the police officer has the power to investigate those individuals, the gangs and the guns, whereas the sheriffs, to my mind, at least to this date and at least from what I've seen, do not have that ability.

I believe the questions we have on this side of the House are more to the value for dollar, whether it's worth having 500 sheriffs being hired. I think that even members on the opposite side of the House will agree with this. Their primary role right now is the administration of traffic. Okay? Great. I think that's wonderful. But it looks like we have gangs, guns, and violence creeping into our cities, which, I would humbly submit, is a more insidious problem, a much more dangerous problem, and should be given the lion's share of the resources. When we're balancing these on a scale of what, in fact, our society needs right now, that is where I believe our questions are stemming from.

If our questions sometimes seem like we are trying to undermine the good work that the sheriffs do, in fact they're not. I think we're simply doing our job as the opposition, asking questions on behalf of my constituents, on behalf of constituents from Edmonton-Castle Downs, who are no doubt worried about Edmonton being the second-leading murder capital now in Canada. That's got to be extremely disconcerting to the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs and to us all. We're just looking for the best way to effectively manage this, the best way to effectively try and bring things under control and administer justice, like this bill, the Jury Amendment Act, 2008, appears to do.

Back to the Jury Amendment Act, 2008, and the administration of justice. All these things – the police, the justice system, all of our levels of government – are meant to work not only to keep our citizens safe but also to protect democracy and ensure that it's alive and well.

On that note, I will sit down and answer any question which may be forthcoming – I'm not sure – and we'll go from there. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Does any other hon. member wish to join in the discussion?

Ms Blakeman: You know, I had spoken to this bill in second reading and had raised a couple of questions. To be honest, Mr. Chairman, I have not gone back and read the answers from the minister in *Hansard*, so I need to go and do that before I put anything else on the record. At this point I'm willing to support this in Committee of the Whole because it's me that didn't do the work. I'll see what happens in third.

The Chair: Does any other hon. member wish to join the discussion?

Seeing none, the chair will now put the question to the House on Bill 28.

[The clauses of Bill 28 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 30 Alberta Evidence Amendment Act, 2008

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

5:00

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I listened with interest when the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose introduced this bill. I followed it on the Order Paper, and here we are in committee. It looks like, from the research that has been provided to me, this is a matter that has been looked at in other jurisdictions. There have been similar laws passed in Ontario, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. A number of American states, both red and blue, have similar legislation, as do all states in the country of Australia. I didn't realize that when I listened to the hon. member introduce this bill. Certainly, I believe it has merit, and it's a step in the right direction.

We're looking at amending the Alberta Evidence Act – I've got a question about that a little later – through the addition of a new section. This addition, or this new section, will introduce the effect of apology on liability. For the purposes of this act, Mr. Chairman, apology means an expression of sympathy or regret, a statement that one is sorry or any other words or actions indicating regret for one's actions.

Now, I was watching with interest earlier this afternoon the hon. leader of the third party in his pursuit of an apology from the Deputy Premier. At no time during that discussion – and I'm going to look forward to that with interest on Monday as that issue of privilege continues in the Assembly – did it occur to me that perhaps hon. members could have considered the legislative proposal put forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose. Maybe it would have

saved certain members a lot of work this weekend going over *Erskine May* and *Beauchesne* and our own standing orders. It'll be interesting to follow that discussion on Monday. An apology every now and then: each and every one of us has to stand up and make them. That's a part of life.

But this is unique. I don't know what work the hon. member has done in the drafting of this amendment. If there are any numbers on how this may reduce actions before the courts, I would appreciate that information.

This bill, as I understand it, also allows for social services and health care providers to operate in a humane manner without incurring legal liability. I didn't realize that some may be operating without that protection. I just didn't realize that, Mr. Chairman. Earlier this afternoon I was looking through the Conflicts of Interest Act and the liabilities that the Ethics Commissioner and individuals in the office have. It would be interesting to compare the legal liabilities of that office and that commissioner and of the social service and health care providers. I think that would be of significant interest to some members of this House. When we look at the details here and the consequences, there are some issues and questions I have at committee.

Now, I was accused of reading the *Edmonton Journal* too much by the minister of health yesterday, I believe, in the Assembly. I don't have the *Hansard* with me, but that was the context of the gentleman's statements. But I'm guilty. I'm looking at an article from the *Edmonton Journal* of Monday, October 20, 2008, hon. members.

Mr. Vandermeer: Throw it out.

Mr. MacDonald: No, I will not throw it out. I think it's a very respectful newspaper. I think they could cover high school sports more frequently, in greater detail. I think that if they did that, they would encourage young Edmontonians to read their paper more often, hon. member, but I don't know if they've got the money to do that these days. However, I think it's a very respectful newspaper, and regardless of what the minister of health thinks, I think it's an enjoyable read at the moment.

However, the newspaperman in this article indicates that in 2006 the B.C. Attorney General's office published a six-page discussion paper on their proposed legislation, and they identified several potential problems. I would like to know, please, hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose, if this has been taken into consideration in the drafting of this amendment and if these potential problems include what we do or how we stop strategic or insincere apologies from occurring. Does the hon. member agree that this bill could make plaintiffs vulnerable to settling for inappropriately low amounts as a result of this legislation?

Also, further on – and this is outside the *Edmonton Journal*. I'm going to fold it up and put it on the coffee table for the hon. minister of health.

This proposed Alberta Evidence Amendment Act, 2008: could the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose tell me if there is a reason that this amendment to the act was made. The reason I ask this question is that the British Columbia legislation is in the form of a stand-alone statute, the Apology Act. If we compare British Columbia to Saskatchewan, the legislation there is in the form of an amendment to the Saskatchewan Evidence Act. So why did we amend the Evidence Act and not have a stand-alone statute like British Columbia?

With those questions at committee, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the time to get on the record with this bill. I would like to formally

thank the Member for Calgary-Montrose for drafting this and for sending it to the Assembly here last week. I think it's a step in the right direction. It certainly has merit, and hopefully it will in the future prevent, at least reduce, the issues around the courts. I think it would be central to the mediation and the healing process that occurs in the courts. I don't know how it will enhance the affordability and speed of the justice system. I'm not so sure that it's going to speed up civil disputes or shorten or avoid litigation. I hope it does. We will see. But it certainly has merit and is worthy of support, and I would like to thank the hon. member for that.

Thank you.

5:10

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

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This bill is already achieving some of its hopeful outcomes. I say that in referring to the fact that it has received a great deal of support from members opposite as well. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre says: they've got it right this time. So this is it. This legislation is meant to bring people together, and that's what it's doing in this very Assembly, so that's very positive. Also, the Member for Calgary-Varsity said that it's a good bill. This is, indeed, very exciting. The Member for Lethbridge-East said that this is a really good bill, so she put in a little extra emphasis, which is very, very exciting. The Member for Calgary-Buffalo had some very engaging discussion on this bill, and it's my belief that the member is supportive of this as well. The member actually provided some real-life examples of situations where apologies are beneficial, like car accidents. So this bill is doing what it's meant to do, and that's to bring human beings together face to face.

Now, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar talked about numbers. There has been some research in various jurisdictions that have in fact referred to some numbers. One, for example, is just a survey done by the American College of Physician Executives that showed that 80 per cent of doctors believe health care organizations should apologize. A patient survey demonstrated that 57 per cent would set aside a lawsuit for an apology. That is, indeed, very encouraging. It again reinforces the fact that human-to-human interaction is what society really needs and wants and to some degree lacks.

A 2008 report in the *New England Journal of Medicine* showed that the greatest desire of family members after a loved one experienced a medical error is for someone to communicate openly with them. Again, this legislation is meant to allow that open, honest, and transparent dialogue between parties without there being legal liability.

The Veterans Affairs Medical Center in the United States went from having the highest number of claims amongst veterans' hospitals to one of the lowest after it instituted a policy to be honest about errors and to offer a swift apology and settlement. Again, another piece of support for this legislation.

At the University of Illinois the number of malpractice filings dropped by half in the first two years of its program to acknowledge and apologize for preventable errors. Once again, that's another example of how in medical cases, malpractice cases specifically, this sort of a policy has been very successful. I must give credit to Susan Martinuk, who wrote this very article that I'm citing.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar also talked about a couple of possible concerns that were expressed in a 2006 report by the B.C. Attorney General, one of them being: how do we stop insincere apologies? Well, to be quite honest, Mr. Chairman,

stopping insincere apologies amounts to creating a utopian society, where we stop everything insincere, where we stop insincere questions in question period, where we stop an insincere "I love you," for that matter.

In addition, the member brought up another concern from that report that said that people could settle for lower amounts. Well, Mr. Chairman, there have actually been some reports that say that – you know what? – an apology is really worth a lot to people, so if someone offers a frank and honest apology, they'd be willing to accept a lower amount. That's something that has been reported in several cases.

Why not have this be a stand-alone act? Well, it's just that, you know, instead of having little bits and pieces of legislation all over the place, I think it makes sense to have this encompassed in the Alberta Evidence Act because the Evidence Act is where people go to see the rules of evidence, essentially. To have this included in that very act makes a lot of sense because this excludes apologies from being used in civil cases as evidence. I hope that provides a little bit of clarification to the hon. member.

In addition, Mr. Chairman, as we said, this law should remove barriers and add options for creating fair and reasonable resolutions. It supports opportunities for people to really have early resolution by having frank and honest discussion and being able to offer apologies. This is part of, I guess, a family of initiatives by Alberta Justice that really encourage alternative means for solving legal disputes, and there are other such examples. I mean, the family and civil mediation programs and the restorative justice initiatives are all initiatives designed to encourage people to resolve their disputes by talking to each other. These alternatives allow people to communicate and, hopefully, resolve their legal issues as well as the underlying emotions and concerns that have put them in conflict.

For example, restorative justice focuses parties on the victim's injuries and the offender's responsibility to repair the harm done. Using restorative justice, an offender learns from the victim about the harm that has been caused and helps the victim find ways to repair that harm. Through sentencing or healing circles and victim-offender conferences victims can experience some healing, and offenders have a chance to make things right. Like Bill 30, restorative justice processes put a human face on the dispute and allow for a more full and appropriate resolution. The Alberta Evidence Amendment Act, 2008, will make it easier for parties to resolve civil disputes by removing the legal implications of making an apology.

Mr. Chairman, when we speak about restorative justice, I've had the good fortune of being involved with a great deal of young people that have gone through various restorative justice programs. I'm a big supporter of the Youth Justice Society in Calgary. Restorative justice really allows young people an ability to sit down and see the consequences of their very actions, to see the harm that they've caused. It can actually be very life changing for offenders. It can help them see that the harm that they've caused indeed has a very human aspect. I think that if our justice system can really help people feel remorse, that's the best way we can ensure that a one-time act doesn't turn into a life of criminal activity.

I'm very pleased that this legislation sort of is another mechanism for creating a more human legal system. With that, Mr. Chairman, I urge all members to support it.

I'd like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

5:20

The Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that the committee rise and report Bill 28 and report progress on Bill 30.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to call on the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following: Bill 28. The committee also reports progress on the following bill: Bill 30. I wish to table copies of all amendments

considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official record of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, October 27.

[Motion carried; at 5:22 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

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

Activity to October 23, 2008

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Royal Assent -- (Jun. 3 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force June 3, 2008; SA 2008 c7]

2 Travel Alberta Act (Ady)

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

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

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

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

Royal Assent -- (Jun. 3 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2008 cT-6.5]

3 Fiscal Responsibility Amendment Act, 2008 (Snelgrove)

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

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

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

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

Royal Assent -- (Jun. 3 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force June 3, 2008; SA 2008 c5]

4 Alberta Enterprise Corporation Act (Horner)

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

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

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

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

Royal Assent -- (Jun. 3 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2008 cA-17.5]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 7 Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2008 (Bhullar)**
First Reading -- 348 (Apr. 30 aft.)
Second Reading -- 958 (May 26 eve.), 1037-40 (May 28 aft.), 1121-22 (Jun. 2 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 1128-34 (Jun. 2 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 1445-49 (Oct. 21 aft.), 1451 (Oct. 21 eve., passed)
- 8 Climate Change and Emissions Management Amendment Act, 2008 (Renner)**
First Reading -- 348 (Apr. 30 aft.)
Second Reading -- 958 (May 26 eve.), 1051-54 (May 28 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 1134-39 (Jun. 2 eve.), 1344-47 (Oct. 15 eve.), 1372-75 (Oct. 16 aft.), 1412-17 (Oct. 20 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 1451-53 (Oct. 21 eve., passed)
- 9 Land Agents Licensing Amendment Act, 2008 (Mitzel)**
First Reading -- 479 (May 6 aft.)
Second Reading -- 967 (May 26 eve.), 995-96 (May 27 eve.), 1042-44 (May 28 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 1336-38, 1339-41 (Oct. 15 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 1496-99 (Oct. 22 eve., adjourned)
- 10 Security Services and Investigators Act (Anderson)**
First Reading -- 586-87 (May 8 aft.)
Second Reading -- 889-90 (May 21 eve., referred to Standing Committee on Public Safety and Services), (Oct. 22 aft., reported to Assembly)
- 11* Insurance Amendment Act, 2008 (Evans)**
First Reading -- 348 (Apr. 30 aft.)
Second Reading -- 990-91 (May 27 aft.), 1296-1302 (Oct. 14 aft.), 1325-29 (Oct. 15 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 1341 (Oct. 15 eve.), 1362-70 (Oct. 16 aft., passed with amendments)
Third Reading -- 1499-1502 (Oct. 22 eve., passed)
- 12 Teachers' Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2008 (Evans)**
First Reading -- 348 (Apr. 30 aft.)
Second Reading -- 834 (May 20 eve.), 886-87 (May 21 eve.), 909-11 (May 22 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 958-59 (May 26 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 986-87 (May 27 aft., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Jun. 3 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force September 1, 2007, with exception; SA 2008 c6]
- 13 Financial Institutions Statutes Amendment Act, 2008 (Fawcett)**
First Reading -- 533 (May 7 aft.)
Second Reading -- 834 (May 20 eve.), 887 (May 21 eve.), 911-12 (May 22 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 959 (May 26 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 987 (May 27 aft., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Jun. 3 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force June 3, 2008; SA 2008 c4]
- 14 Court of Queen's Bench Amendment Act, 2008 (Redford)**
First Reading -- 770 (May 15 aft.)
Second Reading -- 992 (May 27 aft.), 1048-49 (May 28 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 1341-43 (Oct. 15 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 1454 (Oct. 21 eve., passed)
- 15 Family Law Amendment Act, 2008 (Redford)**
First Reading -- 770 (May 15 aft.)
Second Reading -- 992 (May 27 aft.), 1049-50 (May 28 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 1343-44 (Oct. 15 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 1455-56 (Oct. 21 eve., passed)
- 16 Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2008 (Danyluk)**
First Reading -- 904 (May 22 aft.)
Second Reading -- 992 (May 27 aft.), 1050-51 (May 28 eve.), 1077-78 (May 29 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 1329-33 (Oct. 15 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 1456-57 (Oct. 21 eve., passed)

- 17 Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2008 (\$) (Evans)**
First Reading -- 904 (May 22 aft.)
Second Reading -- 958 (May 26 eve.), 993-95 (May 27 eve.), 1044-47 (May 28 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 1079-81 (May 29 aft.), 1122-28, 1139 (Jun. 2 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 1204-07 (Jun. 3 eve., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Jun. 9 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2008 c8]
- 18 Film and Video Classification Act (Blackett)**
First Reading -- 848 (May 21 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Community Services), (Oct. 22 aft., reported to Assembly)
- 19 First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Amendment Act, 2008 (Blackett)**
First Reading -- 848 (May 21 aft.)
Second Reading -- 967-68 (May 26 eve.), 1075-77 (May 29 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 1302-08 (Oct. 14 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 1465-66 (Oct. 21 eve., passed)
- 20 Agriculture Statutes Repeal Act, 2008 (Griffiths)**
First Reading -- 848 (May 21 aft.)
Second Reading -- 968 (May 26 eve.), 996-97 (May 27 eve.), 1047 (May 28 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 1308-09 (Oct. 14 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 1502-03 (Oct. 22 eve., passed)
- 21 Heating Oil and Propane Rebate Act (Griffiths)**
First Reading -- 848 (May 21 aft.)
Second Reading -- 968 (May 26 eve.), 1047-48 (May 28 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 1333-36 (Oct. 15 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 1453-54 (Oct. 21 eve., passed)
- 22 Appropriation Act, 2008 (\$) (Snelgrove)**
First Reading -- 932 (May 26 aft.)
Second Reading -- 981-86 (May 27 aft.), 997-1004 (May 27 eve., passed on division)
Committee of the Whole -- 1030-37 (May 28 aft.), 1041-42 (May 28 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 1067-75 (May 29 aft., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Jun. 3 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force June 3, 2008; SA 2008 c3]
- 23 Weed Control Act (Mitzel)**
First Reading -- 1095 (Jun. 2 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Resources and Environment), (Oct. 22 aft., reported to Assembly)
- 24 Adult Guardianship and Trusteeship Act (Jablonski)**
First Reading -- 1095 (Jun. 2 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Health), (Oct. 22 aft., reported to Assembly)
- 25 Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2008 (Redford)**
First Reading -- 1095 (Jun. 2 aft.)
Second Reading -- 1295-96 (Oct. 14 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 1329 (Oct. 15 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- (Oct. 21 eve., passed)
- 26 Labour Relations Amendment Act, 2008 (Goudreau)**
First Reading -- 1096 (Jun. 2 aft.)
Second Reading -- 1154-70 (Jun. 3 aft.), 1171-1204 (Jun. 3 eve., passed on division)
Committee of the Whole -- 1207-08 (Jun. 3 eve.), 1224-35, 1237-66 (Jun. 4 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 1268-81 (Jun. 4 eve., passed on division)
Royal Assent -- (Jun. 9 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2008 c9]
- 27 Funeral Services Amendment Act, 2008 (Johnson)**
First Reading -- 1323 (Oct. 15 aft.)
Second Reading -- 1371 (Oct. 16 aft.), 1417 (Oct. 20 eve., adjourned)
- 28 Jury Amendment Act, 2008 (Redford)**
First Reading -- 1323 (Oct. 15 aft.)
Second Reading -- 1371 (Oct. 16 aft.), 1417-18 (Oct. 20 eve.), 1438-39 (Oct. 21 aft.), 1485-87 (Oct. 22 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 1529-30 (Oct. 23 aft., passed)

- 29 Alberta Capital Finance Authority Amendment Act, 2008 (S) (Evans)**
First Reading -- 1323-24 (Oct. 15 aft.)
Second Reading -- 1371 (Oct. 16 aft.), 1433-38 (Oct. 21 aft.), 1487-92 (Oct. 22 aft., passed)
- 30 Alberta Evidence Amendment Act, 2008 (Bhullar)**
First Reading -- 1324 (Oct. 15 aft.)
Second Reading -- 1371-72 (Oct. 16 aft.), 1418-19 (Oct. 20 eve.), 1439-42 (Oct. 21 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 1530-31 (Oct. 23 aft., adjourned)
- 31 Financial Administration Amendment Act, 2008 (Snelgrove)**
First Reading -- 1324 (Oct. 15 aft.)
Second Reading -- 1370 (Oct. 16 aft.), 1442-45 (Oct. 21 aft.), 1526-27 (Oct. 23 aft., passed)
- 32 Meat Inspection Amendment Act, 2008 (Griffiths)**
First Reading -- 1361 (Oct. 16 aft.)
Second Reading -- 1419 (Oct. 20 eve.), 1457-59 (Oct. 21 eve.), 1481-85 (Oct. 22 aft.), 1527-29 (Oct. 23 aft., passed)
- 33 Agriculture Financial Services Amendment Act, 2008 (S) (Groeneveld)**
First Reading -- 1361 (Oct. 16 aft.)
Second Reading -- 1419-20 (Oct. 20 eve.), 1459-62 (Oct. 21 eve, adjourned)
- 34 Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2008 (Brown)**
First Reading -- 1361 (Oct. 16 aft.)
Second Reading -- 1420 (Oct. 20 eve.), 1463-65 (Oct. 21 eve., adjourned)
- 35 Government Organization Amendment Act, 2008 (Hayden)**
First Reading -- 1324 (Oct. 15 aft.)
Second Reading -- 1370 (Oct. 16 aft.), 1462-63 (Oct. 21 eve.), 1492-94 (Oct. 22 aft.), 1495-96 (Oct. 22 eve.), 1503-04 (Oct. 22 eve.), 1523-26 (Oct. 23 aft., passed)
- 36 Land Titles Amendment Act, 2008 (Brown)**
First Reading -- 1361 (Oct. 16 aft.)
Second Reading -- 1420 (Oct. 20 eve., adjourned)
- 38 Securities Amendment Act, 2008 (Fawcett)**
First Reading -- 1388 (Oct. 20 aft.)
Second Reading -- 1479-80 (Oct. 22 aft., adjourned)
- 39 Court Statutes Amendment Act, 2008 (Denis)**
First Reading -- 1389 (Oct. 20 aft.)
Second Reading -- 1480-81 (Oct. 22 aft., adjourned)
- 201 Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act (Mitzel)**
First Reading -- 59 (Apr. 17 aft.)
Second Reading -- 89-102 (Apr. 21 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 430-43 (May 5 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 625-31 (May 12 aft., passed)
Royal Assent -- (May 15 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force May 15, 2008; SA 2008 cH-15.5]
- 202 Alberta Volunteer Service Medal Act (Cao)**
First Reading -- 59 (Apr. 17 aft.)
Second Reading -- 102-07 (Apr. 21 aft.), 258-64 (Apr. 28 aft., six-month hoist amendment agreed to)
- 203 Election Statutes (Fixed Election Dates) Amendment Act, 2008 (Allred)**
First Reading -- 224 (Apr. 24 aft.)
Second Reading -- 265-74 (Apr. 28 aft.), 443-44 (May 5 aft.), 631-34 (May 12 aft., six-month hoist amendment agreed to on division)
- 204 Traffic Safety (Hand-Held Communication Devices) Amendment Act, 2008 (Johnston)**
First Reading -- 224 (Apr. 24 aft.)
Second Reading -- 937-49 (May 26 aft., referred to Standing Committee on the Economy), (Oct. 22 aft., not proceeded with)

- 205 Traffic Safety (Used Vehicle Inspection) Amendment Act, 2008 (Bhardwaj)**
First Reading -- 401 (May 1 aft.)
Second Reading -- 1100-12 (Jun. 2 aft., passed)
- 206 Alberta Personal Income Tax (Physical Activity Credit) Amendment Act, 2008 (Rodney)**
First Reading -- 587 (May 8 aft.)
Second Reading -- 1112-13 (Jun. 2 aft.), 1396-1406 (Oct. 20 aft., passed)
- 207 Young Albertans' Advisory Council Act (Fawcett)**
First Reading -- 1295 (Oct. 14 aft.)
- 208 Alberta Affordable Mortgage Protection Act (Weadick)**
First Reading -- 1479 (Oct. 22 aft.)
- 209 Traffic Safety (Driver Disqualification and Seizure of Vehicles Arising From Drug Offences) Amendment Act, 2008 (Quest)**
First Reading -- 1479 (Oct. 22 aft.)
- Pr1* Young Men's Christian Association of Edmonton Statutes Amendment Act, 2008 (Lukaszuk)**
First Reading -- 719 (May 14 aft.)
Second Reading -- 1078 (May 29 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 1122 (Jun. 2 eve., passed with amendments)
Third Reading -- 1266-68 (Jun. 4 eve., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Jun. 9 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force June 9, 2008]

Table of Contents

Thursday afternoon, October 23, 2008

Introduction of Guests	1505
Members' Statements	
Waste Reduction Initiatives	1505
Agricultural and Food Industry Exports	1506
A Prayer for Children	1506
United Nations Day	1506
Alberta Aviation Museum	1507
Protection of Children in Care	1507
Statement by the Speaker	
One-day Passage of Bills in Alberta Legislature	1507
Oral Question Period	
Government Spending Controls	1507
Fiscal Accountability	1508
Police Officer Funding	1508
Protection of Children in Care	1509, 1512, 1515
Southeast Calgary Ring Road	1509
Funding for Human Services Agencies	1510
South Calgary Health Campus	1510
Health Care Funding	1511
First Nations Economic Development	1511
Confidentiality of Child and Youth Advocate Reports	1512
Insulin Pump Therapy	1513
Class Sizes	1513
Aids to Daily Living Program	1514
Police and Peace Officer Training Centre	1514
Construction and Demolition Waste Disposal	1515
Food Banks	1515
Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees	1516
Presenting Petitions	1516
Notices of Motions	1516
Tabling Returns and Reports	1516
Projected Government Business	1516
Government Motions	
Ethics Commissioner Appointment	1517
Government Bills and Orders	
Second Reading	
Bill 35 Government Organization Act, 2008	1523
Bill 31 Financial Administration Act, 2008	1526
Bill 32 Meat Inspection Amendment Act, 2008	1527
Committee of the Whole	
Bill 28 Jury Amendment Act, 2008	1529
Bill 30 Alberta Evidence Act, 2008	1530

COMMITTEES OF THE ALBERTA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Elniski

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DeLong	Johnston	Notley	

Standing Committee on Community Services

Chair: Mr. Rodney

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Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Dr. Brown

Deputy Chair: Ms Woo-Paw

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Amery	Dallas	MacDonald	Sarich
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Boutilier	Forsyth	Quest	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Hancock

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Berger	Forsyth	Notley	Stevens
Bhardwaj	Johnson	Oberle	Taylor
Calahasen	Leskiw	Pastoor	Zwozdesky
DeLong	Liepert	Rogers	

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Chair: Mr. MacDonald

Deputy Chair: Mr. Griffiths

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Bhardwaj	Drysdale	Kang	Vandermeer
Chase	Fawcett	Mason	Woo-Paw
Dallas	Jacobs	Quest	

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Chair: Mr. VanderBurg

Deputy Chair: Mr. Kang

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Brown	Jacobs	Notley	Woo-Paw
Calahasen			

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Deputy Chair: Dr. Swann

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