



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, October 29, 2008

Issue 41a

The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta

## The 27th Legislature

First Session

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

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[Errata, if any, appear inside back cover]

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 29, 2008

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Welcome.

Let us pray. Author of all wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, we ask for guidance in order that truth and justice may prevail in all of our judgments. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**Mrs. Ady:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly the ambassador of the Republic of Cuba, Her Excellency Teresita Vicente, as well as the minister-counsellor of the Republic of Cuba, Mr. Antonio Rodriguez. Her Excellency has just recently assumed her role as the ambassador of the Republic of Cuba. We look forward to working with Her Excellency's office in Ottawa and building our province's relationship with Cuba. I would ask our honoured guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Aboriginal Relations.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to rise and introduce special guests from my constituency, especially when they are bright young students who come from Blessed Kateri school. They are here today with their teachers Ray Brooks and Darlene Payne, student teacher Candace Ney, and parent Mrs. Aubin. I would ask all of them to now rise and receive the very warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions this afternoon. First, I'm very happy to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 16 students from Clear Water Academy in my constituency of Calgary-Elbow. They are accompanied by teachers Janley Grant and Paul D'Angelo, who were kind enough to escort another group up here last week. I'd ask everyone to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly in honour of their trip to the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, it is also a great pleasure of mine today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 13 dedicated members of Alberta Justice who are joining us from the Public Trustee office. These staff members are joining us today as part of a public service orientation tour. They are also seated in the members' gallery. I would request all members to join me in extending the warm welcome of the Assembly to them.

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to rise and tell you that on Friday, October 24, Dr. Zaheer Lakhani was honoured by the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies for his contribution to our community. Dr. Lakhani is a distinguished Edmonton-based cardiologist and clinical professor of medicine who has not only demonstrated a deep commitment to his

profession but a profound commitment to our community in many, many capacities, including heading up the local Ishmaelite Muslim community, being on our police commission, contributing in so many ways to the community. He has now been very rightly recognized by the Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies for his service to the country, particularly in the area of racism, and as chair of the Cross-Cultural Roundtable on Security from 2005 to 2008. I could read his extensive resumé, but I won't. I will be tabling documents later on in the House.

His wife, Salma, in her own right has contributed significantly to the community as chair of the parent council at Old Scona school, as a staunch and active member of the Ishmaelite community, working with the Lois Hole hospital foundation and the Alberta Cancer Foundation, and fundraising. I'd ask Dr. Lakhani and Salma Lakhani to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome and thanks and gratitude of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Mittel:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two individuals who are visiting the Legislature today. Michael Reeves is the president of Ports-to-Plains and is joining us from Lubbock, Texas, while Scott Flukinger is the policy adviser for Ports-to-Plains and is from Washington, DC.

They both arrived on Monday evening and have been honoured to meet with our Premier, the Deputy Premier and Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations, the Minister of Transportation, and the President of the Treasury Board. They've been here to discuss trade, agriculture, energy, our potential new trade corridor along the east side of Alberta, and, of course, another 24-hour port of entry at Wild Horse. Ports-to-Plains is the only U.S. government trade corridor between the greatest energy sectors in North America, Texas and Alberta.

They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them both 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 pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. Art Valdez of the Republic of the Philippines. Mr. Valdez is a former deputy minister of the Department of Transportation and Communications and former president of the Mountaineering Federation of the Philippines. The year 2004 marked Mr. Valdez's full-time commitment to lead the very first Philippine Mount Everest expedition. On May 17, 2006, the historical Philippine flag was first planted at the peak of Mount Everest by two Filipino men. Consider that the Philippines has no snow. A year after, again under his leadership, three Filipino women reached the summit of the world's tallest peak. Over the last hour I was joined by our very own Canadian Mount Everest double summitter, our MLA from Calgary-Lougheed, to exchange greetings and a quick lunch with the Premier. I'd like to ask Mr. Art Valdez, seated in the members' gallery, former minister and expedition leader, to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

My second introduction, Mr. Speaker, is four beautiful people who live in Edmonton and one from Richmond, Vancouver, who are seated in the members' gallery. They are Pete Jimenez from Richmond, Vancouver; Mandy Servito, president of the Pangasinan association of Alberta; Rene Abada, constituency manager of

Edmonton-Mill Woods; and Mrs. Girlie Abada, a registered nurse at the University of Alberta. I would like them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Well, on that note, hon. members, I'm going to ask the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed to rise so that all members in the galleries will know that there is an Albertan who also scaled Mount Everest.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you Sergeant Tom Farquhar and Constable Alfred Ma of the Edmonton Police Service. I have worked very closely with these two gentlemen on some exciting initiatives for our community. I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to this Assembly a group of representatives of 12 major organizations in the community of Lethbridge. They call themselves Team Lethbridge, and they're here to promote our community and look at opportunities to partner with the government as we move forward. They're in the members' gallery. I would ask them all to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

### Members' Statements

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

#### 150th Anniversary of the Torrens System

**Mr. Allred:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The year 2008 marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of the Torrens system of land registration. The Torrens system is a hallmark of our stable and efficient land recordation and conveyancing system. This system, designed by Sir Robert Torrens in South Australia in 1858, has been adopted by many Canadian provinces as well as many jurisdictions around the world, primarily, but not exclusively, in the British Commonwealth.

**1:40**

This system has five basic features as compared to other systems. These are reliability, simplicity, cheapness in the form of economy of transactions, speed, and suitability. It is based on three fundamental principles: the curtain principle, the mirror principle, and the assurance principle. Basically, the first two principles mean that you can rely on the certificate of title issued by the registrar as the true and accurate ownership of a parcel of land and that you do not have to search behind the register for other interests in the land. The assurance principle means that the Crown guarantees the accuracy of the certificate of title and that if there is an error, a bona fide purchaser will be compensated.

This system has existed in Alberta since 1886, and since then claims against the system have been minimal. This system has in fact been a minor revenue generator for the province. Our system in Alberta has gone through several iterations, from the original book system, where all original titles were bound in large bound books, to a loose title system, where all current titles were filed in separate filing folders, and now to our present system, which is totally computerized.

We sometimes take systems like our land registration system for

granted since it operates so efficiently in the background, but we must concede that our very economy relies heavily on a stable and reliable system of land ownership, conveyancing, and recordation.

My understanding is that probably at this very moment in Adelaide, South Australia, there is a celebration marking the 150th anniversary.

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

#### Enthronement of Ukrainian Orthodox Bishop

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 26 the hon. Minister of Aboriginal Relations and I had the pleasure of attending the enthronement of a new bishop for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada at St. John's Cathedral in Edmonton and bringing greetings on behalf of the Premier and the Alberta government. Bishop Ilarion has taken the position as an overseer of the Ukrainian Orthodox faithful for the province of Alberta and British Columbia.

Approximately 500 delegates from around Alberta congregated in Edmonton to witness the enthronement. His Eminence Metropolitan John from Winnipeg, His Grace Archbishop Yuri from Toronto, Bishop Andrew from Saskatoon, and over 26 priests were on hand for the celebration. His Grace Bishop David from the Ukrainian Catholic Church was also in attendance at the ceremony and brought greetings on behalf of the Alberta Ukrainian Catholic community.

The ceremony was held at St. John's Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral, a church to which both the hon. Minister of Aboriginal Relations and I have long roots and strong personal ties. As chair of the Advisory Council on Alberta-Ukraine Relations and as a Canadian of Ukrainian ancestry, I was very honoured to take part in this ceremony and to personally welcome the new bishop to our wonderful province.

With approximately 300,000 Albertans of Ukrainian descent our province has strong ethnic, cultural, educational, and religious ties to Ukraine. Having a new bishop here from Ukraine will certainly help strengthen those ties. I look forward to the great work that Bishop Ilarion will do for the church and our province.

Thank you, sir.

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

#### Canada's Sports Hall of Fame

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to share some fabulous news. Canada's Sports Hall of Fame will now call the city of Calgary home. Since 1955 the mission of Canada's Sports Hall of Fame has been to inspire national pride by sharing compelling stories of outstanding achievements by Canada's sport heroes. These accounts and many more will now proudly live on at the hall of fame's new location at Canada Olympic Park.

Mr. Speaker, Calgary is the ideal location for Canada's Sports Hall of Fame. COP was the site for Canada's first Winter Olympic Games, of course, in 1988, and the Olympic and Paralympic halls of fame are already located there. The Canada Sports Hall of Fame will fit perfectly with the Calgary Olympic Development Association's centre of excellence, which is supported by our government's \$100 million commitment to renewing and building world-class sport and training facilities.

It's also the ideal location for the national hall of fame because Albertans are national and international leaders in all sports, both as participants and as avid supporters. Moreover, Albertans' and Calgarians' passion and commitment to sport and our strong sense of community and entrepreneurial spirit played a huge role in the choice to move the hall of fame to Calgary. There were no less than

58 letters from corporations and CEOs endorsing Calgary as the best choice for the Hall.

Not only will this facility add to Albertans' quality of life and provide inspiration for young athletes, it will also become a premier tourist and sports attraction. I'd like to thank our Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation for her efforts in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating the Calgary bid team in acquiring one of Canada's national sports treasures. This is truly a great honour, and it's a proud day for all Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Women in Politics

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tomorrow night the Sheldon Chumir foundation and the Famous 5 Foundation will host Here Are the Women, a forum to discuss and debate the vital role that Alberta's women play in our province's political life. Women in politics have a long history in Alberta. The Famous Five had a pioneering role in ensuring that the right of women to run for any elected office was duly recognized. Nellie McClung herself served as a Liberal MLA in the Legislature in the 1920s. Dozens of women have served as MLAs in this Legislature, and I feel privileged to serve with the ones in the House today, particularly the members for Edmonton-Centre and Lethbridge-East.

Unfortunately, however proud we are of our female MLAs, the number of women elected to Legislatures across the country still falls well short of the 50 per cent mark. Perhaps tomorrow night's forum will help inspire more women to come forward as candidates. Certainly, we should be doing everything we can to encourage women to play a larger role in government. Their wisdom and perspective are vital.

That's why I would like to congratulate the members for Edmonton-Strathcona and Calgary-Elbow along with federal Liberal Jennifer Pollock for taking time out of their busy schedules to head down to McDougall Centre to participate in tomorrow night's event. I know the participation of these women will encourage more women to step up and take their rightful place as active participants in our democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I can only speculate, but it seems to me self-evident that when this Legislature contains an equal number of men and women as MLAs, the great people of Alberta will be even better served, period. I think we can agree that this is a goal worth fighting for, and I'm grateful to Alberta women who have over the years brought that dream closer to reality. One day we'll get there, and our democracy and our province will be stronger for it.

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

### Alberta-Philippines Memorandum of Understanding

**Mr. Benito:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Hon. members, as you may know, in Manila on October 1 Alberta and the Philippines signed a memorandum of understanding that will help ease labour shortages and improve the flow of Filipino workers in this province. At the signing ceremony I had the pleasure of joining the Minister of Employment and Immigration; Percy Cummins, executive director of immigration policy and programs; His Excellency Robert Desjardins of the Canadian embassy in Manila; and Mr. Nick Oosterveen, Citizenship and Immigration Canada's program manager in the Philippines. The Philippines was represented by the

hon. Marianito Roque, the Philippines' Secretary of Labour and Employment, and his staff.

The memorandum of understanding lays the groundwork for future co-operation between the two countries. I am pleased that the agreement makes a clear statement about recruitment fees: Filipino workers should not be charged recruitment fees by employment brokers in the Philippines when they come to Alberta.

I look forward to hearing more from the Minister of Employment and Immigration on the agreement and its implementation. I am confident that the agreement will not only meet the needs of Alberta's economy but ensure that workers from the Philippines are treated fairly and are able to benefit from their time in this province.

Thank you very much.

### Oral Question Period

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

### Government Spending

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government lacks any strategy for securing Alberta's long-term prosperity. It is even hiding its own report by Jack Mintz on developing a savings strategy. Of course, that doesn't stop Tory MLAs from tossing out public funds like confetti if it gives them a photo-op. The big-cheque Tories are an embarrassment to sensible spending. My question is to the Premier: why is the government spending \$600,000 on a high-speed chairlift at Snow Valley, a hill that is 131 feet from top to bottom, when it can't even afford to staff new hospitals?

1:50

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, the five priorities that we rolled out as government do include quality of life. We do have a number of ministries that are responsible in various programs in their ministries to improve the quality of life for all Albertans. We'll continue to find a balance between expenditures in health, expenditures in education but also culture, arts in this province. That is becoming more important, I think, as we draw more people to this province.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thank you, Mr. Premier. Why is this government spending \$300,000 to expand a golf course clubhouse in St. Paul? Are golfers so impoverished that they can't afford to pay their own way?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I am sure that those members on the other side voted in the budget, line budgets, for various lottery-funded projects in the province. One of the facts that I have to get across is that these funds go to organizations like, perhaps, the Kinsmen or the Lions Club, which may operate a golf course somewhere in Alberta. Those are the rules. They can apply to the fund. They either got the money through the community enhancement fund or through the community initiatives project. However, if the opposition says, "No, we should cancel those two lottery-funded programs," this is the time to tell us. And you know what? We may even listen to them in the next budget.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thank you. The picture is not the way the Premier is painting it, Mr. Speaker. Why does this Premier think it's acceptable to give the semiprivate Leduc Golf & Country Club, which charges – get this – \$2,700 a year in membership fees, \$200,000 in public funds?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, with the programs that I talked about in terms of community enhancement funds and the community initiatives fund, or CIP, I believe, money also went through those same programs to the Citadel Theatre in Edmonton and I am sure to other arts and culture facilities in Calgary as well. Do we say “no” here and “yes” here, or do we try and find a balance – try and find a balance – so that all communities have equal and equitable access to the lottery programs that we have in the province?

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

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. This bloated government spends money for political grandstanding to the point where cabinet ministers sign their own names on cheques drawn on the public account. The needs of hospitals, the children’s advocate, or the hungry take second place to the political grandstanding of the big-cheque Tories. To the Premier. It appears this Tory government has a soft spot for golfing. Why has this government spent \$10 million in the past five years to support golf courses in Alberta while food banks are feeding the hungry in record numbers?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, government supports food banks. In fact, we have one of the most comprehensive programs to take care of those that are vulnerable in this province. Quite frankly, I’d put the amount of dollars invested in various programs for the needy and compare it to any other province on a per capita basis, volume, however you want to measure it. We do take care of those vulnerable in the province of Alberta.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: when is this government really going to focus on the needs of Albertans – of children in care, of seniors who are facing their pension funds drying up – or even just save for the future and stop channelling – stop channelling – \$50 million a year to prop up horse racing?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I think now is the appropriate time because this leader has evaded this for over a year. When we’re going to talk about spending, using taxpayer dollars – taxpayer dollars; not lottery-funded dollars, taxpayer dollars – to pay for radio ads, and still till today he won’t get up in this House and tell us how much he spent on those radio ads. Now is the chance.

**Ms Blakeman:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order.

**Dr. Taft:** Again to the Premier. To all the world this province’s lottery funds look like a giant slush fund for Tories. So here’s my challenge to you, Mr. Premier. Will you do the politically courageous and financially responsible thing and return control of lottery funds to nonpartisan community lottery boards?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, we went through this debate some time ago in this very House. We debated it, we made a decision, and I stick by that decision. No matter what decisions you make in terms of disposition of lottery funds, there will be some that appreciate the support they get; others demand more than what they’ve received. But those budgets are set. There are X amount of dollars in those budgets for distribution across the province.

However, still another chance because I see there’s a point of order coming up. I want to know: how much? They’re going to say: “Oh, but it has been approved. Somewhere it has been approved.” But you know what? In the House, right now. Come on. Tell us.

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

### Health System Restructuring

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The mission statement for the new Alberta Health Services Board is to provide a patient-focused health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans. The Canada Health Act is based on a set of five principles. My first question is to the Premier. Why are four principles of the Canada Health Act – comprehensiveness, universality, portability, and public administration – ignored by the board that this government created to run health in this province?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, you know, we can debate about these principles back and forth for the next 10 years. Our main goal here as a government is to make sure that this publicly funded health system is sustainable for the next generation. The way this opposition is going, we’re going to lose it over the next year not only in this province but right across this country.

We’re going to take a leadership role to make sure that the next generation has equal to or better health services and access and quality than we have today. Rather than yap about something that is totally irrelevant, now is the time to work together and find a solution.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government wants to privatize health care, not protect it. Again to the Premier: why is this government willing to relax some of the rules prohibiting the sale of private insurance for publicly insured health services?

**Mr. Stelmach:** You know, I don’t know what this member is again referring to, but the sky is going to fall over the next few weeks given the kind of questions that seem to be coming from the opposition. With respect to policy a statement made by this government and by me personally is that we are committed to a publicly funded system. I do not want to go back to those situations, some of the other countries, that we’re having to look and compare to see why we’re spending more in Canada than other jurisdictions, yet we can’t equal the quality of some of the other countries that provide health care. How can we fix the system so that we can make it sustainable and also improve the quality? This is the big challenge now when all governments across Canada, especially the federal government, are talking about deficits and not going into deficits. How do you come out of this unbelievable economic turmoil and support a very, very important health service delivery in this country?

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier should try to explain his health care policies to the 2,700 adults and children in High Prairie who have experienced first-hand this government’s mismanagement.

My third question to the Premier again: when does the government plan to amend the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act to allow

doctors to opt out of the public health system and charge privately for some services?

**Mr. Stelmach:** I don't know where he's going on some amendments to the health act, but I'll ask the minister to respond to it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

## 2:00 Syringe Reuse at High Prairie Health Complex

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. After the terrible incident at the Vegreville hospital two years ago, where hospital equipment was not being sterilized properly and over 80 people were at risk of cross-contamination, the Premier promised to make sure that this kind of public health nightmare would not recur, and here we are, facing a similar scandal in which 2,700 people in High Prairie are at risk of contracting HIV, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C because this government failed to ensure that they were safe. My question is to the Premier. Will you do the right thing and apologize to the people of High Prairie for placing their lives at risk?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I do empathize with the people that access health services in the community of High Prairie. We responded immediately, as soon as we were apprised of the situation, to ensure that anyone that has received services in that hospital will be contacted so that we can again ensure that no one who received services there contracted any of the infections and diseases that the member has mentioned. We'll continue to monitor and get in contact with everybody to make sure that they're safe.

**Mr. Mason:** Monitoring is not an apology, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday Newfoundland Premier Danny Williams stood up and apologized to nearly 400 breast cancer patients and took full responsibility for his province's mishandling of cancer examinations. In this province 2,700 people in High Prairie who put their trust in the health care system are wondering if they have been infected with a potentially deadly disease. To the Premier: will you follow the example of the Premier of Newfoundland and take responsibility and apologize?

**Mr. Stelmach:** The situation that he's bringing up is completely different. We undertook to do something about it immediately. In that province they took time before they decided what action to take. A big difference.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, it was 15 months ago that this government undertook to keep our health care system safe, so I think the answer of the Premier is far from adequate.

My question is simply this. This is clearly something that is the responsibility of the government, something they promised to fix after Vegreville, 15 months ago. It's happened again, and it could happen more and more times. The question to the Premier is: do you take responsibility, and will you apologize?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, government is responsible for the delivery of health care services and all services in the province of Alberta, but I will say one thing. I learned a lot through that issue we had in the community of Vegreville. There were people on a daily basis providing health care services to our clients, to our patients, that worked very hard for years. Some of the statements made in this House were difficult for them, obviously. I can tell you that it hurt a lot of people, professionals that delivered those

services, whether it be nurses and LPNs. It is not an easy situation to live through.

All I'm saying is: let's work with the health care providers in High Prairie, work through better communication. We'll learn through this situation. The Health Quality Council is investigating and will give us additional information on how to ensure that it doesn't happen again.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

## Highway 61

**Mr. Mitzel:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Highway 61, a primary two-digit highway from Stirling east to Manyberries, was built in 1961 and finished in 1965. It was overlaid with paving starting in '69 and finished in 1972. The highway has lasted 47 years. The present section, not upgraded, has lasted 43 years. Residents in my constituency are extremely concerned about the long time it has taken to upgrade this highway. My question is to the Minister of Transportation. What is the average lifespan of a basic, normal paved highway?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's sure nice to get a good, positive question from someone that cares about their constituents.

It's very difficult to answer that question in a short time because there are a lot of factors that determine the lifespan of a highway.

**Ms Blakeman:** Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

**Mr. Ouellette:** It really depends on when it was built because the technical standards have changed a lot over the years. This hon. member has heard me say many times in this House that the average lifespan of what we design, the actual top, the rideability of that highway, is a 17- to 20-year span, but, Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Speaker:** Okay. We'll get on with it. We'll get to it.

**Mr. Mitzel:** Mr. Speaker, the first 70 kilometres were upgraded and widened to give the highway at least some shoulders and some side slopes. The next 16 kilometres are ready to go and were promised many years ago. Can I tell my constituents that this next 16 kilometres will be done next year, completing the roadwork from highway 4 to Foremost?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I have some very good news for this hon. member. This particular highway is on our three-year plan. However, we haven't quite determined yet if we're going to possibly be able to get everything done and have it tendered and get the work done in '09, but I'm going to try my darndest to have it done in '09. For sure, we'll get it done in '10.

**Mr. Mitzel:** Mr. Speaker, the remaining hundred kilometres are all ready to go, with most of the right-of-way purchased. Safety is a prime concern, and major agricultural and oil truck traffic has increased perhaps tenfold because of the loss of the rail line. Can we see the remaining five projects of highway 61 to Manyberries done in a timely manner, like over the next five years? Safety is a prime concern, as the hon. minister has mentioned, on Alberta's highways, and here it is extremely compromised.

**Mr. Ouellette:** Well, I have to tell the hon. member that those five projects aren't on our three-year plan right now. As I will say, we revise. Every year we look at the stresses. As you know, Mr.

Speaker, we have a lot of pressures in the northern part of the province also, and we have to rate those jobs to all get onto the three-year plan.

**The Speaker:** I want the minister to know that I don't know. I'm still looking for that elusive pavement.

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

### Grizzly Bear Management

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. This government committed years ago to sustainable resource and environmental management. A 1999 document states, "Species diversity shall be protected and maintained." It also commits to integrated forest management plans. However, we do not see much integration evidence by resource companies operating on the same land base. Given that the main cause of grizzly mortality is intense resource activity in grizzly habitat, why has this government failed to implement an integrated plan to share access roads, minimizing habitat intrusion? Save habitat and duplication dollars.

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, our integrated land management plan has been in place for a number of years. It's working very well. In certain areas, up in the caribou area, it's reduced land use by up to 60 per cent in certain areas.

As far as the grizzly habitat issue goes, we have accepted the recommendations of the Grizzly Bear Recovery Team. The key one there is core habitat and reduction of public motorized access into there. We've mapped the core grizzly habitat area and are dealing now with the motorized access issue.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. When the resources have been extracted, the road should be immediately removed as part of the natural restoration process. Will this minister commit to creating more roadless areas in Alberta in the interest of protection of species habitat and recreational enjoyment of Alberta's natural beauty?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to commit to following the recommendations of the Grizzly Bear Recovery Team, which focuses, as I said before, on identifying core habitat and then restricting motorized access into that area. That is the issue, and we're dealing with it.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. Given the fact that recent studies conclusively show a grizzly population well under 500 and that the grizzly bear could disappear from Alberta forever due to government inaction, why is the minister not fully implementing the grizzly bear recovery plan, as recommended by this government's own recovery team? Why is this minister not taking the grizzly bear out of the in-process category immediately and declaring it as threatened?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, I guess that when you're in opposition, you're always in a hurry for something. We're sticking with the plan, as we've repeated many times here. We're finishing the census that's been under way for the last four years. Once the DNA census

is finished, then we'll take the next step. We are committed to a grizzly bear plan that works for this province, and we're sticking with it.

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

2:10

### Payday Loan Industry

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Like the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, I too care about my constituents. In the spirit thereof, payday lending companies seem to be expanding in our province. There are no specific regulations governing this industry in Alberta, but several other provinces have introduced regulations. To the Minister of Service Alberta: when will we see regulations for payday loan companies in our province?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta does indeed recognize the need for improvements to how the payday loan industry is regulated, and we want to do it right. Recent changes to the Criminal Code of Canada have given the provinces the option of setting a maximum cost to borrowing. Earlier this year we consulted with many consumer groups, representatives of low-income Albertans, payday lending companies, and other groups and individuals. We now want to consult directly with Albertans, particularly those who use the services of payday lenders, and are developing a strategy to do that.

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

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is again to the minister responsible for Service Alberta. Instead of carrying out further consultations, why does her department and why does this government not introduce regulations to reduce the maximum rate of interest below the criminal rate of interest set by the Criminal Code?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issues related to the payday loan industry are not limited to just the maximum interest rate they can charge. There are many different aspects, and we want to take a comprehensive approach. For example, companies can charge additional fees and surcharges on top of their interest rates, so we need to account for that. We're also examining a number of other practices such as fees for extending loans beyond their repayment and lending the borrower a sum of money lower than the principal amount stated in the agreement. There are many issues to deal with, and we want to do what's right.

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

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Finally, to the same minister: how does she plan to consult directly with Albertans, including those in beautiful Calgary-Egmont?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The details in our strategy are being worked out, but it will involve several different approaches and tools designed to gather opinions directly from



Albertans who are customers of payday loan companies. There is a common perception that payday loan customers are generally lower income Albertans, and that's not true. It's increasingly reaching into other areas as well, so we're going to plan a few different strategies to reach people. No other jurisdiction that I'm aware of has taken this kind of approach to reach out to Albertans, and we're confident we're going to get some really good information.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks for the intro. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. According to Statistics Canada young families with little savings who have fallen behind in their bills are those most likely to use payday loans. Other provinces have protections against usury interest rates while Alberta has decided to use the old voluntary, self-regulation practices that have worked so well in the environment and financial sectors. My question is to the Minister of Service Alberta. Why is the minister letting the payday loan industry set the rules when it was their practices that allowed for sky-high charges in the first place?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said earlier, the Criminal Code of Canada now allows us to re-evaluate that and look at that, and most certainly that's one of the areas we're going to be looking at. I'm certainly looking forward to the excellent debate that we're going to have on Monday night with the hon. member's motion.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much. To the same minister: will the minister stop allowing lower income families to be caught in this trap by mandating that people who are on employment insurance or who receive social assistance are to be charged at a lower interest rate than the payday loan companies certainly set? This is exactly what Manitoba did.

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that with respect to the whole issue of lower income families and the struggle they face on a day-to-day basis, that's the kind of input that we need to hear, and that's the kind of input I'm looking forward to hearing. That's certainly something that we need to look at to ensure that their needs are being met by other places than just payday loan people, including the banks that are across Alberta.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. Again to the same minister. I'm pleased to hear that she's looking forward to the debate on my Motion 511, but more specifically I'm wondering if the minister will follow the lead of both that motion and of Manitoba and commit to implementing caps on the interest rates that can be charged by payday loan companies in Alberta. What's the lead you're going to take on this?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the cap issue is something that we're going to look at. As mentioned, it is across

Canada. A number of provinces have taken different approaches. The approach that we take here in Alberta will be what's right for Albertans and not what's right for other provinces.

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

#### Local Authorities Election Act Review

**Mrs. Sarich:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After each municipal election the Local Authorities Election Act is usually reviewed, and amendments are recommended to the Legislature for approval prior to the next municipal election. My first question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. What action have you taken to review the Local Authorities Election Act?

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

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, it's very important that everyone has confidence in the election process. After the last election we consulted with the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association. We also consulted with the city of Edmonton and the city of Calgary. We explained to them that residency was one of the issues that had come up to us. There were no other major concerns, and we are reviewing the feedback at this time. I need to emphasize that any amendments need to clarify and maintain confidence and be reasonable for all involved.

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

**Mrs. Sarich:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is to the same minister. The city of Edmonton has said that the province will form a committee to review the way municipal elections in Alberta are run. What is the status of that committee to review the Local Authorities Election Act?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the act has been very effective in ensuring that Albertans have faith in the local elections. There was a very major review that took place approximately three years ago. There is no plan for a major review at this time. We are looking at having a review after the next election of 2010, but we are monitoring the present emerging trends and keeping abreast of them on a regular basis. We have a good system in place right now for local elections.

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

**Mrs. Sarich:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the same minister. Is the province considering allowing Internet voting and increasing municipal terms to four years?

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, Mr. Speaker, not at this time. The process of using, let's say, Internet balloting is a complex one. Internet voting must be one that's able to guarantee eligibility and anonymity. A secure voting process is essential to ensure that Albertans have confidence in their local elections.

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

#### Police and Peace Officer Training Centre

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the police

college slated for Fort Macleod is of paramount importance for southern Alberta and consequently the province not only from an economic point of view, but it does tie into the government's rural initiative. My question would be for the Solicitor General. Can the Solicitor General guarantee progress with the Alberta police college in Fort Macleod?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I surely can't guarantee progress. As I spoke about this the other day, we are looking at reviewing some different funding models, and when we are through that process, we will see where it takes us in regard to our request for proposals and see what falls out of that.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you. Actually, you've answered my second question. I wanted to know if you have been developing other alternatives. Other than just looking at it, is anything being developed?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Well, the process is complex when you start looking at different funding models. I can assure the hon. member that we have a number of people who are working on that, and hopefully we'll be in a position fairly soon to move forward on this initiative.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you very much. My last question is fairly pointed. Have there been any discussions around the possibility that this location would be changed?

**Mr. Lindsay:** There certainly haven't been any discussions with me, Mr. Speaker. We went through a very detailed process in picking the community, and I have no intention of changing that decision, that was made over a year ago.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

## 2:20 Child and Youth Advocate

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The January 2008 advocate's quarterly report says: "This is the third consecutive quarter in which we have been informed of allegations of injury during restraints that have occurred with youth . . . Some youth have experienced significant injury." Now, this is based on two prior quarterlies describing repeated meetings with senior ministry staff on this issue, yet the minister's response, tabled Monday, is that only one child sustained a minor injury. This just doesn't add up. To the minister of children: given this apparent inconsistency how can you expect Albertans to trust the independence of this internal investigation?

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

**Ms Tarchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member has referred to the fact – she's right – that the quarterlies have come out, and I have tabled a response. That response is accurate in terms of both the investigation and how it was addressed and what the results were.

**Ms Notley:** Well, the quarterly report also said that "two siblings under the age of 6 were in a placement where all parties agreed that their needs were not being met and that the placement was not

appropriate." The minister's answer: "The investigation found that the Region believed it was in the best interests of the children to remain in their current . . . placement." To the minister of children. For eight months the caseworker's request went unanswered, yet your internally generated response fails to address this issue. The advocate needs to have the ministry's cord cut. Why won't you make the advocate an officer of this Legislature?

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

**Ms Tarchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The comments here are a little bit irresponsible. First of all, the responses are less than full, and I would suggest that anyone that's interested in taking a look at the responses to the quarterly reports can take a look at the copies.

**Ms Notley:** Well, in fact, it's the response that's less than full, and your tabled response actually creates more questions than answers about the quarterly report process, the investigation, and the accountability.

Children need an arm's-length officer of the Legislature to stand up for their interests and safety and to independently review the value of ministry reactions to service failures. To the minister of children: why won't you do the same thing that every other province has already done and commit to making the advocate an officer of the Legislature now?

**Ms Tarchuk:** Mr. Speaker, every day this week I have said that we are taking a look at what other provinces are doing, and that work is under way. As far as continuing to mislead the House in terms of not full answers, I've also offered to give full briefings on those quarterlies.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

## Funding for Homeless Aboriginal People

**Mr. Dallas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this year the mayor's task force on ending homelessness in Red Deer developed a framework to help our community end homelessness. I was pleased to participate on that task force, which issued a number of broad recommendations that housing and supports be in place for vulnerable aboriginal people living in the Red Deer community. My first question is for the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs. What is the minister doing to help homeless aboriginal people living in the Red Deer community?

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

**Mrs. Fritz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is correct: the Red Deer plan was submitted in February of this year. I have reviewed that plan, and I can tell you that I am addressing the recommendations, hon. member, through affordable housing, through rent supplements, through emergency shelter. Also, we did allocate \$112 million in block funding to municipalities. I understand that the members from Red Deer will be meeting with their city here in the near future regarding their block funding, and it will be the municipality that decides the affordable housing needs. That will include aboriginal housing.

**Mr. Dallas:** To the same minister. The minister just mentioned block funding for municipalities. Is there any other funding dedicated to aboriginal housing?

**Mrs. Fritz:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this is the third year of the federal off-reserve aboriginal housing program. That funding program allocates \$16 million a year for off-reserve housing for aboriginal people. Last year that funding supported 264 aboriginal housing units in 12 municipalities in Alberta, and that was for housing for home ownership, for housing that needs repairs, for student housing, affordable housing overall. It was a solid program.

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

**Mr. Dallas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the same minister. Are you aware of any plans for the federal government off-reserve aboriginal housing program to be increased?

**Mrs. Fritz:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has discussed this issue with me. I know he is very concerned after having been on the affordable housing task force for Red Deer and concerned for aboriginal people. It is a valuable funding program, the federal program, and I can tell you that I am concerned, in fact very concerned because that funding program, as I indicated to the hon. member, will not be continued past March of next year. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker and members of the House, that I will be meeting with my federal counterpart as soon as they're appointed to the federal cabinet, and I will be working in conjunction with the Minister of Aboriginal Relations regarding this funding.

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

#### Role of Provincial Sheriffs

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With 700 sheriffs and counting, concerns from citizens, police officers, and even Progressive Conservative MLAs about the conduct and operation of the sheriffs are mounting. To the Solicitor General: can the minister tell us why municipal police services are currently investigating the misconduct of sheriffs within their municipal boundaries?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not exactly sure what the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo is referring to in regard to our sheriffs being investigated by police forces. I'm certainly not aware of that. Like any other police service in the province or in the country, for that matter, there are certain members who may not obey all of the rules and could be under investigation, but this particular instance I'm certainly not aware of.

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

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your own members have concerns about sheriffs. The MLA for Cardston-Taber-Warner stated in a recent policy field committee meeting that "the sheriff did not use good judgment nor apply common sense." Why is this government expanding their role when serious concerns about training levels and capability still exist?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner can speak for himself, but I can assure you that our sheriffs are one of the best-trained units in regard to the jurisdiction that they have. From the feedback that I'm getting from Albertans, they're doing just a great job keeping our highways safe.

**Mr. Hehr:** At the same meeting on June 18 the MLA for Lesser Slave Lake said the following regarding sheriffs: "There was an

intimidation situation." Isn't the minister concerned that these sheriffs are intimidating citizens? Your own MLAs have concerns.

**Mr. Lindsay:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake can speak for herself. I guess I'd be concerned if any peace officer or police officer was using intimidation tactics. We have procedures where those can be brought through the process to be dealt with.

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

#### Crime and Safe Communities

**Mr. Johnston:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics released some grim news about the 2007 homicide rates in Canada. The report indicated that both Edmonton and Calgary were among the top five Canadian cities with the highest homicide rates per capita. My questions are for the Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security. Our residents deserve and expect to be safe in their neighbourhoods and in their communities. What can you say to Albertans that will give them confidence that something is being done to change those homicide numbers?

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

**Mr. Lindsay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The numbers that the hon. member is talking about are disturbing, and we are taking action. Yesterday we announced a plan to put 183 new police resources on our streets starting on April 1 next year. Sixty-seven of those positions will be used to establish dedicated enforcement teams across the province that will target the drug trade and the gangs who profit from it. Albertans expect this government to take action on serious and violent crime, and we're doing just that.

**Mr. Johnston:** To the same minister. You mentioned 67 positions for those dedicated enforcement units. What about the remaining positions? Where are they going, and what are they doing?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, 16 of the remaining positions will be going to specialized policing units such as Criminal Intelligence Service Alberta and the integrated child exploitation unit. The remaining hundred new officers will be going directly to front-line policing in a number of communities. For example, the city of Calgary will be receiving another 41 officers, Edmonton another 35, Lethbridge will receive three, and Camrose one, while 20 positions will be going to municipalities that contract directly with the RCMP for policing. These are in addition to the hundred officers that we announced just seven months ago.

**Mr. Johnston:** My final question to the same minister: we're all glad to see that you're bolstering enforcement, but what else are you doing to make our communities safer?

2:30

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, the safe communities task force report gave us a very clear road map to make our communities safe and reduce crime. We're adding more police officers. We're also adding 110 probation officers, and we're closely monitoring offenders in our community. We've added new investigative units to target problems and illegal activities such as gangs, drugs, and prostitution. We've also announced new treatment beds to help those who are battling addictions.

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

### Sexual Orientation

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act states that a person cannot be discriminated against based on their race, ancestry, or place of origin, so the minister of culture's comment yesterday that the rights of immigrants need to be addressed is not only misguided, but it is false. Immigrants already have their rights protected and are physically written into the legislation whereas gay and lesbian Albertans do not enjoy having their protection written in. My question is to the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit. Is it appropriate for the minister responsible for human rights to pit one group against another in a competition for protection?

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given where that comment came from, understand that I said yesterday that I was interested in looking to make sure that those new immigrants to Alberta had a service that was deliverable for them and met their needs. I'd never once pit one group against another. That is conjecture given by the Member for Edmonton-Centre. We will look at the legislation in due course as part of our review, and when we have something to report, we will report that.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. Again to the same minister. In the spring the minister said that he needed to make a presentation to his caucus before he could commit to changing the legislation. Is it the Tory caucus who is refusing to follow the Charter, the laws, and the courts and write in protection for gay and lesbian Albertans?

**Mr. Blackett:** Mr. Speaker, we're in the midst of a review. As I mentioned yesterday and I've mentioned repeatedly in this House, we are looking at a new chief commissioner for the commission. We are also looking at the process and various components of that, including legislation. I have not had a chance to have a discussion with any of my caucus members in caucus or in cabinet upon this issue, and we're not at that point yet because our review is not yet completed.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much. Back to the same minister, then. Well, will the minister commit himself to be leading forward and championing the cause of having protection for gay and lesbian Albertans written into the legislation? Will he make the commitment?

**Mr. Blackett:** Mr. Speaker, it's quite inappropriate for me as the minister responsible for the Human Rights Commission to advocate any particular view, one or another. Just like the Human Rights Commission is supposed to look at issues on balance, fairly weigh the scales of justice equally, that's what I will do in my position.

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

### Problem Gambling

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I recently learned that the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission is partnering with the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission in a five-month

multimedia informative advertising campaign targeted at high-frequency gamblers. The cost of the campaign is \$552,000. My questions are for the Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security, who is responsible for the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission. To the minister: would you please define for this House a high-frequency gambler? Is this the same thing as a problem gambler?

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

**Mr. Lindsay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, this informative advertising campaign was based on comprehensive research, including focus group testing. For the purpose of this campaign a high-frequency gambler is defined as someone at low to moderate risk of problem gambling. A high-frequency gambler has played VLTs, slot, casino table games, and/or bingo at least 12 times in the past year.

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

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer.

First supplemental question: specifically, what type of information are you providing to high-frequency gamblers through this campaign?

**Mr. Lindsay:** The campaign provides information resources to help gamblers stay in control of their gambling behaviour and/or obtain the help that they may require with a gambling problem. The campaign educates Albertans about the need to set time and budget limits and treat gambling as a form of entertainment, not as a way to make money. This campaign uses commonly acknowledged myths and facts of gambling to help high-frequency gamblers reflect on and examine their own behaviour and the risk level of problem gambling.

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

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The final supplementary question to the same minister: given the extent of this investment, then, Minister, what are some of the specific gambling myths and facts the advertising campaign attempts to contradict, and where do gamblers find specific information to help them stay in control of gambling?

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

**Mr. Lindsay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's an excellent question because gambling facts presented through this campaign include such things as: there's really no such thing, for example, as a hot or cold machine, that every play is random chance every time, that slot machines and VLTs are not programmed to pay out at specific times, that odds always favour the house. Gamblers can find information to help them stay in control of their gambling at [setalimitalberta.ca](http://setalimitalberta.ca). This new website provides tips and self-tests related to responsible and problem gambling.

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

### Public-private Partnerships for School Construction

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is

going into public debt again through the use of the P3 scheme. My first question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. Did the government offer the school boards a choice in new school construction between public tender and the P3 scheme?

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

**Mr. Hayden:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A wonderful question. In fact, the school boards along with the teaching professionals were involved in the designs of these schools and were spoken with all throughout the process. It has delivered in this last program 18 high-efficiency, healthy environments, nine in Calgary and nine in Edmonton, \$118 million cheaper than conventional. We're all happy.

**Mr. MacDonald:** That's very interesting. It contradicts what was said in Public Accounts on October 7, 2008.

Again to the same minister: why did the government tell the Calgary Catholic school board that P3s were the only option they had, to take it or leave it?

**Mr. Hayden:** Mr. Speaker, there are 18 schools in the P3 program. There are 156 major school facility projects under way right now. It's another option for delivery of schools, and it's one that's well accepted and happily accepted by those communities that are getting new schools for their children.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the chair of the Calgary Catholic school board stated: "If we didn't go along with P3s, was there an alternative? We were told no. It had to be P3s." Why did this government force the school board into accepting the P3s? Why was it: take it, or you don't get the schools built?

**Mr. Hayden:** Mr. Speaker, no one has been forced to take schools. Everyone has accepted the schools very gladly, as have their families and the students in those communities.

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

### High School Diploma Examinations

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today's children lead busy lives. They are under an immense amount of pressure at school to perform well and have the added pressure of home life and extracurricular activities. On top of this, high school students have to prepare for diploma exams in order to graduate. My questions are to the Minister of Education. Does high-stakes testing, like the diploma examinations, really assess anything about a student's learning, or do they just put unnecessary pressure on already busy students?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The purpose of the diploma exam is actually threefold: to certify a student's level of achievement in a course, to ensure that a province-wide standard of achievement is maintained, and to report individual and group results. Given the purpose it's well worth maintaining. We have bright, motivated students in Alberta who appreciate a challenge and rise up to meet the challenge. By having these diploma exams, that are well accepted nationally and internationally, they have the standards necessary for postsecondary accreditation.

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. Currently diploma exams are worth 50 per cent of the student's final mark. Again, this is a stressful prospect for students. Why won't Alberta Education lower the weighting of diplomas or allow teachers to decide whether or not to include them in students' final grades.

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the diploma examination program was being created – and I remember it well because it was actually the year that I was in grade 12 that the 50-50 weighting was brought in for diploma examinations . . . [interjection] That was quite a long time ago, not quite 1950 but quite a long time ago, and it has served Albertans well. Overall, the support for the 50-50 split has remained high, so the weighting has been maintained.

What it does, Mr. Speaker, is allow for the assessment at the classroom level while having a provincial standard which, as I said in my first answer, is well received by postsecondary institutions of all types to allow students entrance.

2:40

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A final question to the same minister: are the diploma examinations putting Alberta students at a disadvantage to other Canadian students who don't have to write the same high-stakes exit exams?

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, it's an advantage for Alberta students. In other jurisdictions the universities and postsecondary institutions look at the diploma results, look at the marks the students are getting out of high school, and sometimes adjust for them. With respect to Alberta students, with the credentials that our Alberta students graduate with, those credentials are well accepted by postsecondaries, well accepted by employers precisely because we have the standards.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that was 108 questions and responses today.

In 30 seconds from now we will resume the Routine.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

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

### Dr. Bruce McNaughton

**Mr. Weadick:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to speak to this House about a recent announcement at the University of Lethbridge that has my hometown and the rest of Alberta literally buzzing with excitement. On October 23 our Premier formally declared Dr. Bruce McNaughton as the inaugural winner of the Polaris award, a \$10 million research grant from the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research. That money will be matched by other grants for a total of \$20 million going towards research at the U of L Canadian Centre for Behavioural Neuroscience.

Dr. McNaughton was attracted from the University of Arizona and

will be joining Drs. Ian Wishaw, Bryan Kolb, Rob Sutherland, and others at the Canadian Centre for Behavioural Neuroscience. Separately these men are world-renowned leaders in their field. Together they are recognized as one of the top neuroscience teams on the face of the earth. This hire will be one of the most significant of any university in Canada this year.

Mr. Speaker, it is no exaggeration to say that with such a phenomenal team in place and with those resources at their disposal, it is very possible that the next leap forward in the study of memory will come not from Harvard medical school or Johns Hopkins but from the University of Lethbridge. As a U of L alumnus myself I can't describe how incredibly proud I am of that fact. This development could not have happened without the will of this government to create the Polaris award to draw the best and brightest researchers to Alberta. By doing so, we can add yet another line to Alberta's diverse resumé: home of the world's best beef, Canada's most abundant oil and gas reserves, breathtaking natural beauty, and some of the smartest people on earth.

Thank you.

### Presenting Petitions

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have signatures of 28 people from St. Albert, Edmonton, Morinville, and Sherwood Park who are asking the Legislative Assembly to urge the government of Alberta to

commission an independent and public inquiry into the Alberta Government's administration of or involvement with the Local Authorities Pension Plan, the Public Service Pension Plan, and the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

#### Bill 41

#### Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2008 (No. 2)

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce Bill 41, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2008 (No. 2).

This bill expands the permitted uses for surplus school sites by simplifying the process to apply suitable new uses for such sites. Mr. Speaker, these new community uses could include libraries, fire halls, police stations, and affordable housing. It also includes an amendment to clarify the existing policy on the use of the ERCB records for assessment of oil and gas property. Lastly, it includes an amendment to clarify and define who must pay for property taxes on oil and gas lease sites where machinery and equipment is located.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 41 read a first time]

#### Bill 210

#### School (Enhanced Protection of Students and Teachers) Amendment Act, 2008

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 210, the School (Enhanced Protection of Students and Teachers) Amendment Act.

Bill 210 would prohibit acts of intimidation or bullying and provide a mechanism for dealing with these incidents. It would also prohibit the possession of weapons and/or drug paraphernalia on school property.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Sergeant Tom Farquhar and Constable Alfred Ma for all their help on this bill.

[Motion carried; Bill 210 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I introduced Dr. Lakhani, who received an award from the Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies. I'd like to table five packages of the materials that were available on Friday, which include a fact sheet on Digital Terrorism & Hate 2.0, a backgrounder on the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies, a biography of Dr. Zaheer Lakhani, and a news release which indicates the reason why Dr. Lakhani was recognized for his service in terms of antihatred and for tolerance. The occasion was the report of the centre called the iReport, Online Terror Hate: The First Decade. A CD goes with it. I'm tabling copies for the House, and I would encourage members of the House to get one of these and have a look at what is on our international web with respect to hatred and intolerance so that we can assist others in rooting it out.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is a letter that I enjoyed receiving very much from the Minister of Health and Wellness. I received this letter on August 29, 2008. In this letter the hon. minister admits that "one of the major weaknesses of the previous health region structure was the lack of any formal accountability to the taxpayer."

The second tabling I have is the framework document that is essentially the blueprint for further privatization of our public health care system in this province. It has been developed by this government.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am tabling the requisite five copies of a response to the Minister of Children and Youth Services thanking her for being willing to respond to the following question from Monday: "Will the minister review the manner in which information goes one way up the chain of command without returning to front-line workers so that they can implement the feedback received, thereby improving child support?"

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling the required five copies of my letter and cheque dated May 13, '08, to the Kainai Food Bank. As per my pledge in the Assembly on April 2, '07, half of my indexed pay raise is donated monthly to a food bank in southern Alberta until AISH is similarly increased and indexed.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of pages from the 2007-2008 fourth-quarter report of the Child and Youth Advocate, which include information to which I referred in my questions today.

2:50

**Tablings to the Clerk**

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the House that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mrs. Ady, Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation, pursuant to the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation Act the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation annual report 2007-2008.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, on your first purported point of order.

**Point of Order****Allegations against a Member**

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I must say that I don't think this was a stellar day for people expecting a tone of civility in this Assembly or general respect for all members. My point of order is raised against the Premier. During an exchange with the Leader of the Official Opposition he repeatedly made calls for information on an Official Opposition caucus expenditure which, in fact, happened in 2007 and in doing so I believe violated 23(h), which is making allegations against another member, that somehow this expenditure was inappropriate or unauthorized and demanding to know the amount of money. That, of course, is supported as well by *Beauchesne* 494.

As well, I would cite Standing Order 23(i), which is regarding imputing unavowed motives to a member. Certainly, that was contained in the Premier's remarks, I believe, imputing and inferring something that is just not the case.

Finally, the use of insulting language and certainly an insulting tone that goes along with that as we find in 23(j). I'll also reference *Beauchesne* 409(7).

Finally I'll reference Standing Order 23(c): "persists in needless repetition or raises matters that have been decided during the current session." Now, Mr. Speaker, this particular issue has been raised by the Premier a number of times and, in fact, was the topic of at least one previous point of order and a Speaker's ruling, yet here we have the Premier raising this issue again. I find this very curious. We have an expenditure that's made by the opposition caucus. It is an expenditure that receives approval through the Legislative Assembly staff, and they are basing that approval on instructions and rules that are set out in the members' services book, which, in fact, is put into place by a Tory-dominated Members' Services Committee. So as well as inferring that some wrongdoing has happened on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition and the opposition caucus, it's also, I would argue, casting aspersions upon the members of the committee that formed the rules.

Now, there's repeated calling for the information to come forth. Mr. Speaker, as you have well taught me, it is inappropriate to table documents that have already been tabled in the House. The Premier is aware of this and is more than welcome to go and check Sessional Paper 150/2008, which was tabled in this Assembly on May 12, 2008. So the information has been provided. The expenditure was arrived at in an approved and legitimate manner, yet the Premier, as I'm citing 23(c), in fact, persists in raising this as though there is some wrongdoing on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition or on behalf of the caucus members or staff. This original expenditure was from the spring of 2007, Mr. Speaker. This issue is now 18 months old. The tabling was made in this House, and there was a Speaker's ruling that is six months old.

I would ask the Speaker to please request that the Premier consult the documents that are already there and to resist endlessly raising the same issue that, I would argue, is insulting to the staff, to the

members of the Members' Services Committee as well as to the Leader of the Official Opposition and members of that caucus' staff.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. whip.

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, 23(h), (i), and (j), as I read them in the Standing Orders, require a member to impute false motives or use abusive language directly towards another member. I would argue that the Premier did no such thing. He simply stated a matter of fact. There was an expenditure made by that party – the hon. member just agreed with that – of public funds on radio advertisement. The Premier merely stated the fact (a) that it happened and (b) that the hon. Leader of the Opposition has not mentioned on the floor of the House exactly how much money was involved. Now, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre is quite correct: that expenditure was approved.

I might point out that the exchange took place during a question period exchange in which the expenditures that that party referred to were also approved. They're part of a budget that we approved on the floor of this House.

Lastly, I see nothing in Standing Orders 23(c), (h), (i), or (j), that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre referenced, that refers to how old an issue has to be after it apparently crosses some threshold and becomes a point of order. I see no such rule in the Standing Orders, Mr. Speaker, and I would argue that this is a frivolous representation of the rules of the House.

**The Speaker:** Anyone else?

There is no age factor with respect to a point of order. The chair has certainly heard on occasion hon. members referring to events that occurred in 1990-something and 1999 and 2003, basically trying to tie it into something that has happened today, so that's really not an issue.

The chair has the Blues in front of him. This came as a result of a series of questions. This is the Premier:

Mr. Speaker, I think now is the appropriate time because this leader has evaded this for over a year. When we're going to talk about spending, using taxpayer dollars – taxpayer dollars – not lottery-funded dollars, taxpayer dollars, to pay for radio ads, and still till today he won't get up in this House and tell us how much he spent on those radio ads. Now is the chance.

Quite frankly, the tone of the question is not much different than the other types of questions that came in here: why are you spending money on this?

It's absolutely correct that these documents were tabled in the Alberta Legislative Assembly by the Official Opposition caucus, as the Official Opposition House Leader has pointed out. They were tabled on two occasions, in fact. The most recent one is the date which the hon. member has given. It seems to me that the gist of the question basically is the identification of how much was spent on those ads, not a statement with respect to the expenditure, which was correct; there was expenditure. These were public, taxpayer, dollars spent on this, that came from the Legislative Assembly of Alberta budget, that went to in this case the Official Opposition caucus.

The chair is not going to get involved in a discussion with respect to whether or not the chair had been advised of these ads as Speaker, as the head of the Legislative Assembly. These ads, the expenditure would have been approved at the time. This is not going to be debated today.

However, nowhere in all this exchange back and forth has anybody ever said what the dollar figure was. It seems to me that that is the crux of the whole matter: how much was spent. These are

taxpayer dollars. So I'm going to tell everybody today because it's all in the public record, and maybe it won't come back again. Or if it does come in, it will be used; \$11,720, that was the amount of money.

3:00

I will accept the advice provided by the hon. Official Opposition House Leader. I will advise the Government House Leader to perhaps advise the Premier that he doesn't have to stand up anymore and say, "How much money?" because the Speaker has now done it for the Leader of the Official Opposition and has basically stated that the figure expended was \$11,720. These are taxpayer dollars.

I dealt with it. Okay. We've now cleared up that matter.

Now let's move on to the second one. The hon. Member for Edmonton Centre.

#### **Point of Order Inflammatory Language**

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The second point of order I was calling was against the Minister of Transportation who in an exchange with – I'm sorry; I didn't catch who the exchange was with . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. My apologies for not catching that at the time.

. . . Cypress-Medicine Hat made a statement something to the effect – I'm sorry; I don't have the Blues – that he was pleased to respond to a member who actually cares about his constituency. The inference in that, of course, Mr. Speaker, is that other duly elected members don't care about their constituencies. I would argue on behalf of all members of this House that we all do care about our constituencies. Every single one of us, all 83 of us, cares about our constituency. I would argue that we would all take some offence at the inference from the Minister of Transportation that we don't.

Now, perhaps the Official Opposition critic for Transportation could take particular offence against that, seeing as they're the person that is referred to by the Minister of Transportation as usually asking that kind of question. Truly, I think this is an offence against all members of the House in that I think every member would stand up and say that they cared a great deal about their constituency or they wouldn't be serving in this Assembly to begin with.

Under 23(h), (i), and particularly (j), given the robust delivery that this particular minister is known for, we would ask for the minister to withdraw his comments that he has made. I understand that he didn't make it in particular reference to any one individual, except that he referenced the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, but I feel that the insult is carried by all of us. That's just not an appropriate way to be behaving in this House.

Truly, if we wonder as politicians why people have such a low opinion of ourselves, they only have to listen to the language that we use and the tone that we use in talking to each other in this House. We do a far better job of degrading and trivializing ourselves than anyone in the public could possibly do, and I think that the Minister of Transportation's presentation is a perfect example of that.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader on this purported point of order.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to respond to it because in some of – I was going to say "much of," but I think it

more appropriate to say "some of" – what she says I entirely would agree, that we ought not to demean ourselves with the tone that we use in the House and we ought to try and have a suitable level of discourse in the House so that the schoolchildren in the galleries and those that might be watching on the Net or on the television would see that we are reasonable people doing a good job for all Albertans. So I would suggest that we take that advice from the hon. Opposition House Leader and that she and her caucus take that advice, and I will certainly undertake to take it back to my caucus.

We would expect, then, starting tomorrow that preambles to questions would not be inviting that kind of a response, that there would be a factual basis to the preambles, short and succinct preambles as the rules require, and nothing inflammatory. I think that would be a very, very good improvement to the tone of the House. I undertake to go to my caucus tomorrow and ask that we respond in kind to what I understand will be coming forward in terms of preambles to questions from the opposition. I would even invite the House leader for the third party to take it back to her caucus and see whether we can't establish a very good tone. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, we could get up to 123 or 124 or 125 questions and responses. I think that would be a most suitable thing.

I really do appreciate the hon. Opposition House Leader bringing this point of order and raising the question of the tone of the House because I think, as someone who appreciates the role and function of a parliamentarian and who really does believe that this House should have stature and standing among the Alberta public, that we should adopt exactly what she said.

Now, with respect to the specific point of order question, the hon. Minister of Transportation did not refer to any specific member. He basically reflected in the preamble to his answer, whether a preamble to an answer is an appropriate way to describe it, that here is a member who does appreciate his constituents. That came after a series of questions, Mr. Speaker, about major facility grants and community facility enhancement grants, which are lottery dollars going back into communities to help build the community, to help voluntary organizations in the community create community facilities.

The implication that government members were running around the province with big cheques, giving money out willy-nilly – the examples that were given were community facilities that were being built by volunteers in our communities around the province. So it was quite accurate for the hon. member to point out that the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat is talking about building infrastructure that's needed by Albertans and valuing it. The earlier questions were about devaluing projects such as the Snow Valley project, which is about enhancing the ability of our children to maintain their health by being involved in meaningful winter activity, active activity to keep them healthy, or golf courses where rural Albertans can be healthy or other community facilities with volunteers under a program that is specifically designated to return lottery funds to the community, which is something that this government promised. So in that context the hon. member's remarks were quite appropriate and quite on point.

But I do understand the hon. member's point about tone, and I think we should go there. I will, as I say, undertake to talk to my caucus about tone, and I hope that we can engage in that starting tomorrow.

**The Speaker:** Well, I frankly think you're all nice people, but I guess the basic point here is: can we all become nicer? That's really what this is all about. Sometimes, you know, it's best to leave sleeping dogs lie. Anyway, this has now been raised, so we'll deal with it.



Okay. The hon. Minister of Transportation:

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's sure nice to get a good, positive question from someone that cares about their constituents.

It's very difficult to answer that question in a short time because there are a lot of factors that determine the lifespan of a highway, at which point in time a point of order was raised.

I'm sitting here watching this. I've been sitting here observing and being a part of this Assembly now for going on 29 years. I do know that the hon. Minister of Transportation is an ebullient kind of fellow and that everything has to depend on the ambience and the mood and where we're at and where we've come from and where we think we are and where we're going – and, you know, has your car got a flat tire today? – and all the rest of that stuff. Has the dog run away?

By itself, in isolation, I can't see how this could possibly be a point of order. If this hurts the feelings of other members, then I want other members to know that when a member gets up and says that a minister doesn't care, if you take the same principle of application, then I'd have to rule that kind of a statement out because some minister would come to me and say their feelings are hurt, and they're sensitive. Or: the minister should resign. Well, holy mackerel. Do you think that minister doesn't feel sensitive about that and go home at night and kick the door in? Would I have to then lead to ousting the member who raised it in the House? Or: the minister is out of touch. I mean, if you're going to talk sensitivity in here, okay. Fair game. You know, I'm a teddy bear and a cuddle of love, but we can have a lot of sensitivity. Let's understand that there sometimes . . . [interjection] Yeah. Thank you very much. You sit down.

There are always going to be times in here, and we also all know that depending on the day of the week and whatever circumstances happen and whatever the issue is that the person is raising the question on or whatever the issue is that the person is responding to the question on, there may be motivations in there that none of us are appreciative of. Human beings are human beings. It doesn't hurt to have a little emotion sometimes, too, as long as you don't hurt anybody with respect to that emotion.

The Government House Leader has undertaken a task. I haven't heard the Opposition House Leader saying that she's going to go to her caucus and say: everybody, we're going to be nicer tomorrow. I haven't seen the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona saying that she's going to change her language or anything else. So we'll see where this goes in the next number of days, but right now we're going to Orders of the Day.

3:10

### Orders of the Day

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

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

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

#### Bill 10

#### Security Services and Investigators Act

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

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess I have some amendments that I'll be bringing forward for Bill 10 further on. We're going to let the opposition speak first. But I want to make

some comments on some of the points that were raised by the opposition during second reading yesterday just for clarification purposes.

There was a lot of talk about how this Bill 10 is supposed to somehow deal with sheriffs and their conduct and their training. Bill 10 does not deal with sheriffs. That is an irrelevant point there. That's the Peace Officer Act. I would hope that on a go-forward basis if we want to debate the Peace Officer Act at a different time, we can do that, but Bill 10 does not deal with the sheriffs. On that point there were many questions asked about the sheriffs or some points made about the sheriffs. In my view the sheriffs are doing a very good job. [interjection] Absolutely.

The basic premise of the sheriffs program is not to replace our RCMP or our municipal police forces. They are to take a burden off our municipal police forces and the RCMP in order to allow those, shall we say, higher end police officers, more highly trained officers to be able to investigate more serious crimes and more serious offences. That's the reason for it. It makes a lot of economic sense because it'll allow us to hire more officers. We don't have to hire more officers for the purpose of doing paperwork and things that are not suited to the scope of what they should be doing. That's the reason for the sheriffs program. Those were several of the questions that I read in the *Hansard* from yesterday.

With that, I'll turn the time over to the opposition members.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members wish to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I very much want to speak in committee on this bill. I tried hard to attend the policy field committee meetings, but because of the rules that were in place at the time, which I hope are going to be changed, I couldn't find out when the meetings were being held and wasn't able to attend the one meeting in which most of the discussion took place. So this is my opportunity now that we're in Committee of the Whole to raise the issues that I had concerns about.

Let me just talk generally first. When I first heard the sponsoring member introduce the bill and speak to it, my memory is that he used a lot of language about, you know: "We want to acknowledge that there's been a change in the private security sector. They're much more professional, and we want to honour that and build on a relationship and be more respectful." Yet I don't actually see any of that manifested in this bill. What I see is a lot of attempt to distance private security from the police forces, to say: "You can't look like police forces. You can't call yourself by anything that might be taken to be a police force." There's an extraordinary amount of effort to say: "You're not that. We don't see you as a colleague and a co-worker."

What's actually happening in the bill is not reflecting what's currently happening. What's currently happening is that times have changed, and they're moving along pretty quickly. I think there has been a long exchange in the Assembly this fall about funding of more police officers and funding of police officers versus funding of sheriffs and who is responsible for doing what. I think that is a manifestation of how things are changing.

Clearly, people feel the need to hire private security. Perhaps they feel they cannot get a fast enough response from the public police force, whether that's a metropolitan police force or the RCMP, and they choose to spend their dollars to hire private security. Fair enough. Increasingly, we also have municipalities hiring private security, and I'm not talking about sheriffs here. I'm talking about, you know, private security companies that have a profit-making

mandate to them and may well have shareholders or certainly one or two co-owners of a company that want to make a profit from this. On these very grounds we have had private security companies patrolling, presumably for the safety of the MLAs and the safety of the property here. So in places we never would have imagined having private security working, they are now very much working. Things that we previously would have only entrusted to our fully fledged police forces are now being done by private security forces. That's a fact. That's the relationship I actually see happening.

I certainly have reservations about how we move forward with this. I'm on record repeatedly with my deep concern about access to personal information and how that is handled because I believe there is not the same understanding coming out of a for-profit. A market-driven sector does not have the same attitude towards protection of personal information. It makes sense. You see some information. You go: "Wow. I've got that information, and I could use it to market another service that I've got. Wouldn't that be helpful to people if they knew that I could also offer them this service as well as this service?" It's often seen as a marketing opportunity, but in fact they have people's personal information: where they live, you know, perhaps how old they are, how many children or how many people are in the household. Is there a security or an alarm system in the house? There's a lot of information there that can all add up.

I continue to have serious concerns about how that personal information is protected. Frankly, it's not about the computer systems. I suppose it is on one level, but computer systems are available now that are sophisticated enough that there are varying levels of access codes. It can be all set up so that people that should have access can get it, and those that can't have access can't get it. Where we know the break always happens is human deliberation. Somebody decides they are going to do something even if they've been told they're not to do it or that it's wrong to do that. It is going in and accessing those databases and using that information for a purpose other than what the information was gathered for. I continue to have huge concerns in that area.

But let me talk about some of the things that were brought up with me. I will start with the stuff around dogs, training and handling of guard dogs, because I think there is an issue here. Right away when you look at the legislation – and it comes up in section 4, I think, right off the bat. There is a heading that says Guard Dog Handlers. Well, a guard dog handler is not necessarily a person who trains a dog. They are two different functions. They can be done by the same person. Certainly, I trained my dog and I also handle the dog, but that's not necessarily the same person.

Then this goes on to say in 4(1), which is following that section heading:

- No person may, without a licence to do so, for remuneration,
- (a) engage in the activity of training, handling or controlling a dog for the purpose of providing security to a person, property or premises, or
  - (b) supply a dog to provide security to a person, property or premises.

I would like to know from the sponsor of the bill why a person who's training a dog needs to be licensed to do that. There are no references here to the level of standard the dog is to be trained to, to any kind of a universal testing system. There's just no criteria here at all.

3:20

Some of the people that I met with said that this is just a money grab. Everywhere you look in this act it's about: "You should have a licence. You have to pay a fee for a licence." I say, "Yeah. Why does someone who trains dogs have to have a licence to do this?"

What is the government trying to control? What behaviour are they trying to control, prohibit, or encourage by having someone pass through that gate of getting a licence? That's not clear in this legislation.

Again, in the earlier section, in Security Services, in 3 it says:

- (1) No person may, without a licence . . . for remuneration,
  - (a) patrol, guard or provide security for another person or for the property or premises of another person, or
  - (b) detect loss of or damage to the property or premises . . .
- (2) No person may advertise, hold out or offer to provide a service . . .

et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, unless you've got a licence. Well, what exactly is being licensed here? What is that behaviour that you're trying to encourage, prohibit, or control?

I would argue, particularly around the dog handling, that that is not clear, and I would like to see an amendment that removed the trainers. You may be able to make an argument to me that someone who is handling a guard dog needs to have certain requirements, but that's required of the handler, not of the dog. The dog will do nothing unless the handler gives them the instructions to do so.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Who are we training, the dog or the handler?

**Ms Blakeman:** Exactly.

Making requirements that somebody who is going to train these dogs has to pay a fee: why? That doesn't make sense to me.

So I think, again, you're working against the purpose of what you said you wanted to do. If you're trying to bring this whole sector up, and you're trying to form stronger bonds here, this is not doing it. That does look like a money grab to me. I don't see what you're gaining from insisting that people that are training these animals pay a licence fee. It doesn't say: train the dog so it can answer this command, or train the dog so it won't do that. It just says: pay a fee.

So I think the training should be taken out of the act – let me be clear about that – because if they are going to do it, they need to have a very clear set of regulations, standards, tests, and evaluations, and you need to put the money behind that. If you're going to make people pay a fee and give them those standards, then you'd better be willing to send somebody out that's going to test that that's what's happening. This government doesn't have a great track record on monitoring and on enforcement, so it's highly unlikely that they'd be following through on this one. So I would say, you know: don't say that stuff in the first place.

Now, we can have an additional argument about licensing dog handlers. What is it you're expecting from those dog handlers? Somebody that has a dog on a leash that is walking around a yard that has equipment in it: what is it that you are expecting them or not expecting them to do? What is the behaviour that you're trying to encourage or control here, and what does it have to do with the fact the person has a dog with them? I think you need to be very clear about what you're expecting there.

For starters, how many people are working with dogs that are trained for security in the province? How many dogs are we actually talking about? Is this thousands of dogs? Hundreds of dogs? Dozens of dogs?

**Ms Pastoor:** And are they trained to kill?

**Ms Blakeman:** Are they trained to kill? Well, I don't know the answer to that, and perhaps the sponsor of the bill can get me the numbers on that.

But, you know, are we talking about dozens of dogs, and you're now going to put a law in place that somebody's got to pay a licence

in order to be able to train them? I've got real problems with this and ditto for the handling.

One of the other issues that was raised with me – it wasn't clear to me in reading what happened in the policy field committee, but perhaps it's been addressed. Currently the employer is expected to pay the licence on behalf of the security guard. But we've got very high mobility right now, and the government would like to encourage more labour mobility. So what's in it for an employer to pay the fee on behalf of a security guard who can quit the next day and walk over to company B with that licence?

Why would anybody want to get involved with that? You just end up with people running small businesses feeling like they're being ripped off by the government because they're having to pay a fee. Let's talk about the Eurig decision. I mean, the Eurig decision essentially said that the government can only charge a fee large enough to cover its administrative costs, and if it is larger than that, then it is a tax and it should be brought before the Assembly on an annual basis to be voted upon as part of a budget because it's a tax revenue.

When we have these fees being charged, these licence fees to everybody, to be a security guard, to be a dog handler, to be a dog trainer, to be a locksmith – you've got fees and licences all the way through this act. What are you charging them for? Are you charging as an administrative fee? Then what are they getting for their money? Are they getting a newsletter? Are they getting training? They're getting a piece of paper. That's what they're getting for it. And what does the piece of paper say? Not very much at this point.

I don't want to run out of time, so I'm going to kind of skip to the end, and then I'll start to work backwards.

I think what I would prefer to see here – because long run is: what do we all really want to know about people that are out there wearing something that looks like a uniform, something that says that I am here, I am in control, and I am part of the security in this place? We want to know that they have been trained. We want to know that they have some sort of training in dealing with the public in a courteous and open manner. Everybody's fear is that you're just going to give a bunch of thugs a uniform and a baton to walk around and take out their personal prejudices on members of the public. Those are the nasty, awful, derogatory terms that you hear people talking in, and I don't think that's what you were trying to do in this bill. I heard you say that we wanted to elevate these professions and recognize them as the professionals that they are.

What's important to members of the public? They want to know that somebody has had training. We've got an issue here with licensing people and not knowing what they're getting for their licence, and we've got an issue with no educational component that's required here. What I would suggest to you is that you require that every security guard who is going to get a licence pay the fee themselves, for starters, because it's an investment in their career, that in order to receive that licence, they attend at least an eight-hour course put on at any of our many local and very fine colleges or educational institutions, and as part of that they take courses and gather information on safety of the public but also safety of themselves. Officer safety is equally important here. There's no point in getting those security people hurt.

They should get some information about the law. They should get some information about how to testify in court. They should get information on how to collect evidence or at least how not to muck it up. They should get information on how to write reports. So there's some really simple, basic information there that they could get in an eight- to 10-hour course. They pay 150 bucks, they get the course, and at the end of it, when they've passed it, they get their

licence. Now we have security guards out there that we all know have had some training. The college system benefits, the individual benefits, and the businesspeople benefit because they're not having to fork out money for what they don't know to pay for an employee who can walk across the street and work for the next guy the next day. This way we put the individual in control, and we make sure they get some training that goes along with it. That's what I would like to see in this act.

I'm very conscious of not running out of time, and hopefully I'll get another chance to get up, but that's where I'm coming in in the comments that I'm making about this act.

We're requiring, as I said, a number of licences. There's a business licence here. There's a security licence. There's the licence that you have to pay police to have a security alarm system now. We're talking about licensing dog trainers and dog handlers. There are a lot of licences and a lot of fees, and I don't see us getting what we wanted to get out of this.

3:30

This bill also covers, I think it looks like, around 10,000 people or maybe a bit more in the province. I heard the member talking about 6,800 security guards and 2,900 locksmiths. That does start to add up, so this is becoming a viable career option. It's something that people should be proud to do, and it's something where the public should be comfortable and confident having those individuals around them.

I'll admit that I've got a bias. You know, I'm very cautious around police. I'm very cautious around anybody that is in a position to use their personal discretion to limit my personal freedoms. I'm very cautious about that, and I have good reason for that. I think what we want to do is to be able to enhance all of these professions, and I don't see you doing that in this act.

Again, security alarm responders: "No person may, without a licence to do so, for remuneration, respond in person to the location of a security alarm." Now, you've already clarified through the policy field committee that that's not supposed to be for retail workers who are going back to their shop where the alarm is going off. I'm wondering what you are trying to achieve by licensing this.

Basically, that person's job is to show up. Throughout most of the alarm companies, and certainly when I've dealt with them, you have to show up. Then once you're there, basically they phone the police because if there's clearly been a break-in, then that's what that security responder is going to do. They're going to phone the police and say, "There's been a break-in, and I'll stand here until you get here." So are we licensing people to do that? To stand there? Is it because we think that they might go in and rob the property, and that's why we want to license them? Licensing isn't going to change that. Education might change that. Screening might change that. Licensing will not change that.

I think I'm going to run out of time here on my first at-bat. Before I get cut off, I'll just say that I do have other issues that I want to raise. I'm aware that there are other members in the House that want to speak, and I can't keep going. I'll let my colleague get up and fill the interim time.

Thank you very much.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to share a reason that I feel very strongly about the training of people that are going to be working with the public. This bill appears to be more about business than it is actually about the protection of property or persons.

I had a very unpleasant incident in the spring with a security guard that was working for a large local food retail outlet that is fairly close to here. I drove into the parking lot and saw a clearly intoxicated female native person sitting on the ground with what appeared to be a security guard trying to lift her up and reefing on her arm. I stopped my car, got out, and went over and asked if I could help because, clearly, this young man was way in over his head. To make a long story short, I finally got her calmed down, and he kept saying: "She can't hit me. She can't hit me." She kept saying: "You pushed me. You pushed me." Clearly, bad communication.

I got her calmed down, and I got her on her feet, but I couldn't retain her until the police came. I wanted the police to deal with the security guard. Afterwards I spoke with him: (a) he didn't have his licence yet, and it was in the mail; (b) he had had two months of schooling in law enforcement that he'd had to drop out of. The whole thing was very, very upsetting to me, that this person actually didn't have the psychological training that is required to work with people who are intoxicated. It certainly didn't have to turn into the ugly situation that it was.

I can't remember the name of the native reserve. It was in the east. There's this famous picture of a soldier who was going nose to nose with one of the native protesters.

**Ms Blakeman:** Kanesatake.

**Ms Pastoor:** Kanesatake. Thank you.

That could've turned into a very, very ugly situation. In fact, someone could easily have been killed. But the soldier was trained to be able to withstand somebody in his face and not take it personally. When you're dealing with people who are intoxicated or who are emotionally out of control, you really can't take their behaviour towards you personally. You have to have the psychological training that will allow you to step away from that situation and deal with the person from many different angles that will help get them calmed down.

I just wanted to share that, that I think it's imperative that before someone is hired as a security person for whatever company, they really have to have deep psychological training because they're going to be dealing with the public. Someone, particularly this young man, could've easily flown off the handle and caused great harm to this person if not to himself had they gotten into a scuffle. I think she looked like she outweighed him by at least 50 pounds and probably could've pummelled him into the ground with not too much effort, considering that she was already intoxicated and usually people are stronger.

I just wanted to get that on the record that it's imperative that we don't have goon squads out there. One of the big, big security firms who actually has mercenary soldiers – I think it's called Blackwater, out of the States – certainly are looking to expand their form of security and their form of military.

I think we have to be very, very careful with the people that we allow to have the authority to deal with the public at large.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you. I just wanted to clarify some of the questions for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre as well as the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East. Those were all very good points. The reason for the clear identification and differentiation between police officers and security services personnel is, just basically, so the public doesn't get confused. They need to know who they're talking to, and they can make some decisions about what rights those people have with regard to them. They're very different. You

know, police are police – they have certain rights – and security guards are not police, and the public shouldn't be confused in that regard. That gets back to what the hon. members were talking about with regard to making sure that powers are not abused.

With regard to the dog training the committee did discuss this, and it's a very relevant point that you brought out. I guess what I would say is that I look at the language of section 4. This was never intended to catch your everyday dog owner or someone like that. This specifically is somebody that for remuneration trains a dog for the purposes of becoming a guard dog. I mean, that's what it says. It says: "for remuneration . . . engage in the activity of training, handling or controlling a dog for the purpose of providing security to a person, property or premises."

That is intended to be for the trainers to make sure that they have the proper training, that they're not training dogs to be killer dogs. You never know; you might have some company say, you know: we can train a dog to be an absolute killer. Pay a great fee, and they'll train your dog to be a real pit bull. That's not what we want. We want to make sure that there's the proper training in place for that and proper restrictions, but a good point nonetheless.

**3:40**

With regard to section 14, the fee question, section 14 clearly states that the individual licensees will be the ones that are responsible to pay the fee. Now, employers might well pay the fee for them as a way of attracting them to the position; no one is going to stop them from doing that. But the actual responsibility for paying the fee is the licensee's not the company's.

With regard to the other point, the education or the training, I absolutely agree. The reason it's not in here – the degree of training, the amount of training, what that training would entail – is because we felt that it was best left to the regulations just because of best standards. They change so often, and we want to make sure that our standards are always, you know, the highest in Canada and consistent with the rest of the country. As those change, we don't want to have to come back to the House and over and over again to have to amend the act.

Finally, to the member's point on alarm company responders, I will be bringing forth an amendment to clarify that it does not encompass retail workers.

Those are my comments.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much. You know, I'm interested in this argument about us wanting to demarcate private providers of security services so that the public doesn't get confused, because that was my first response back to the person I was arguing with, and they said: "So what? What difference does it make?" You're on a plaza. You're out here on the Leg. grounds by the wading pool. Something goes wrong. You look around. You see somebody with a big hat and a blue outfit. You go where they are. You go running up to them. Do you screech to a stop and go: "Whoops, sorry, you're not a police officer; you're a sheriff or a private security person," and turn around and run in the other direction? No. You say, "Something has gone wrong; please call the police," and they do. Their call is frankly going to get picked up faster than my call to them.

I still don't understand. I mean, clearly, I lost the argument. I could not come up with an argument about why it was important that the public not confuse someone in a private security firm with police officers. I mean, our police officers are pretty distinctive, but you put anybody in a black or a navy blue or even an aubergine outfit

with a certain cut, and it's going to look – especially in the dark, and we're in the dark six months of the year in this part of the country – like an official security-type person. So what's the problem with confusing them? The person is still going to go there. The security person will help them. If they need the police and it's a situation where the police are needed, they're going to be faster at getting it. If you don't need the police, then that's the person that you should have been going to in the first place.

The second thing the member said was, "Well, we need decisions about the rights and powers." Why? This security guard has the right to tell me to move off the property. Am I going to decide that if it's a security guard, he doesn't have the right to tell me that, and I'm going to stand and argue with him? What difference would this make given the situations that we're discussing, which is usually around sort of traffic control, you know, people don't go in this area, or protection of property or protection of individuals. What you gave me is not a good enough argument. Let's hear the next layer down for it because I can't defend that to somebody. I tried it. My argument was too weak, and I lost. So give me a better argument, but if you can't, then I have to push back and say, "Sorry, that's not good enough."

Now, you said that you want to license the people who train the dogs, and you said that you want to measure that proper training that was used. What exactly are you going to measure? Otherwise, you're charging these people a fee, and who in Alberta has the expertise to measure the training of the, okay, let's call it 200 guard dogs in Alberta? Who's got the expertise to do that? You know what? It's going to come down to be a couple of trainers that are in Alberta right now, and they're going to be the people who you're now trying to license to be able to train. But you cannot put that stuff in place and charge people a fee for this until you've got very clear requirements about what you mean.

Let me push the member a little harder. What exactly do you want them to be able to do or not do as a trainer? Can you articulate that to me now? I'd argue that if you can't articulate that now, then we shouldn't be licensing these people to train. We don't really know what we want them to train for.

We can articulate what we don't want. What are we worried about? We're worried about somebody training a dog that turns into some frothing maniac that gets loose and hurts people. That's what we're worried about. As a dog trainer I can tell you that that's a very badly trained dog if it gets loose and hurts people. Nobody is going to catch that dog. It's not about, you know, essentially how they got trained. So I'm going to push back a little there because your arguments aren't standing up for me.

The other thing was about the requirement for training of security personnel. I would argue that you must have a reference to that in the legislation. I can understand why you want to have the specifics in regulation. That's fine. But if you do not attach the requirement for the training to a licence in the actual legislation, then you really don't have to do it. Anybody reading the legislation doesn't see where they have to do it. It doesn't become part of our requirements about being a security guard.

I would argue that you need to extend your amendments and add in a section that says: in order to get your licence, you will be required to take a training course. Then you can fill in the rest: whether it's a one-day or two-day, an eight-hour or 16-hour course you can take. All the rest of that can be in the regulations. I can't believe I said that. I wish it was all in the legislation. But, no, it's appropriate that the details of that would be in the regulations.

If you don't put it in the legislation, then there will be no overt requirement for training whatsoever. Regs are always hooked to something in the sponsoring legislation. You've got nothing to hook

a regulation about training to in the legislation unless you put the training in the legislation. There's no way to hook it in there. So I think you've got a problem.

The other point that I wanted to talk about – and then I do want to hear what the amendments are coming from the member – was around the prohibited titles. I think the international use of titles like protection or security implies professionalism. I thought what we were trying to do here was accord a professional status to this sector, so why wouldn't they be able to use things like protection officer or security officer? They're not a police officer. Nobody would think that they were. It doesn't say police officer. They don't have the tag on the side that says: police, city of Edmonton, number blah blah. It says Intel Security, you know, or the We're Stronger Than You Private Security Company.

Actually, I find this a little insulting. I know that the member didn't mean it that way, but when you start out by saying, "Oh, we want to acknowledge the professionalism of this sector," and then the first thing you say is, "You can't call yourself or look anything at all like any public security service," in other words, police service or RCMP, then what are we doing here? This is all about: you can't, you can't, you can't.

Under Prohibited Titles under section 39:

A licensee shall not use the expression "private detective", "law enforcement officer", "protection officer" or "security officer" in connection with a business or employment . . .

or hold out that they are those. Prohibited terminology:

A business licensee shall not use the term "police."

Well, that one I agree with. Law enforcement: yeah, I'm probably with you on that. But I don't see what the problem is with protection officer or security officer. If we're trying to acknowledge that these are working hand in glove now, that in fact we don't have to or choose not to fund our police services to the extent that they would need to be in order to provide every single protection and peace and enforcement service that the public requires of them, and if we are going to work with and hire other protection agencies to offer to fill in some of those services, we've got to acknowledge that, or you've got a very unhappy mingling of individuals here.

3:50

The final one was around regulations. Oh, my favourite part. Part 9, Regulations:

45(1) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations, and then there is this never-ending list. Part of what's on the never-ending list are sections (h) and (i):

- (h) respecting the types of weapons and equipment that may be used by individual licensees or classes of individual licensees generally or in particular . . . and prohibiting the use of weapons and equipment.

Then it goes on about:

- (i) . . . the training, use and control of dogs used for the security of persons, property or premises, and prohibiting or regulating the use of those dogs with respect to activities described in the regulations.

So we're still not close to what exactly they're supposed to train to or not train to, and it really looks to me like a money grab here.

The prohibition about weapons. I have not made up my mind about this, but the argument that was made to me from the owner of a security company is: I send my people out there, and I have to be able to protect them, or they have to be able to protect themselves, so why can't they carry something that would allow them to protect themselves? I don't think anybody was talking about guns here, but I had to say: is it fair for us to put someone in a dark and scary place and then say that all they can walk around with is a toothpick? Hmm. Well, okay. I had to admit that there's a bit of a problem there.

I have not made up my mind on this one, so I'm very interested in the arguments on both sides. I agree that I wouldn't want to take a job where somebody said: take the bus to the furthest end of town and then walk around an empty yard all night long with no protection at all. Fair enough. I think what we want to do is be specific when we create these kinds of laws that we don't want someone to be using a weapon that would – you know what? I just don't know enough about this, so I'm interested in hearing what the arguments are.

There was one other point around those weapons. You see, with the police they're told that they always use one level of force up from the level of force that's being used against them. I think we'd want to be careful or regulate or limit what was possible with the private security guards. That's what we're aiming for here. For someone to be able to protect themselves without elevating the level of force or elevating the level of force only to a certain point and no higher is what we're really trying to say as members of the public.

I'm going to take my seat, and I look forward to seeing what the amendment is from the member although there are lots of others who want to speak.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

**Mr. Anderson:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to bring forward some amendments.

Just to clarify a couple of things real quickly, I agree with the hon. member that security services personnel are definitely professionals and are incredible . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Are you presenting amendments now?

**Mr. Anderson:** Yeah. I was just going to.

**The Deputy Chair:** Okay. We'll distribute them first.

**Mr. Anderson:** Okay. Sure, we can do that first.

**The Deputy Chair:** I'll tell the pages to have them all distributed, and then you can proceed.

**Mr. Anderson:** Okay.

So I agree with the member there, and the intent is not to . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** No. Just wait. Wait until they're all distributed.

**Mr. Anderson:** I'm not actually talking about the amendment but to the member's questions.

**The Deputy Chair:** You're not talking to the amendment?

**Ms Blakeman:** No. He's just answering my questions. He will.

**The Deputy Chair:** Okay. We will distribute them while you're speaking to the questions.

**Mr. Anderson:** It's all right. I'll wait.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, proceed.

**Mr. Anderson:** Going back to what I was saying, I agree with the member that security services personnel are professionals and that

they perform a very valuable service to Albertans. That differentiation of officer and security services personnel is not intended to be a slight. For example, if a police officer walks up to me and has reasonable cause, he can tell me to get up on the side of the car and spread 'em, and he can do a search. I have to comply with that if he's a police officer. A security services person cannot to that. They do not have the right to do that. There is difference. They have things that they can do and things they are allowed to do. They're allowed to escort someone out, for example. They're allowed to do some other things. But there are definitely clear differences between what a police officer can do and what a security services individual can do to an individual. It's not intended as a slight, but I think it is important to differentiate between the two.

I guess, further to that, we've had over 200 submissions from stakeholders in the security industry and 50 direct consultations, including the CPS, the EPS, the RCMP, the major security firms, et cetera. Then at the PFC level we had 20 additional submissions. I'm not an expert and I don't think anyone on that committee is an expert on what training, for example, dog trainers need or security services people need, but I'm confident that as we consult with stakeholders who know those details, we can put them in the regulations and make sure that they're getting the right training and go forward on that.

I don't think it's up to this body. I don't think this body is in a position or has, frankly, the knowledge base to be able to specifically identify the level of training and the level of qualifications that they should have. We can identify a couple of little things, but I don't think we could give the whole picture. That's why I think it's better left to the regulations because those might change as we go along and as we consult with stakeholders.

Now, as to the amendments, I'll just go quickly through.

**The Deputy Chair:** You're now proposing an amendment?

**Mr. Anderson:** Yes. Sorry. I move that the amendments that you have before you be included in Bill 10. As a brief explanation, again, these were the recommendations that came out of the policy field committee, and a lot of work and discussion went into them. We had about 20 submissions given to the committee, which we went over line by line, proposal by proposal to see if it was appropriate to include or not include in the bill. We came back as a committee with four recommendations. These amendments are an attempt to get these recommendations put into the bill.

The first revolves around what the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre was speaking about earlier, with clarifying that managers or retail workers responding on behalf of an employer to an alarm are exempt from licensing requirements. How it's worded is that if responding to security alerts or security in general is incidental to the person's position or the person's work, then they are exempted from having to have a licence, because that was never the intent of the bill.

The second clarification is with regard to when a security company needs to report an incident to the registrar. What we decided as a committee was that it would make sense that when there is an allegation of criminal conduct, that should always be reported to the registrar. However, if it was mere force that was used, so if someone was accosting somebody at a store and a security guard came and had to physically restrain the person and maybe put the person on the ground in order to take him off the person he was assaulting, that wouldn't have to be reported to the registrar. However, that sort of incident would have to be kept on internal records so that if it ever became a question in the future, the company could go back to their records. They could say, "Okay,

well, this is the incident; this is what happened,” and it could be dealt with. That’s specifically under part C as well as – I have it right here – part L. That’s where those two clarifications occur.

4:00

The third was an exemption of licensing requirements for individuals from other jurisdictions where there is an appropriate agreement in place such as the TILMA. That’s section K in the amendment. The reason for this, of course, is obvious. We have agreements in place. If we find that the training is just as thorough in another jurisdiction, say B.C., which has similar legislation to this, I don’t think we need to burden those individuals with having to be retrained in Alberta. But there has to be an agreement in place that’s appropriate, or else they would still have to get the training.

Then the fourth and final is an amendment to the appeal process. Specifically, now if you are a licensee and you would like to appeal your licence being taken away, first you would apply to the registrar, and then you could appeal that to the director of law enforcement. With regard to a complainant first you would file the complaint with the employer of the individual, the security guard person, and hopefully the employer would take care of that. If you were not satisfied with that, the complainant could then go to the registrar. If still not satisfied, they would then go to the director of law enforcement for the province of Alberta.

Those are the changes.

**Ms Blakeman:** What I would like to do is under *Beauchesne* 688 request that the larger amendment be severed into different votes that would correspond to the alphabet sections that appear in the amendment – I think that in the end that gives us 13 different votes – just for clarity and being able to vote against one. Please don’t make me vote against the entire bill. So if I could ask for those to be severed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, would you like each one debated individually or done in sections, in blocks? The whole thing or each one debated and voted on separately as we go through?

**Ms Blakeman:** You know what? I have no preference as to how it’s done. I just need the votes done separately. So you can debate the whole thing for several hours and then call the vote separately, or you can debate each section and vote it. I don’t have a preference.

**The Deputy Chair:** What’s the pleasure of the House?

**Mr. Hancock:** Sever the vote.

**The Deputy Chair:** We’ll debate the entire amendment and sever the votes on all the sections.

Okay. On the amendment who wishes to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona has the floor.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this amendment. I had actually not yet had an opportunity to speak on the whole bill, but I’ll limit my comments to what we’re dealing with right now, which is the amendment. I realize that this amendment essentially flows from the recommendations made by the policy field committee consideration of this bill. While I do sit on that policy field committee, I was unable to make it to the meetings where these recommendations were constructed and voted on, so I would like to take the opportunity right now to say that I don’t and the caucus of which I’m a part does not agree with the proposed amendments that are coming forward, which is fine. But I’d like to have an opportunity, then, to just outline why that is.

The first amendment that I want to highlight is the one under C, this notion of changing or replacing the need to report to the registrar such that where it would have been where there is an incident of excessive force, now we would only be reporting or self-reporting to the registrar in incidents of alleged allegation of criminal activities.

Well, I know we do have a number of lawyers in the House. I suspect that most people, those of us who are here, remember those first-year law school quizzes we had, where we sort of talked about whether, you know, two people agreeing to get into a boxing ring with each other, and one person accidentally kills the other through a misplaced punch – is that a criminal activity, is that an assault? – versus somebody coming up to you and touching your shoulder, sort of like maybe your kids do in the back seat, where they play that little I touched you game. Which one is an assault, or are either of them an assault? Of course, the answer is that the latter one is, and the former one is not.

Not everyone needs to know that, but the reality is that this whole notion that, you know, an allegation of a criminal event is the only thing that gets reported: I think that at the end of the day that change is going to reduce the number of occasions where activities of the security guard are being reported. Simply put, I think that that is inappropriate. I think that the employer of the security guard needs to report to the registrar any occasion where there is an allegation of excessive force, whether it is or is not something that might actually be perceived to be, in fact, an allegation of a criminal offence on the part of the security guard.

I say this because, generally speaking, we need to change this bill in many ways in order to build and enhance the oversight and the monitoring and the protection of the public with respect to activities of the security industry. There is a really troubling trend not only in Alberta but across North America for there to be a reduction in a publicly funded and accountable police force. It is combined, then, with a private police force. Regardless of what the attempts are in this legislation to distinguish between police and security personnel, the fact of the matter is that there is tremendous overlap and that it is a privatization of what has historically been for over a century one of the most fundamental public services in our communities. I am very troubled with any kind of increase in our society’s reliance on private security personnel – very, very troubled by that – and certainly to the extent that it does happen, I think it needs to be monitored and enforced with tremendous rigour.

I remember being involved in a discussion 10 years ago about whether it was appropriate for the publicly funded provincial insurer to pay police out of their budget for their work in reducing speeding offences. There was a tremendous brouhaha about that. The reason behind that was because there was a fundamental conflict with the notion of certain areas of society – even, in that case, a publicly funded one but, nonetheless, certain areas of society, whether private or public – distorting the priorities of the police force by way of having the money to fund the police force. That is why fundamentally there is a problem with this trend. Anyway, I’ll just put that on the record – now I’ll go back to the amendment – so that’s a concern with that.

Flowing from that, then, you will be not at all surprised to hear that I am also very, very troubled with the proposed amendments to the appeal process, very troubled. Frankly, I was troubled by the proposed appeal process in the first run at the bill because I thought that was inadequate. What’s being proposed here is to reduce that even more.

4:10

We heard at the committee and received submissions at the committee from representatives from various and sundry police

spokespeople who said to us: "Wait a minute. If our officers do something wrong, inappropriately use force or somehow otherwise inappropriately exercise the authority given to us by virtue of our office, we are held accountable by the Law Enforcement Review Board. Why is it that people involved in the security industry, who overlap with us so much, do not have that same accountability? There is no mechanism for the public to be as protected from those inappropriate uses of authority."

That's a very good answer. I recall some of the discussion, at least the part that I was able to hear, being: well, yes, but the Law Enforcement Review Board is so backlogged right now that the last thing we need to do is create a whole bunch of new people whose misconduct might ultimately find its way in front of the Law Enforcement Review Board. While I appreciate that that's a problem, that's kind of akin to saying, "You know, we know we've got a Charter of Rights and Freedoms here, but we're just really going to ask that you not try and enforce it because there's a real backlog in our courts" or "Yeah, we know we've got a whole bunch of criminals over here, but you know, we're just not going to actually arrest those ones because there's a real backlog in our courts."

I absolutely reject that rationale for not subjecting the activities of security personnel to the same standards and conduct required by our police officials. Thus, in the current proposed act licensees – i.e., security companies or security personnel – who have their licence taken away from them in the current act before this amendment have the right to go to the Law Enforcement Review Board. However, members of the public who have a complaint against either an individual security guard or a company that employs them has no right to go to the Law Enforcement Review Board. Frankly, that lack of parallel right and that lack of appeal process is something that needs to be fixed.

The answer to fixing that disproportionate or imbalanced access to appeal is not to actually cut off all access to the Law Enforcement Review Board, which is what is being proposed through this amendment. The absolutely last thing that this Legislature should consider doing is limiting the accountability of the growing security industry. Leaving it simply to the internal director to review these things with no appeal to the Law Enforcement Review Board creates two standards, one for our police, the other for security personnel. Where there is inappropriate behaviour, it may well be that that behaviour is often the same thing.

When I hear stories about complaints that have been filed against police officers, it's not about them shooting somebody; it's about the inappropriate use of force. That's the same kind of thing that will happen with security personnel, yet the person who is unfortunate enough to be the victim of an inappropriate exercise of force at the hands of a privately funded security personnel who's protecting their employer's property has less access to have their rights addressed and their rights protected than the person who may well be the victim of inappropriate force exercised by a police officer.

To me, these amendments are heading in utterly the wrong direction. In fact, the act as a whole needs to be amended but to do the exact opposite of what these amendments are trying to do, which is to build in additional accountability for the actions of private security companies and their personnel on a level that is the same as we have come to enjoy with respect to our police officials within our community.

I'm concerned as well about the reciprocal agreement idea. Certainly, you never know from one province to another what the training standards are. We will talk more on the general bill about how I think it doesn't say anywhere near enough about training. The idea of just accepting training done in one province as being

adequate here – the committee itself reviewed cross-jurisdictional comparisons. Just as an example, B.C. has, I believe, five times the enforcement resources as Alberta does right now in terms of the oversight and monitoring of security personnel. They also have a great deal more training and all that kind of stuff, and they regularly monitor whereas in Alberta as it stands right now, for instance, it's very spotty. That's in the document we were provided on the committee. So we see two very, very different systems. I'm concerned about simply relying on another jurisdiction's standards and saying that that's good enough in terms of the training that we ultimately decide is required here. I'm a bit concerned about that reciprocity agreement, notwithstanding TILMA and all the wonderful, wonderful, brilliant economic benefits that will flow to us all as a result of it, in theory.

Nonetheless, those are my primary concerns. I just want to re-emphasize, though, that I think the amendments with respect to the appeal process are absolutely the wrong way to go. They do not protect the interests of the majority of Albertans, a trend that is going to create more and more problems in this area, and they simply give more authority to a very select group of people to deny the rights of people to have their concerns addressed.

Those will be all my comments at this point on this amendment. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on the amendment.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. Thank you very much. I was quite interested in going over this series of amendments that have been presented to us this afternoon on Bill 10. I had an opportunity to sit on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and Services. Certainly, it was interesting, to say the least. I initially met in July outside of the committee with a group of individuals who were involved in the security industry. I first had contact with these individuals from our constituency, and before I knew it, they had organized a meeting regarding the committee's mandate, this bill, and ultimately these amendments that are before us this afternoon.

Now, there was a lot of interest, surprisingly, in this bill. Loss prevention officers from out of province and also all over the province were interested in expressing an opinion on this bill. There was shopping mall security. There was hotel security. There were individuals from commercial premises, office buildings. There were representatives from both Calgary and Edmonton involved with community policing. We had quite a broad discussion on Bill 10, and a lot of the discussions always came back to, of course, the report and recommendations to the Alberta Solicitor General and Public Security ministry from November of 2006.

Of course, the committee went through its various meetings, some of them called quite quickly, and one that I, unfortunately, could not attend. When we look at the recent meeting, the one that I couldn't attend, and the recommendations that were presented to the Assembly here, the recommendations from that meeting, again, are totally different than the amendments that are being presented here today. The original Standing Committee on Public Safety and Services recommendations for Bill 10 were around section 7, the security alarm responders, which is in here, and it's fine; the business licensee obligations, section 19 – I had some trouble with it when I heard about it before the committee, and I still do – and the appeals process.

We're going to start with the appeals process here, Mr. Chairman, and that would be amendment A: "Section 1(b) is struck out." Now, section 1(b), of course, is in the definitions, and it says, "'Board' means the Law Enforcement Review Board established under the



Police Act.” So we’re going to eliminate that. Also associated with that will be amendment E, which is section 24, and that is to be struck out. Of course, section 24 is the appeal to the board.

4:20

Now, I appreciated the gentleman’s time, the chairman of the committee, in organizing this. The chairman of the committee was quite diligent. I phoned him indicating that there was considerable interest in this bill from the security industry across the province. The chairman of the committee, the hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne, put me in touch with Mr. Meade from the department, and we worked through a lot of these questions and concerns and issues. I would like to state publicly, on the record, that I appreciated that. But when I see these amendments here, I have many reservations.

When we’re looking at the Law Enforcement Review Board and its role in this, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona is correct. I think the Law Enforcement Review Board is needed here, Mr. Chairman. When we had this discussion at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and Services, there was the issue of the workload of the Law Enforcement Review Board. I would encourage all hon. members to read the *Hansard* from those committee meetings. Certainly, the Law Enforcement Review Board is way behind. I felt at that time that there was a reluctance to provide that information to me, but I did receive it, and in some cases they’re up to two years behind. This bill in its original form was to increase the workload of that board, and if it has a significant workload, this is no reason to strike it out.

Now, if we look at the report from only two years ago, from November of 2006, Mr. Chairman, a recommendation was made in the government MLA review of the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act. I’ll be specific. This is recommendation 7.5, and I’m going to read directly from it. “Agencies or individuals that have their licence cancelled for not complying with standards would still have access to the current process involving an appeal to the Law Enforcement Review Board (LERB).”

Why are we ignoring the advice and the recommendation from the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills? Hopefully, in the course of debate today or this evening or how long this takes, we can get an answer to that. But I’m not satisfied with this. Maybe we can hear directly from the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills because for some specific reason that individual wanted the Law Enforcement Review Board to be part of the appeals process for this bill and for this industry. For us to take it out, I think, is an error. I really do. For that very reason I, for one, will not be supporting amendment A and also its companion amendment E, which is the striking out of section 24. This is wrong. We’ve got to have a full appeals process. If we have to strengthen the Law Enforcement Review Board, well, let’s do it. Certainly, when we look at this bill, this is the wrong direction.

I don’t know if the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere has had a chance since the amendments to this bill have been circulated in this House or prior to consult the stakeholders again regarding these amendments. I would certainly be interested, and I fully intend to contact some of the groups to see if they are satisfied with this direction that we’re going in. I suspect they are not.

Now, we also look at other amendments here, Mr. Chairman. There are a lot more amendments being presented here today than what was recommended by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and Services to this House through the document that was tabled here earlier. As I said, we’ve got an amendment or a change or a recommendation to the security alarm responders, the business

licensee obligations, and the appeals process. Unfortunately, there are other amendments here as well.

When looking at the review by the director, I don’t think we should consider that adequate. This is an industry. I didn’t realize it, but this is a significant industry. I didn’t realize until I sat on this committee, for instance, that in any hotel one visits or checks into there are security personnel. I guess they’re doing their job really well because they’re neither seen nor heard from unless there is trouble. The same applies to loss prevention officers in retail stores, whether it’s a grocery store or whether it’s a hardware store. You never see the loss prevention officers; you never hear from them until there’s trouble.

When you look at security personnel involved in commercial buildings, in shopping centres, we have to be careful that we don’t put these people out of work. Many of them have suggested to me, Mr. Chairman, that if these fees and schedules get too high, they’re going to have to walk away and get into another line of employment. If the regulations are going to be too burdensome, they may just walk with their feet to another career.

That being said, we have to be very, very careful with this bill and with the amendments. I know the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere has worked very hard at this. He was kind enough to give us a PowerPoint presentation on this entire bill. And now, after that extensive public consultation, we have these amendments, which are a totally different direction, Mr. Chairman, than what we had done earlier. After I’ve seen this, I am very anxious to contact the groups that I had the privilege of talking to.

I would also like to point out to members of the House the fact – and I’m not starting at A and going to M – that a lot of these amendments are related. Initially, Mr. Chairman, we were talking about conducting appeals under section 24 of the Security Services and Investigators Act. But the Police Act – this is in the original bill here, and section 50 is going to be struck out in its entirety – is amended in section 17(1) by striking out “and” at the end of clause (c), adding “and” at the end of clause (d), and adding the following after clause (d):

- (e) shall conduct appeals under section 24 of the Security Services and Investigators Act.

4:30

Why is it necessary to now strike this out? I’m going to contact the community policing department of the Edmonton Police Service and, hopefully, have an opportunity to also do the same in Calgary and see how they feel about this. The community policing services in both cities have quite a dialogue with the rest of the security industry that I mentioned here earlier, and they exchange information frequently. In a way I think that it benefits all of us, actually, and benefits public safety.

I’m certain that there are some amendments in here that I would be quite willing to support, but certainly there are many that I do not have confidence in, and for those reasons I would like to talk to many of the individuals that I had the pleasure of meeting this summer and see what they have to say regarding this series of amendments.

In conclusion, I would like to note the concerns that have been issued regarding the Law Enforcement Review Board – why remove that from Bill 10 at this point? – and also, Mr. Chairman, to look at what was recommended by the committee, whether I agreed with it or whether I disagreed with it, whether I was present or absent when some of this was discussed, and that would apply to any other hon. member. We look at what the standing committee has done. I pointed out some of the inconsistencies in this legislation now in comparison to the recommendations made by the hon. Member for

Calgary-Foothills, and if you look at this long list of amendments, I think it's time to adjourn debate on this bill. Hopefully we will hear from stakeholders from across the province who have a very keen interest in the direction that the security services industry is going with this Bill 10.

Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Bill 35

#### Government Organization Amendment Act, 2008

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to this bill in place of the Minister of Infrastructure today. There were a few concerns raised during second reading, and I'd just like to take this opportunity in Committee of the Whole to discuss some of those concerns.

The purpose of Bill 35 is to provide the Minister of Infrastructure with additional flexibility in the sale of public land so that government can quickly adapt to unique circumstances. The ability to act in a timely manner will allow government to take advantage of opportunities that present themselves but are not contemplated in existing legislation. It's been suggested that this legislation will soften the requirements for government land sales and will jeopardize transparency and accountability of the land sales process. I want to assure this House that this government is not changing the principles of its land sale disposition policy with Bill 35. The best interests of Albertans have been and will remain a primary consideration. Bill 35 simply provides the Minister of Infrastructure with authority similar to that of the minister of sustainable resources.

Mr. Chairman, it is important to note that the vast majority of land transactions will be conducted using the procedures and principles outlined in the existing legislation. Use of the proposed provision will be the exception, not the norm.

Mr. Chairman, with that, I would ask that we continue with debate in Committee of the Whole.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have heard what the Member for Lethbridge-West, who is speaking for the Minister of Infrastructure, has said about this bill. I am sure this is a person of integrity and that if they say this, they believe it. However, unfortunately, that individual will not always be around to stand up and say that they guarantee that this is the case, and I'd rather have it written in the legislation, and that's what's missing here.

When he talks about, you know, how this is just giving the government opportunity to take advantage of some land sales or some things where timing might be of the essence, that always needs to be balanced against protection of the public asset and of taxpayers' money and, of course, transparency and accountability of the government. I am not hearing from the sponsor or from the Member for Lethbridge-West, frankly, any proof or any assurance that that balance is being achieved with this bill. In fact, I would argue that the balance is not being achieved with the bill.

Of course, the offending section for me is that although there are provisions in 10(3)(a), those can be ignored because of the additional

powers that they've given themselves under 10(3)(c), which allows cabinet to make a sale totally outside of and not subject to the other safeguards that have been put in place. In fact, what's actually being done in this bill is the antithesis of what the member claims is being done in this bill, and that's my issue with this.

I also am increasingly aware that this government prefers doing business with P3s. We heard this morning – yeah, it probably was morning – in this House about how certain school boards feel that they were not offered a choice. It was: take a P3 or don't get a school. Of course, school boards that are trying to provide schools for their students are going to take the P3, but they certainly didn't feel they had a choice. As this government chooses more and more delivery of public health through P3 health facilities, through school board facilities . . . [interjection] They were indeed. This is from Public Accounts on October 7, 2008. I'm reading the *Hansard*, and that's exactly what they said: "If we didn't go along with the P3s, was there an alternative? We were told no. It had to be P3s." Well, there you go.

**Mr. MacDonald:** You don't have to table this.

**Ms Blakeman:** No, I don't because it's in *Hansard*, and people can look it up. Now it's been referenced, so they can look it up twice.

This government clearly prefers P3s. Okay. Fine. Well, not fine, but accepting that for this argument, do we have P3s, then, and P3 situations considered into the mix when we see the government allowing to make sales outside of these boundaries? Are we now talking once again about taking public assets and delivering them over for private profit? That's never acceptable in my terms.

If you're going to be a private business, go ahead. There are lots of good private businesses, and they supply a lot of things that we need and want in this society, but as soon as you start taking public money, you're into a different ball game here because it is about making sure that there are opportunities for transparency and accountability in a way that we generally do not have a relationship with the private sector. I think that that transparency and accountability needs to be enhanced. You must conform to the standards that are set for government, not lower them to standards that are currently acceptable in the private sector, and I think that has been amply demonstrated, for example, by what we've seen happen in the financial markets in the U.S.

4:40

I would argue back, against what's being presented here by the Member for Lethbridge-West, that that is exactly what is not happening here. I would need some much clearer examples of where he could demonstrate to me that this opportunity would exist, where he would be able to also demonstrate where the protection of the public asset, the transparency, and the accountability would stay in place. That has not been offered as part of this discussion, but it may well be. We're in Committee of the Whole. There's opportunity for people to get up repeatedly.

Overall, what I do see here along with the continuing enabling of P3s to deliver and be the recipient of public service and public dollars is a systematic dismantling of legislative controls on spending. I think that's what I'm seeing here as well. The very thing that didn't save Canada but left us in a better position given the financial meltdown in the U.S. is that we tended to have better controls – and lots of financial people have admitted this – in Canada. We had more legislated limitations on what people could do in those markets, and that left us in better shape. We were far more protected, and the public was protected. The investors were protected. We did it better.

Why are we now watching one of our richest governments turn around and systematically lift those legislative controls on spending? I think that should be great cause for concern. It is following a pattern that this government has followed before. I mean, that's the thing you get when you've got a government that has been in place for coming close to 40 years now, I think. In tracking that same government, you can clearly see the choices they make where they start to repeat history, and that's the point we're at right now because exactly the same thing happened in the early '80s. The financial economy started to get a little wonky, the controls were taken off by the government, and we got into serious trouble and took a long time to dig ourselves out as a result of that.

I would speak against what is being contemplated in Bill 35, the Government Organization Amendment Act, 2008. I know that a number of my colleagues are also interested in commenting on this bill, so I will take my seat.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is, again, as I said earlier, a very interesting piece of legislation. I have no idea in the world – and I don't mean to be disrespectful – why this government would suggest that they need additional flexibility to address some of the situations around the sale of Crown lands. They've got more flexibility than a Slinky right now, and I think we should be going the other way with the sale of Crown lands and making it much more open and much more transparent.

We only have to look at some of the controversies not only surrounding the sale of the surplus ring road land around Edmonton and Calgary and some of the sweet deals that individuals got there, but we look at the sale of land in Fort McMurray. The Auditor General had to get involved in that and write an entire report devoted to those practices.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Why don't you talk about it? Why don't you tell what he said?

**Mr. MacDonald:** He had lots to say on that, hon. member, and perhaps you can join in the debate and explain to the House and to the public exactly what he did say. That's your privilege.

#### Point of Order Clarification

**Mr. Boutilier:** Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The hon. member, if I understand correctly, will submit that, where the Auditor General says that the opposition, in fact, made erroneous comments, unsubstantiated. In fact, he refuted them in a public record as the Auditor General and the Ethics Commissioner. I remind the hon. member of that, and I'll submit it as a quotation of what he actually did in fact submit.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I'd have to look at the Blues to substantiate that, but I don't believe that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar made any specific statement to that point at the moment.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Good. Glad to clarify that.

**Mr. MacDonald:** I appreciate that, Mr. Chairman. Certainly, there's no point of order there. I again would encourage the hon. member from Fort McMurray to participate in the debate.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. MacDonald:** Now, you look specifically at schedule 11 of the Government Organization Act, and we look at what is suggested here. We can go through the sale or disposition of land, and we can go through what has been suggested under the Real Estate Act or “after the Minister has obtained 2 or more appraisals of the market value of the land, at least one of which is obtained from an appraiser who is not an employee of the Government and carries on a business as an appraiser, and” – we can go on to item (c) – for an amount “not less than market value of the land, as determined by the Minister, having regard to those appraisals” referred to earlier. This, certainly, one could live with if we were going to have invitations to submit tenders and whatnot. That is open, and that is transparent. I'm sure taxpayers, who own the land and, if it is sold, are going to be anxious to ensure that we get top dollar for each and every acre, could certainly agree with this.

But when we look at 3(c) here, it states: “Under circumstances authorized by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, subject to any conditions that may be imposed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.” Now, that's cabinet approval. The cabinet can make the rules without any public discussion, and that's it. That's it. One shouldn't have to go to the library or to the Queen's Printer and check it all out in the *Gazette* and see what land was sold and get the details that way, see how much it was sold for on a per-acre basis or whatever. We shouldn't have to do that. Then not all the information, it is my experience, is made available to the public.

When we look also not only at the *Alberta Gazette* but at what the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development can do under the Public Lands Act, there have been questions raised in this House and raised in various parts of the province about the sale of land under the Public Lands Act under the authority of the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Now, I think it certainly is not necessary to give the hon. Minister of Infrastructure the authority that the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development has. I just can't for the life of me understand the logic of this.

At this point, Mr. Chairman, I would like to circulate and, hopefully, hear from all sides of the House regarding an amendment that I have for Bill 35. It's signed by Legislative Counsel. I'm going to keep one and give the chairman the original. If the page could circulate these, please.

**The Deputy Chair:** We'll take a moment to have the amendment circulated.

I think all members have the amendment. You can proceed, hon. member, to speak to it.

4:50

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The amendment that is circulated reads that the Government Organization Amendment Act, 2008, be amended in section 2(a) by striking out the proposed subsection (3)(c). Again, that reads: “Under circumstances authorized by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, subject to any conditions that may be imposed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.” So cabinet approval is being removed from this bill. Certainly, the rest of it, I think, as I said earlier, we can live with.

Why should we remove this? Well, simply to protect the taxpayers. I don't think that in the past we have gotten full value, real value for some of the transactions that this government has committed to over the years, certainly, around the ring roads in Edmonton and in Calgary. In fact, there is still some of this land left to be sold, Mr. Chairman. Now, in light of what has happened in the

past with the sale of surplus land around the ring road by previous Conservative governments – you know, they can't explain some of the bad deals on some of this surplus land.

There are many individuals and many corporations that are involved in land banking. That's part of the capitalist free-market economy that we live in. I'll certainly live with that. But whenever the taxpayers do not appear to be getting full value for the land that is sold by this government – and it's the taxpayers who paid for it in the first place – it's a bad deal. It's a good deal for these people who were lucky enough, if I can use that term, to get the land, but it's a bad deal for the taxpayers.

When we consider this amendment, let's remember that in the recent past – and I don't know how to describe this government anymore that's been in power for 38 years, whether it's one dynasty, the next dynasty, or the next dynasty. But when you put it all together, there's a pattern. The first dynasty – I'll use that word – or regime. I think regime is better than dynasty. I'm going to say regime.

**An Hon. Member:** Dynasty fits.

**Mr. MacDonald:** No. I'm going back. I'm going to change my mind, hon. member. It's going to be regime. The first regime accumulated all this land at top dollar. The second regime scratched their head and was puzzled at what to do with this land. Initially the idea was to build a ring road, which was a good idea. The third regime started to build a ring road and started to sell off the surplus land that was no longer needed. This occurred in both Edmonton and Calgary.

This land that had been accumulated cost millions of dollars, millions and millions of dollars. Of course, it was taxpayers' money. So the government, the cabinet, has an obligation to get maximum back in the sale of the surplus land, and hopefully they can turn a profit if they hold onto this land for a period of time, sell it for more than what they paid. In the cases that I'm familiar with, they were purchasing land for \$40,000 per acre, \$45,000 per acre, \$50,000 per acre. This is in the early '80s. Then just before this boom, this current boom, hit its zenith or peak, they were selling that land for as little as \$5,000 and \$10,000 an acre. This is after the road has been constructed, so you got a twin freeway with bridges over the river. That has a certain appeal to developers. They can build single-family houses there and sell them. People can go in any direction, hopefully quickly. It will happen, Mr. Chairman, once we get those overpasses built. Anyway, the chairman is looking at me like I'm off course here, and I'm not.

The land that I'm referring to consisted of over 500 acres and four lots at the southwest corner of the Henday ring road. It was purchased by the government in 1987 for \$10.2 million. Now, some people in one of the Conservative dynasties – I'm back to that dynasty thing. See, the minister does have influence on me, Mr. Chairman. Now, Dick Johnston was the Provincial Treasurer at the time. He criticized this \$10 million deal, suggesting that it was only worth \$4 million and that the government, the minister at the time who was in charge of this, had overpaid. We can go on with this, but there were direct, specific questions in this House less than two years ago on this series of transactions. I discovered that a lot of the land, 500 acres, had been quietly shifted back to one of the individuals involved in assembling the land in the first place, the late Mr. Joseph Shekter. This land was transferred back for \$4, or \$1 per lot.

Now, I was never satisfied with the infrastructure and transportation minister's explanation of this, but in my recollection of the land titles documents that are registered, there was no language in those land title documents indicating that the government had to sever

what was needed and return the rest to the same individual. There were no instruments on the title to that effect whatsoever.

Now, this is only one example of this government's purchase and then transfer of land. The cabinet does not, in my opinion, deserve to have this authority or power that is going to be granted under 3(c) if we were to allow this bill to proceed through the Assembly unamended.

I'm not going to go on any further, Mr. Chairman, but allowing the government, allowing the cabinet, to be specific, to have this kind of authority is going to be a bad deal, in my view, for the taxpayers of this province. For that reason I'm presenting this amendment to strike out this proposed section 3(c). I would encourage all hon. members of this House to support my amendment. Hopefully, I can even count on the support of the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members wish to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** He was before me.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre cedes to the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. Do you wish to speak?

5:00

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Based on what I've heard, I certainly cannot be supporting the amendment that is being suggested by the hon. member. Not only that, but it should come as no surprise . . . [interjection] The amendment is what I am speaking to.

I'd also like to indicate that I've asked the Legislative Assembly for the report that the hon. member made reference to, and I would like for the benefit of everyone to get a copy of that, which is being retrieved as we speak, because what was described by the hon. member – really, I think it's important to tell the rest of the story based on what was written by the Auditor General, which was presented to this Legislative Assembly, as well as the report that was submitted by the Ethics Commissioner to this Assembly.

I will remind the hon. member in terms specifically verbatim of what they had said relative to the issue of land sales in the constituency that he made reference to in the oil sands capital city. In actual fact, I think he will find it quite amazing and quite contrary to what he has created in the innuendo that he made reference to this afternoon. Certainly, based on the important points he made not relevant to, in fact, an amendment, I cannot support it.

**The Deputy Chair:** To the amendment. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. Well, I'd like to speak in favour of the amendment because this amendment actually addresses the concerns that I was raising when I spoke previously to this bill by removing that kind of . . .

**Mr. MacDonald:** Cabinet authority?

**Ms Blakeman:** Well, yeah. I was going to call it a get out of jail free card, but that's not appropriate in the circumstances.

Taking out that exception clause of 10(3)(c), which allowed that decision-making to happen outside of the parameters that had been set in order to ensure accountability and transparency – that's where my concerns were, and that's exactly what this motion is doing:

striking out that subsection (3)(c). So I'm very happy to support this.

**Mr. MacDonald:** I'm pleased.

**Ms Blakeman:** You're most welcome, hon. member.

I've been trying to follow the Member for Wood Buffalo . . .

**Mr. Boutilier:** It's Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Ms Blakeman:** My apologies. Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. Thank you for the correction.

I actually didn't hear the member notate that particular constituency in his comments. He just referenced the Auditor General's report but nothing specific. So I'll admit you have me a bit baffled there about your concerns, but I'm sure you could put something on the record about it. I just didn't quite understand how it pertained to what was being discussed by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Yeah, this would solve my problems with this bill, actually, and I'd be very willing to support it if we could pass this amendment. So I'm urging my colleagues in the Assembly to pass amendment A1, that has been moved onto the floor by my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West. To the amendment.

**Mr. Weadick:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate hearing the discussions regarding the Government Organization Amendment Act. However, I cannot support the amendment that has been brought forward. The purpose of Bill 35 is to provide the Minister of Infrastructure with additional flexibility in the sale of public lands so that government can quickly adapt to unique circumstances. The ability to act in a timely manner will allow government to take advantage of opportunities that present themselves but are not contemplated in existing legislation. The proposed amendment suggested today does not support that purpose.

I want to assure the House that government is not changing the principles of its land disposition policy in Bill 35. The best interests of Albertans will remain a primary consideration. Bill 35 simply provides the Ministry of Infrastructure with similar authority to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development.

Therefore, I urge the members of the House to oppose the proposed amendment to Bill 35 brought forward today. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. If I could ask the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West: what unique circumstances does the hon. member have in mind? Can he give us an example of one of the unique circumstances that would be necessary?

**Mr. Weadick:** At this point in time I'm not privy to any of the specific situations that may occur. I just want to make sure that the minister has the flexibility to make the decisions as they appear.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are you ready for the question on the amendment?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are back to the bill. Any other members wish to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. Thank you. When we are looking at this bill in committee and we're looking at this additional flexibility that we're going to provide to the cabinet and to the Minister of Infrastructure and his department, I wonder if we could have a list, before we proceed any further through the discussion on this bill, of all surplus lands that the province holds that they're contemplating selling through this process, all the surplus land in Calgary and Edmonton and in other areas, including Fort McMurray, that the government may contemplate selling in the near future under this legislation and, also, what land they may be considering purchasing for purposes unknown. If I could have those questions answered, I would be grateful.

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Chairman, the hon. member even knows, in the way he smiles as he sits down, that what he is suggesting is absurd, that one would publish a list of all the land that you're potentially interested in buying, thereby – what? – allowing speculators to get in and drive the price up.

I mean, the bottom line is that there is a flexibility in process both in the disposal of the land and in the purchase of land. Take a transportation corridor, for example. Once you've delineated where the roads go, then you determine what's extra land, and if there are purposes for it, that can be determined, and if there is not a purpose for it, then it is appropriate to dispose of it. To suggest for a moment that one would create a list of all the land that's surplus at the moment and somehow believe that that would be comprehensive or to make a list of all the land that you're intending to purchase until you've actually gone out and acquired the corridor or done some preliminary work just defies the whole question of how one does land assembly.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. Well, I can certainly appreciate that from the hon. Minister of Education. Certainly, whenever we look at the past record around transportation and utility corridors and the purchase and the assembling of various parcels of land, people made a significant profit on buying and selling that land. I guess they were just guessing where the transportation and utility corridor was going to be located by the government. It must have been all just a speculative guess.

That is certainly not an unreasonable request when everyone considers that surplus land is being sold and is not being listed as surplus on any government website that I have access to. Let's get everyone interested, drive up the price, and get top dollar for the taxpayers.

That's not an unreasonable request whatsoever, and I'm disappointed that the information would not be provided in the normal course of debate. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Yes, Mr. Chairman. On this point I would like to say that I certainly support what the Government House Leader has said relative to the absurd questions that were asked of him. But I would even like to go further in saying that on the particular issue, the actual issue of land, in terms of public disclosure on the government

of Alberta's numerous ministries I'm proud to say they have combined six ministries into one ministry, which I think is far more productive in terms of ensuring that the public interest is served, which it is.

In terms of the hon. member and his eastern background, hailing from Prince Edward Island, I would only suggest this: I understand that there is someone back there who is willing to sell some land at low tide, and if he is interested, I can give him some assistance on that particular purchase of land.

5:10

**The Deputy Chair:** Anyone else wish to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. Thank you. I don't know if it's worthy of a response or not, Mr. Chairman. Certainly if the hon. member could tell us which six departments he is referring to, I would appreciate that, and I'm sure other members of the House would as well, and how, also, this does not contradict what the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West said initially in comparing the Department of Infrastructure to that of Sustainable Resource Development.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Yeah. Actually, that's an intelligent question, and I appreciate it. In actual fact, you may not be aware, but in particular Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo – and by the way, my comments actually support, do not contradict but support, in fact, what the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West is proposing. But the actual ministries that were involved were the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Development, the Ministry of Environment. At the time there was a ministry of seniors; it had a different name, as the minister would appreciate. There was the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Infrastructure, and the final ministry is Treasury Board, who in fact have combined them all into the one for the six.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are you ready for the question on Bill 35, the Government Organization Amendment Act, 2008?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The clauses of Bill 35 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

#### Bill 34

#### Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2008

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Certainly, when we're looking at the Employment Pension Plans Amendment Act, we have to ensure that the questions that were addressed earlier in second reading are now on the record. I understand that there has been an extensive consultation process on this bill with various groups by the government.

Whenever we look at private-sector employment pension plans,

which really is what we're talking about here, and how they're regulated and how they're regulated here as well as in other jurisdictions, we have to make sure that this legislation is what is needed at this time because certainly there have been a lot of changes in pension plans, unfortunately, since the time even that this bill was drafted. As I understand it, under this proposal if a pension plan is registered in another jurisdiction, only the administrative and the day-to-day funding and investment laws of that jurisdiction will be applied. The laws of this province will apply in all other areas.

Now, how pension plans are funded, by whom, and the investment laws that apply: this will have significant interest to hundreds of different pension plans that are administered here by Alberta Finance. Certainly, whenever we look at unions, for instance – the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre asked if many of the unions had been consulted. I referred to *Hansard*, and I haven't seen where that has been addressed. Now, I may have missed it.

Certainly, when we talk about union pensions, we're talking mostly about construction unions and various other unions. They're not the public-sector unions, that have an agreement under the public-sector pension plans, or the LAPP or any of those that are also administered by the minister of finance. I would just like to have it clarified who has been consulted, what advice has been provided, and if those individuals are satisfied with these amendments that are going forward. Now, the Member for Calgary-Nose Hill I believe has made an effort to notify the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, has provided some additional information, and I'm going to go through this information and see what specifically was said.

With those comments, I will cede the floor to another hon. colleague. Hopefully, the pension plans that are under the scope of this act will always be well funded and will have a decent return on their investment, and the members and their families can be confident that these pension plans, hundreds of them, are administered in a very good way.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I will adjourn debate at this time on Bill 34. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

#### Bill 36

#### Land Titles Amendment Act, 2008

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure today to rise and start Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 36, the Land Titles Amendment Act, 2008. The high volume of land title registrations in the province over the past few years reflects Alberta's hot real estate market. The government's land titles office has made commendable efforts and has done an admirable job of dealing with the high volume of land title registrations.

The major amendment being proposed is the pending registration queue. The queue is a searchable database of documents that have been submitted to land titles offices but not yet registered against the title to a property. The idea behind the queue is to assign an identification number to a document as soon as it is submitted to the land titles office. This ID number will give the document priority in registration or a place in line, if you'd like, over all the other documents that affect that particular title with a later identification number. The public will be able to see all the documents in the queue when they register the document. The queue will facilitate

more efficient land transfers and create certainty in how the title will look when the document is finally registered.

Other minor amendments in the bill will clarify when assurance claim coverage begins and allow the Alberta Land Surveyors to appoint a member to sign for former members.

5:20

At this time I would like to respond to the questions from second reading. The Member for Edmonton-Centre asked a question as to the circumstances that would require cabinet-authorized queue-jumping of a land titles search. This is intended to address a situation where there is a court order directing that a document be registered immediately or for documents that in the opinion of the registrar are frivolous registrations or meant to slow up the registration of other documents. Also, documents that are not in priority competition, such as a discharge of an existing registration, will be given the ability to queue-jump because they are not competing with the documents in front of them for priority status on title, and there is no prejudice to any document in the queue by having these registered early. In fact, that person would get a cleaner title, which is likely a benefit to them.

Fraud is another situation that is meant to be addressed. In the Land Titles Amendment Act, 2006, which was recently proclaimed, we gave the registrar the power to refuse documents if there's evidence of fraud. The registrar could reject this document and register the documents behind it in the queue notwithstanding that the time for correcting the document and redistributing has passed.

A second question came from the Member for St. Albert as to what the process would be for dealing with documents submitted to the queue and subsequently rejected to ensure that they do not become stale-dated. This will be dealt with in the regulations that are in development, but the idea will be to maintain the current process. Documents that have been examined and have irregularities will maintain their place in the queue for a set number of days to allow the document to be corrected. If it is not corrected and resubmitted to land titles within that time, it will lose its priority in the queue. If necessary, an extension of time will be granted. The intention is that there will not be too many changes to the functioning of the rejection process as it is now. However, as the queue is searchable by the public, we need to detail the process in a publicly available regulation rather than in our own policy documents.

I look forward to additional debate on the bill. I'd be prepared to try to answer any questions. I'm encouraged by the debate that we've had so far and look forward to more discussion in Committee of the Whole.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think this is a good bill. One of the reasons that I think it is good is that it will help eliminate some of the horror tales that we've heard over the last two or three years about people coming home and finding that their home has been sold out from under them, obviously with fraudulent registrations, et cetera.

It really does create a database that's publicly accessible, as has already been said. One of the things it allows is for more transparency in the system and allows for the public to access more information on the property that they're dealing with. I think that because of all of the media coverage that was on the fraudulent mortgages and the fraudulent sales, people are very apprehensive, and having this extra information is good for them.

It would also be done through the establishment of a new pending registration queue. Again, I think a queue in a way is a fair way to have people in line. I don't know if anyone has been to Britain, but they certainly queue nicely to get on the bus, and it seems very fair. They seem to know how the queues work, but the thing is that they really do know if they're going to get on that bus or not. In this case with the queuing they would know exactly where they stand, and as has been mentioned before, they'll be able to plan their lives accordingly on how soon they would get a piece of property or, in fact, have it sold as well.

They also would have access to all information regarding caveats and instruments at the time of filing with the land titles office, and it leads to more informed decisions. I think it's very important, regarding the caveats, that sometimes caveats are put on, and they can sit there for years and years and years. People haven't paid any attention, and all of a sudden it pops up, and it takes them a long time to be able to have it removed because, in fact, sometimes the people who put it on have died or have moved on or it's difficult to find them to have it lifted. I think this is very good for that.

Also, by extension it would presumably lead to decreased fraud, as I said, in the purchase and less reliance on legal claims or claims for reimbursement through the Alberta assurance fund, which, of course, would save us all money in the long run.

All in all, Mr. Chair, this is a good bill. It will make things certainly more efficient. It'll go through the system faster. As I said, I believe that it will protect those that in the past have suffered from fraudulent purchases.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, are you going to speak to the bill?

**Ms Blakeman:** I'm happy to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd move that the committee rise and report progress on bills 10, 34, and 36 and report Bill 35 and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

**Mr. Weadick:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 35. The committee reports progress on the following bills: Bill 10, Bill 34, and Bill 36. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

**Mr. Hancock:** I'd move that we adjourn until 7:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:28 p.m.]





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