



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

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The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta

## The 27th Legislature

First Session

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[Errata, if any, appear inside back cover]

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 26, 2008

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon and welcome.

Let us pray. Let us keep ever mindful of the special and unique opportunity we have to work for our constituents and our province and in that work let us find strength and wisdom. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**Mr. Blackett:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly the Ambassador of Lebanon, His Excellency Massoud Maalouf, who is sitting in your Speaker's gallery. This is the ambassador's first visit to Alberta, and we are very pleased that he is able to join us. Over 21,000 people of Lebanese descent call Alberta home, and the Lebanese community is an important part of Alberta's dynamic cultural mosaic in places such as Edmonton, Calgary, and Lac La Biche-St. Paul. I would like to ask our honoured guest to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Technology.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's truly an honour to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of 87 bright, articulate, and well-behaved grade 6 students from Muriel Martin school. I'm proud to let you know that the school is one of nine St. Albert schools that contributed a large donation to operation Christmas child, bringing joy and hope to children in desperate situations around the world. They are accompanied by teachers Mrs. Jody Bialowas, Mlle Danielle Jean, Mrs. Katie Boyd; parent helpers Mr. Joe Sheldrake, Mrs. Leslie Carter, Mrs. Leanne Dunnigan, Ms Sheila McDonald, Ms Janice Lane, Mrs. Treena Shandro, Mrs. Elizabeth Comeau, Mr. Andrew Sutton. As well, with them is one of their friends, which is a service dog in training named Rigger. They are seated in both galleries this afternoon, and I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today it gives me great pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two separate groups of visitors from my constituency of Edmonton-Glenora. The first group consists of two very special individuals who have profoundly contributed to my constituency and the entire Edmonton community. Acting as the executive director and the director of Jasper Place health and wellness centre, Mr. Murray Soroka and Mr. Scotti Coles have helped shape the centre into one of Edmonton's leading social care agencies, providing a safe and secure drop-in centre for the homeless and other vulnerable people who need support in the west end. Since the Jasper Place health and wellness centre and the Hope Mission began to participate in the rapid exit program 16 days ago, which was assisted by Housing and Urban Affairs, 20 homeless

people have been placed in homes and given a chance at a fresh start. This is over one placement a day, Mr. Speaker. The work they do for the entire Edmonton community is truly valuable. I would like to thank them for their dedication. Join me in welcoming them.

My next introduction, Mr. Speaker, is a class from the Glenora elementary school, a school I am very familiar with and, I am proud to mention, that both of my children attended. The class has already participated in a mock Legislature this morning – they elected a Premier, and he is sitting up there – followed by a tour of the Legislature Building and are now here to witness first-hand the action in question period. I would now like to ask the students of the Glenora elementary school along with their teacher, Mrs. Ilona Lukas-Stark, and their accompanying parents to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all hon. members of this Legislative Assembly a visiting group from St. Gabriel's school. They are going to join us in the public gallery in the second half of the question period program, but for the record I would like to name the individuals. They are again led this year by Mrs. Svetlana Sech, who is the teacher. She is accompanied by parent helpers Mr. Dwight Heck and Mrs. Tracy Kully. As well, a special helper, the principal of St. Gabriel's school, Mrs. Suzanne Szojka, has found time to join the group this afternoon. When they join us, I'm sure they will find our proceedings interesting. On behalf of all members I would like to welcome them here.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a very special Albertan seated in the members' gallery. Her name is Mrs. Olga Tom. As a teenager Olga and her family fled war-torn Poland shortly after her mother passed away in Poland. She immigrated to Canada with her father and a number of siblings. They originally settled in Grande Prairie. You can imagine at that time the language barrier, and the weather was quite different, but she managed as a young woman to raise an exceptional family that are tremendous contributors to Alberta society. She has lived in the same home for over 100 years.

My wife, Marie, and I had the pleasure along with our mayor to celebrate Olga's 100th birthday. It was an exceptional event, a great and joyous event, and it really proved why Alberta is such a wonderful province to live in because of tremendous contribution and dedication, perseverance of Olga and her family. She is joined by several family members: her daughter Alma Tomm, grandson and granddaughter Brad Tomm and Leah Balzer, and Leah's father, Matt Balzer. I would ask them now to please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly, and I would ask Olga to give us a wave.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Olga should know that that wave was a royal wave.

The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

**Ms Redford:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have one very special introduction today. Although her class from St. Gabriel school has already received an introduction from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, I also wanted to welcome Kennedy Kully. Kennedy is the daughter of my special assistant Tracy Kully. Many

of you in the Assembly will know Tracy from her years of distinguished service in the Legislature. I think it's very exciting that Kennedy has the opportunity today to see first-hand a glimpse of the process her mother is involved in on a day-to-day basis. I know that Kennedy isn't here right now, but I hope that her friends will tell her that I had the opportunity to introduce her. I'd ask everyone to give her and the rest of the class a warm welcome when they arrive.

**Mr. Horne:** As deputy chair of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities it is my distinct pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my colleague Marlin Styner, chair of the Premier's council. Although Mr. Styner's appointment as chair is relatively recent, he has in fact served as a member of the council since 2005. He is well known across Alberta and, indeed, nationally as a keynote speaker and respected advocate for citizens living with disabilities and those who support them. A quadriplegic since 1981, Mr. Styner has worked tirelessly with organizations such as the Canadian Paraplegic Association, the spinal cord injury collaboration initiative, and the Rick Hansen foundation, among many others. Marlin is accompanied today by his wife, Diane Gramlich. I know Marlin would also want me to acknowledge the tremendous contribution that her advice and support makes to his service on council and his many other endeavours. It is my continued privilege to serve with our new chair. I would ask all members of the Assembly to join me in extending to both Marlin and Diane our congratulations and our traditional warm welcome.

1:40

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Mrs. Irene Feika. Irene Feika has been a long-time advocate for disabled people and a participant in numerous organizations, including the Council of Canadians, Disabled Peoples' International, and the Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities. All three of these organizations have urged Alberta's ratification of the United Nations convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. Dignity and Justice for All of Us is the theme of this year's International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3. It has also been a theme of Irene Feika's life and volunteer activities. I would now ask that Irene wave and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

### Members' Statements

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

#### International Day of Persons with Disabilities

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Wednesday, December 3, is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Proclaimed by the United Nations in 1992, recognition of this day aims to increase awareness and understanding of the challenges facing the approximately 10 per cent of the world's population living with disabilities and the issues that impact their lives. The theme for this year's day is Nothing about Us without Us. While this day provides us with the opportunity to celebrate the success of people living with disabilities, it also serves as a reminder of the collective responsibility we all share to ensure that people with disabilities and those who support them can count on the access and assistance required to

facilitate their full and productive participation in the economy, in the community, and indeed all the very best things that Alberta has to offer.

Mr. Speaker, while increasing our awareness and understanding of the issues is an important first step in removing barriers, the true evidence of our commitment will be measured by the action we take in response. The expansion of progressive, sustainable employment opportunities for disabled persons and the development and implementation of standards for universal, barrier-free design are just two areas which require our focus and our leadership as parliamentarians. The International Day of Persons with Disabilities is a great time to learn more about how communities can work together toward full inclusion of these distinguished Albertans who have so much to offer.

As part of our efforts to promote this day, pins were distributed to members. On behalf of my colleague the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports I would invite and encourage all members of the Assembly to participate in local community events that will commemorate this most important day.

Thank you.

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

#### Cap and Trade Emissions Trading System

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today out of significant concern for the economic well-being of Alberta and future health of our planet. The source of my concern is the increased rhetoric on the establishment of a North American cap and trade system on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. This is akin to paying someone else to exercise and eat healthier for me in the hopes that my waistline will become slimmer and my health will improve. I wish it was that simple.

My point is that I've come to understand that the cap and trade system is not about the health of our environment or the ecological future of our planet. It's very apparent that some want to use this noble cause of protecting our environment and future existence here on this planet for alternative ends, this being wealth redistribution. Establishing a market for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is certainly a concept worthy of consideration, but a cap and trade market that clearly establishes winners and losers from the outset is not responsible or fair.

A cap and trade system alone will not solve the issue of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and, consequently, the challenge of global warming. It is a simplistic view that targets large industrial emitters without addressing key issues such as societal consumption patterns and trends or development and economic viability of technology. Instead, proponents are hell bent on a system that will create winners and losers, redistribute wealth without any sense of natural justice, and turn the economic system and societal order of the last century upside down.

I stand here today, Mr. Speaker, to strongly suggest that in these times this approach is totally irresponsible. Here in Alberta we have taken the leadership of marrying responsible growth with innovative environmental progress. This government's cap and invest strategy is a more realistic and effective means to deal with this issue. Unlike the winners and losers scenario of a cap and trade system the cap and invest creates a win-win situation, where economic well-being and environmental health are promoted as being mutually beneficial and in the interests of all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Carpenters and Allied Workers Training Centre

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the weekend of September 12 through 14 the Alberta Regional Council of Carpenters and Allied Workers held the grand opening of their amazing new provincial training and administration centre. I was one of several members from all sides of the Assembly who had the privilege of attending this grand opening. I was very impressed, as were my colleagues, by the sheer scale and the potential of the new training centre. Alberta carpenters have once again demonstrated great leadership and responsibility by constructing an environmentally friendly building, heated and cooled by geothermal energy. Within this impressive 30,000-square-foot structure are state-of-the-art training spaces for carpenters and millwrights, including a pair of three-storey-tall scaffolding shops.

It was a pleasure to see the building in person. I could see that Alberta's carpenters and allied tradespeople are going to develop incredible skills at the centre, perhaps the best in North America. It looks like a safe, challenging, and invigorating place to learn. The completion of this incredible training facility sends a message about Alberta's unions: they're innovative, they care about the environment, and they believe in giving the next generation of Alberta workers the best possible training that's available, benefiting not only the workers who use this facility but contractors and industry as well.

On behalf of all hon. members of this Assembly I congratulate the Alberta Regional Council of Carpenters and Allied Workers on the opening of their new provincial training centre. It's a great achievement for their union and for the province.

Thank you.

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

### Alberta Water and Environmental Science Building

**Mr. Weadick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to speak to this House about an exciting new building at the University of Lethbridge that has the potential to be not only a top-notch research facility but also a shining example of co-operation between a number of stakeholders. On November 13 our Environment minister and the University of Lethbridge officially opened the Alberta Water and Environmental Sciences Building, a 60,000-square-foot facility that will house more than 20 researchers and up to 150 supporting technicians, graduate students, and doctoral candidates from the departments of biology, geography, and physics and astronomy. It was painstakingly designed to focus on environmental responsibility and incorporates features that will maximize energy and water use while potentially shaping the future technologies and applications. This building will incorporate innovative water and energy conservation processes, including collecting rainwater in a basement cistern for use in toilets, natural airflow and more efficient air conditioning and heating systems, and holding rainwater in retention ponds and wetlands and irrigation use.

While the building is a marvel of design, Mr. Speaker, it's also a shining example of co-operation between a number of stakeholders. The Alberta Water and Environmental Science Building is a partnership between the University of Lethbridge and seven provincial and federal research partners, including Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Animal Diseases Research Institute, Health Canada, Environment Canada, Alberta Environment, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, and Alberta irrigation districts. By working together, these organizations have built something that will create a variety of benefits in a number of disciplines. This is a case where the whole is indeed greater than the sum of the parts.

If I may be indulged for just a few more moments, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate the U of L women's Pronghorns for winning their second straight national women's rugby championship earlier this month on their home turf in Lethbridge. I would ask my colleagues to join me in applause for these ladies and their fantastic accomplishments.

Thank you.

### Oral Question Period

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

### Alberta Health Services Board

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. Only a few months ago it was unthinkable that the Alberta Cancer Board, AADAC, and all the regional health authorities would be dissolved. The minister of health has acted recklessly in making staggering changes without a plan, making decisions on the fly. Among these hasty decisions have been various appointments of board members and staff before having conflict-of-interest rules in place. My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Will the minister immediately make public the conflict-of-interest rules that apply to Alberta Health Services?

1:50

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there are conflict-of-interest rules, as I mentioned yesterday, that applied to the previous boards, and they simply carry over to the Alberta Health Services Board. I think they're public, but if they're not, I'll make sure the member has a copy of them.

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

**Dr. Taft:** All right.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta Health Services controls a \$10 billion budget and delivers services of life-and-death importance. There are reasons for tough conflict-of-interest rules, among them fairness. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: does this minister understand that companies competing against Stantec for business with Alberta Health Services are rightly concerned that the appointment of Stantec's CEO to the AHS Board is inappropriate?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, let's be clear on the capital process that involves health care. The Alberta Health Services Board after due diligence province-wide provides a priority list of capital projects. It comes to government, and it's government that makes the decision on what gets approved from a capital aspect and what doesn't. For this member to suggest that somehow an individual who owns shares in Stantec has undue influence on this government – because we make the decision.

**Dr. Taft:** Well, you make the decision, I hope, on their advice, but maybe you don't, Mr. Minister. I don't know.

To the Minister of Health and Wellness: since this minister seems content to appoint people whose businesses have large contracts to the very public agency that administers those contracts, is he planning to return to the now banned practice of allowing physicians who occupy key medical positions in the public system to channel business to clinics they own?

**Mr. Liepert:** I had some trouble following that question, Mr. Speaker, but if what the member is asking is if will we continue to publicly fund health care, the answer is yes.

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

### Health System Restructuring

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Jim Saunders is the chief operating officer, corporate services, of the Alberta Health Services Board. His annual salary is \$394,000. Mr. Saunders, when he was promoting the Health Resource Centre in Calgary, stated: "The debate, however, is not if private health initiatives will expand; it is how, where and when they will expand." To the minister of health: given that Mr. Saunders is in charge of provincial policies under corporate services of the health board, can the minister guarantee that no private health initiatives will be implemented while this man is in the employment of the board?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, what a stupid request, Mr. Speaker. There are numerous private initiatives involved in health care in this province. For that member to ask that kind of a question shows how little he knows about health care.

**Mr. MacDonald:** What a stupid answer.

Again to the minister of health: Given that the Health Resource Centre in Calgary has a long-term contract worth millions of dollars with the government to supply insured surgical services, will the minister tell the House: does Mr. Saunders now have any interest in the Health Resource Centre?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I can't answer that question. I can certainly get the information for the hon. member. Let's be clear: it's the Alberta Health Services Board and previous to that the Calgary health region which contracted with the Health Resource Centre for publicly funded practices in the health system.\*

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would appreciate that information tomorrow, as would the public.

Again to the minister of health: given that Mr. Saunders has 10 per cent of voting shares in HRG, Health Resource Group Inc., can the minister tell the House if the Health Resource Centre is a completely separate entity from the corporation in which Mr. Saunders holds a 10 per cent voting share?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, to believe somehow that I'd have that information is just absurd. I would suggest that if the hon. member wants the answer, put it on the Order Paper.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The people of northwestern Alberta are up in arms that the hospitals this government promised them during the election have now been put on hold. Grande Prairie, for example, desperately needs a new hospital and has for a long time. Meanwhile, instead of focusing on the real business of delivering health services, the Minister of Health and Wellness has mired his department in a wildly expensive reorganization project. To the Minister of Health and Wellness: how can this minister justify spending \$80 million this year alone on reorganization expenses when the people of Grande Prairie and High Prairie are seeing their hospital projects delayed for lack of funding?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there are so many inaccuracies in that preamble that I'd have trouble correcting them all in 45 seconds. First of all, the situation in High Prairie. The High Prairie hospital is under construction; however, some of the tenders that have just recently come in have been exceedingly higher than they should have been, and so we have paused the project . . .

**Dr. Taft:** Does that include the one from Stantec?

**Mr. Liepert:** I don't know if the member wants me to answer the question or not, but I'll answer it if he would quiet down.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thanks. My next question is to the Premier. How does the Premier defend this government's priorities when it has millions of dollars for golf courses, drag-racing strips, bureaucratic reorganizing, and horse racing, but it postpones desperately needed hospitals?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I know where we can find \$10 million to give towards the hospital. He can say no to the Go centre. That would be \$10 million that can go to High Prairie immediately.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Consider it done. Go ahead. Live up to your word in this Assembly.

**Mr. Stelmach:** No. Like I said, if he wants to reverse the \$10 million, good. That's another \$10 million that's going to go towards the project, and the balance of the project in terms of any new . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier has the floor.

**Mr. Stelmach:** He's having a bad day there.

In terms of the overall project we will watch the tenders coming in very closely because now is the time to look at construction expenses much more carefully. Steel is down over 40 per cent. Concrete is going down. We want to make sure that we get value for the dollar.

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

### Congenital Syphilis Outbreak

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. On November 3 the minister of health admitted cancelling the syphilis awareness campaign despite being told by health experts that such a campaign was needed to combat an epidemic that was leading to the deaths of babies. Three days later the minister said in this House, "We need to ensure that we do whatever we can to correct the situation." The question is to the minister of health. You can't have it both ways: promise the public everything in your power to combat the outbreak but at the same time cancel the program that would have done it. How can Albertans trust this government when it hides the truth about how widespread the syphilis outbreak actually is?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I've outlined a number of times in this House the initiatives that have been undertaken by this government relative to that unfortunate situation, but the member either doesn't seem to listen or has a very short memory.

\*See p. 2139, left col., para. 6

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's just interesting to contrast the minister's statements with what he knew. In August the minister said that he wouldn't subscribe to a province-wide ad campaign that could be communicating more to senior citizens than street workers, but in February his ministry had documents showing that married people made up 20 per cent of syphilis cases, teens as young as 15 were infected, and an 86-year-old senior citizen had acquired the disease. The question is to the minister of health. Why did you refuse to give ordinary Albertans the information they needed to act responsibly?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think what this government did do was responsible. We wanted to see some evidence that if we spent millions of dollars on an advertising campaign, it was going to do more than just simply assist some media outlets in terms of a revenue stream.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. That's a rather contemptuous view of this campaign.

For months the government has insisted that syphilis is the disease of marginalized populations only. The minister of health has suggested that people with syphilis were irresponsible and essentially blamed them for the outbreak. On August 14 the minister said that 95 per cent of Albertans were not impacted by syphilis, but a report dated February 8 to his ministry from Dr. Karen Grimsrud said that the disease had spread across all socioeconomic groups, genders, and ages.

**Mr. Liepert:** I would confirm that the information he had from the former acting chief medical officer of health is what I read as well, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Support for the Arts

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know that Albertans support arts troupes and arts facilities across the province. I see the success of the arts in Strathcona county with various shows at Festival Place. However, I know that the success of our artists is not well known outside Alberta. My questions are for the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit. What can be done to recognize Alberta artists across the country and abroad?

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

2:00

**Mr. Blackett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is correct that right now Alberta artists aren't well known outside of the province, but that's yet. The successful tour by Leslie Feist in Europe is one of those few instances, and more to come. The Alberta creative development initiative is a partnership between the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and the Canada Council for the Arts. This program started in 2007 and was specifically designed to address the province with funding for Alberta artists because a disproportionate amount of money went everywhere but Alberta, and they wanted to recognize that Alberta artists are not supported . . .

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

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question, then, to the same minister. What does this announcement mean for Alberta and Alberta artists?

**Mr. Blackett:** It's a recognition by the Canada Council for the Arts, which is Canada's national arts funding agency, that Alberta artists are to be recognized and that the Canada Council, which is highly internationally recognized, will support and help us promote our artists abroad.

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

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question is to the same minister. There are a number of aspiring artists in my constituency. What else can be done to support and promote artists in Alberta?

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, in addition to this program, where \$525,000 went to 21 organizations, the other thing we can do is continue to meet and educate people outside of our province. This past weekend I had a chance to sit down with Quebec's minister of culture and discuss our cultural policy and theirs and share information to let them know that we in this province also take arts and culture very seriously. We have a great record to show, and that's nothing to be ashamed of in any part of this country.

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

### Support for Low-income Albertans

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The consequences of a failure to save for the future and be fiscally responsible go beyond a bank balance. Consequences extend to all areas within our province, and unfortunately those most impacted by poor planning at the top are those at the very bottom. My first question is to the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs. Given that the increase in Alberta's homeless population is based on numbers from before the worst economic circumstances hit, what strategy has the minister developed to avoid another tent city developing as the economy weakens?

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

**Mrs. Fritz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We were concerned, as well, when tent city developed two years ago. This year through good programs and support services that we have in place, we formed an outreach team. That team went into the river valley. It was under the direction of Homeward Trust, which, as you know, is the umbrella organization for the 32 organizations that offer services for the homeless. That team, I can tell you, had a highly successful report to bring back because of the good work that they did for the homeless . . .

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My next question is to the minister of health. Given that people who are poor, mentally ill, and in a deteriorated condition because they can't get the resources they need in the community are more than twice as likely to be hospitalized, requiring comprehensive health care, why

is the minister putting mental health at the bottom of the list by delaying construction of the mental health beds at the south Calgary hospital?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, again, their information – it would be nice if some of these members would travel to Calgary once in a while and find out what's actually going on down there. Mr. Speaker, when the south Calgary hospital is constructed, there'll be some 35 beds for mental health. Let's also be clear: this government has provided significant dollars through safe communities, and a good part of that money is going to mental health.

**Ms Blakeman:** Okay. The next question to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports: what strategy is the minister putting in place to assist pensioners who have seen their income dwindle through pension losses in the markets?

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The seniors' benefits program that we have is one of the most generous programs in the province. They have a threshold, that we are reviewing. People under that threshold receive supports for income; they receive supports for eyeglasses, for dental. All seniors get free health care, and all seniors are recognized under the drug plan that we have for seniors. As well, we have an education property tax plan for seniors to help them with property tax increases.

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

### Climate Registry

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Climate Registry is a North American organization that sets consistent and transparent standards to measure, verify, and publicly report on greenhouse gas emissions. The registry has 289 North American members, and my understanding is that Alberta agreed to join this organization through a 2007 Council of the Federation commitment. My questions are for the Minister of Environment. Did Alberta follow through on its commitment to join the Climate Registry?

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I can advise the member that, indeed, Alberta did follow through on that commitment and, in fact, joined the registry in August of this year. We believe that it is in Alberta's best interest to stay connected to the broader regional and international efforts with respect to identifying clearly what a common language is with respect to CO<sub>2</sub> and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reductions.

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

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer. To the same minister: from an Alberta perspective what are the specific benefits to Alberta of joining the Climate Registry?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, I'd suggest that there are two principal benefits to Alberta. One is that we have an opportunity to collaborate on the technical side of CO<sub>2</sub>. Oftentimes you hear about commitments to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and it almost sounds like you

could put all this CO<sub>2</sub> on a scale and measure it and determine how much CO<sub>2</sub> has been emitted. The fact of the matter is that it's the result of a very complex and sometimes confusing arithmetic calculation. It is imperative that all jurisdictions use the same arithmetic formulas.

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

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Finally, to the same minister: would the minister please describe Alberta's specific role as a member of this organization?

**Mr. Renner:** Mr. Speaker, we believe that we have a significant role to play in this organization. In fact, we have a leadership role in that, as I've repeated many times before in this House, we are the only jurisdiction in North America that actually has legislation up and running with respect to mandatory reductions in CO<sub>2</sub>. We have some experience and expertise that we've developed here in Alberta, that we believe we are in a fine position to be able to share with our contemporaries throughout North America.

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

### Registered Disability Savings Plan

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports noted earlier this session, the registered disability savings plan is a great program. However, the main problem that arises is that if RDSPs are not exempt from being claimed in AISH reporting, people with disabilities or their families who do try to plan for their future will be penalized by having their supports cut back. My questions would be to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. I'm sure the minister will stand by her earlier statement . . .

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, yes, I did say that the registered disability savings plan, which is a federal government program, is a great program. The federal government has asked all provinces to have a look at this program and to exempt this program from any income that we may give to people with disabilities. So that's something that is under review and something that we are very much aware of at this time.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you. Could the minister tell Albertans who live with disabilities, as the RDSPs will be available in December, how they can invest in their future financial security and not be penalized by this government? The other governments – Manitoba, B.C., Newfoundland, Labrador, Yukon, and Saskatchewan – already are complying.

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If this program is approved by all provinces, then people with disabilities will be able to have a better quality of life once they reach the age of 60. Once again, I'll just say that we are reviewing this program, and I know that the date that it starts through the federal government is December 1.

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



**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you. I don't want to wait for any of the other provinces, and I don't want to be last. I think we should be next in line.

Could the minister clarify the remarks that she made in the Assembly on November 18 when she stated that AISH was increased by \$50 a month this January? Upon hearing this, many of my AISH constituents called and wondered if maybe the minister had misspoken. I think they're hoping that you haven't.

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, if I misspoke, I apologize. I know that AISH was increased by \$38 in January of 2008. When I said this January, I was referring to January 2008. I apologize if I misled some of our AISH clients.

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

### 2:10 Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped

**Mr. Cao:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many of my constituents contact me on a regular basis regarding the assured income for the severely handicapped program, known as AISH. They have concerns about the level of assistance they receive from the AISH program, particularly in Calgary, where the rent is high and the cost of daily living is increasing. My question is to the hon. Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. How does the AISH program compare to seniors' benefits and other social assistance programs within Alberta and across the country?

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently Alberta is one of only three provinces with distinct income support programs for persons with disabilities. In most other provinces people with disabilities receive a supplement to a basic welfare rate for extra costs associated with disability. I'm proud to say that our AISH program has the highest assistance rate for persons with disabilities of any social assistance program in Canada. As well, it's difficult to compare seniors' benefits with AISH assistance as the programs were created with different objectives.

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

**Mr. Cao:** Well, thank you. My second question is also to the hon. minister. I already mentioned that cost-of-living increases impact those living on AISH assistance. Can the minister explain what type of income is exempt from the AISH formula? For example, is CPP disability exempt? If not, would you consider exempting it in a review?

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, the AISH program has three income categories: fully exempt, partially exempt, and not exempt income. The way income is treated depends on the type and amount of income and who is receiving the income, the AISH client or the spouse. Like all income support programs for individuals with disabilities across Canada, the AISH program requires clients to access all sources of income for which they may be eligible, including the CPP disability. AISH was designed to work with federal government programs such as CPP disability, not to replace them. It's also important to note that AISH is the only income assistance program in Canada that provides exemptions . . .

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

**Mr. Cao:** My last question is also to the same hon. minister. Although the regular AISH rates do help people, the overall cost of living and related expenses, such as transportation to the doctor's office, are having a big impact. My question is: is there anything else that can help AISH clients with their bills?

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, AISH clients may also be eligible for supplementary assistance on a one-time or ongoing basis for needs such as travel to medical appointments, moving costs, or special goods and services, such as a special diet, medical or surgical supplies, or medical alert services. An emergency benefit is also available in situations that present a serious health or safety risk. AISH clients, like all Albertans, are also able to access supports from other provincial programs, including the rent supplement program and the homeless and eviction prevention fund.

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

### Homelessness

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I was instructed by the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs to look at *Hansard*, and I did. I confirm that on Monday the minister claimed that programs such as the direct rent supplement program are working. Let me go on record: I do not agree with the minister that a 20 per cent increase in homelessness is evidence that the rent supplement programs are working. To the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs. The number of homeless families in Edmonton increased from 79 to 133, representing an 87 per cent increase since 2006.

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

**Mrs. Fritz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased that the member has looked at *Hansard*. I can talk with him further about whatever the question would be that is forthcoming or that he didn't have an opportunity to ask.

**Mr. Hehr:** Do you consider this a success in the fact that we've increased our families that are homeless by 87 per cent since 2006? Are these programs working?

**Mrs. Fritz:** Mr. Speaker, today the minister introduced people here from the Jasper Place health and wellness centre that are leaders in the community for addressing homelessness and affordable housing. Here in Edmonton, as I said to the Assembly just recently, about three weeks ago, through these good volunteers and good staff and people working in the community we've developed a rapid exit program for families in Edmonton. I understand that what was said here today is that just in the last 16 days, hon. member, 20 individuals . . .

**Mr. Hehr:** Yesterday the minister claimed that the now nine-year plan to end homelessness will be released before Christmas. Does the minister mean that she will release a document to the public, or will the minister hide it in Tory committees before Christmas?

**Mrs. Fritz:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a very important plan. In fact, it's groundbreaking news for us. I can assure you, hon. member, that this plan will be released before Christmas, and it will follow due course, as I said, through the number of processes that it needs to go through before it is released.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

### Carbon Capture and Storage

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government announced earlier this year that they would be spending \$2 billion of taxpayers' money on carbon capture technology. Then they set up a committee to advise them how to spend the funds, while at the same time the committee members were invited to line up with their hands out. To the Minister of Energy: don't you see that there's maybe something wrong with this picture?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you what's right with this picture. Carbon capture and storage has been recognized internationally as one of the major building blocks towards an absolute reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions globally. We're leading that parade at the moment, and we intend to continue doing that.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you. The CCS council tells us that it's working on big-picture final reports not yet available to the public. Meanwhile, applicants for the CCS slush fund were told that their applications would be assessed on how well they fit into the big picture. As it turns out, six of the nine industry reps on the council saw their companies end up on the short list. To the same minister. Clearly, there's a link between the council and how the funds will be doled out. Why won't you admit it?

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

**Mr. Knight:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, you know, given the circumstance now that we see globally with respect to the economic conditions and, most certainly, I think, the availability of capital for any major industrial projects to proceed, we're going to continue through the process that we've set in place, and indeed at the end of the day I do believe that we will identify the right projects. At that point in time we will certainly work with our partners to figure out how best to support these projects and finance them.

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The only real action this government is taking is handing the chequebook over to the big polluters. To the same minister: if government and the industry are so certain that CCS will work, why isn't government making industry fund it themselves instead of making Albertans pay the cost of industry's pollution?

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

**Mr. Knight:** Thank you very much. Again, Mr. Speaker, the information that the hon. member across the way has is probably interesting reading. However, the fact of the matter is that the technology involved with carbon capture and storage does work. There are two good examples in western Canada, one in central Alberta and, certainly, one in south-central Saskatchewan, that show that it works. In fact, there are a number of places around the world where pilot projects show very good results. We have pilot projects operating today in the province of Alberta that are showing excellent results. The member may very well want to know that, in fact . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

### Métis Settlements Services

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday at the end of Métis Week in Alberta the Minister of Aboriginal Relations visited the Elizabeth Métis settlement and Fishing Lake Métis settlement in my constituency. Many important issues were raised at those meetings. My constituents want assurance that those issues will be followed up in a timely and effective way. My questions are to the Minister of Aboriginal Relations. What is the minister doing to help secure additional police services that are desperately needed in these two Métis settlements?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, there are certainly some challenges on Métis settlements in that respect, as there are elsewhere in the province. However, it should be noted that we just marked the first-year anniversary of Alberta's safe communities project, or SafeCom, as others would call it. That includes a special dedicated fund of about \$60 million for purposes such as this. Métis settlements are, indeed, eligible to receive some of those monies. I've just recently met with my colleague the hon. Minister of Justice. We've discussed some of those concerns, and I've explained what the pressing needs are on their behalf and on your behalf.

2:20

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

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, my first supplementary question is for the same minister. Some of the roads in the Métis settlements are in sad shape. Can the minister clarify whose responsibility it is to ensure that these roads are well maintained and don't result in dangerous driving conditions? Is it the Métis settlements' responsibility, or is it the government's?

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** The short answer, Mr. Speaker, is that it's a shared responsibility. Métis settlements are eligible to access some of the same programs, in fact, virtually all of the same programs that other local governments such as municipalities are. In that respect it should be noted that I just signed a three-year interim funding agreement worth \$18 million with the Métis settlements, and a significant portion of that is focused around infrastructure. So there are opportunities there, and I know the Minister of Transportation is aware of these issues as is the Minister of Infrastructure.

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

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a former teacher education for all my constituents is very important to me. I know that improving educational outcomes for aboriginal students is a priority issue for all of us and for the Minister of Aboriginal Relations in particular. Therefore, I want to know what he is doing to help students on the Métis settlements improve their educational achievements.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Mr. Speaker, the three-year funding agreement that I just referenced also contains a significant emphasis on education on Métis settlements because it is and has been, as I've indicated many times, my number one priority. Aboriginal education is truly something that we have to be more aggressive in our pursuit of. Individual school boards, of course, have the ultimate responsibility. I have met and spoken with our colleague the hon.

Minister of Education and with the minister of advanced education about these matters. In the end I will continue advocating and going to aboriginal conferences where we can raise these issues to ensure success.

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

#### Investigations into Provincial Sheriffs

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sir Robert Peel is credited with creating the first modern law enforcement agencies. His principles are still taught in police training today and are really just as relevant now as they were then. Paramount to the ability of police to perform their duties is public approval of police actions. The same principles apply to sheriffs. To the Solicitor General: is it government policy to keep investigations into serious incidents involving sheriffs internal?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe I answered this question a couple of weeks ago when the hon. member asked it. As I indicated, presently incidents involving peace officers, who are different than police officers in this province, are covered under the Peace Officer Act. Any complaint, for example, against the sheriffs would be handled by the sheriffs professional standards unit. That being said, because of the increase of sheriffs on our highways and in courthouse security we are looking at public oversight in regard to investigations on sheriffs.

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

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister explain how the public can be assured of impartiality and independence into investigations against sheriffs when you have failed to provide a public oversight mechanism?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Well, Mr. Speaker, keeping in mind the duties of our sheriffs as compared to a police officer, I'm not aware of any incidents that have happened in recent years regarding our sheriffs that have ended up in an investigation that has not satisfied the public.

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

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister commit to amending the Peace Officer Act in section 19 to prescribe that investigations brought to the director of law enforcement must have one or more members of the public as overseers to ensure the integrity of the investigation and maintain public confidence?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not prepared to go that far at this time. As I indicated, we are looking at a method of public oversight, and when we consult with those affected, we will come forward with the appropriate tools to put that in place.

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

#### Supply of Diesel Fuel

**Mr. McFarland:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Diesel fuel is a major component and a major input cost for many small businesses, including trucking and agribusiness. Many of my constituents have indicated a displeasure with the premium being paid for diesel fuel on what they feel was irregular refinery maintenance. My question

is to the Minister of Energy. I would like him, if he could, to give us an update on these repair initiatives and requirements that the refineries have been undergoing for the past six weeks to two months.

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

**Mr. Knight:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said earlier, the facts around CCS coupled with enhanced oil recovery are a very good opportunity in the future for Albertans. With respect to diesel fuel we are very optimistic. I've tried to be realistic about the fact that diesel availability for the remainder of this calendar year may remain a little bit tight. Both Imperial Oil and Suncor have completed repairs to their production, and they're back to normal levels. Now, there was a small fire this morning at Suncor's upgrader, and we're looking to see what effect that may have on production levels.

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

**Mr. McFarland:** Thank you. Minister, I appreciate that fires aren't controllable, but with the business that the refineries are in diesel production, do they not have a better idea of the scope and of the length of time that some of these refinery maintenance issues, which my constituents feel are strategically contrived, are taking place?

**Mr. Knight:** Well, Mr. Speaker, yes, indeed. You know, the maintenance that takes place at these refineries, of course, is scheduled. Normally what happens is that stocks are piled up in advance of these things happening in order to supply the marketplace. The technical problems that happen from time to time with facilities like this are unfortunate. It's an unexpected issue, of course, which compounded an already tight supply situation not only in Alberta but in western Canada. We're just trying to make sure that these facilities run in a safe and environmentally responsible manner, and ongoing maintenance, therefore, is very essential.

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

**Mr. McFarland:** Thank you. My constituents, Minister, would like to know if you could help launch an investigation into the prices, that seem to be coincidental, at a dollar premium over U.S. on par with the dollar exchange and so on and also that have gone to the 25 cent a litre premium over regular gas.

**Mr. Knight:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, this marketplace we don't regulate, and in fact a supply-demand balance from time to time causes prices to shift. The diesel producers in the province of Alberta certainly have been very up front with us over the last number of weeks. They have actually been giving us a play-by-play of exactly what is occurring with respect to their facilities. For that reason, I would suggest, there isn't really anything for us to investigate.

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

#### Anthony Henday Drive 137th Avenue Interchange

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you. This government's failure to plan for road construction is presently costing taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. When the government has to return to projects that were not completed effectively, the Alberta taxpayer foots the bill. We are right now witnessing another example of this in the making on

the northern leg of the Anthony Henday Drive in Edmonton at the 137th Avenue and 170th Street interchange. To the Minister of Transportation: why is the minister breaking his commitment to build the north leg of the Anthony Henday with all the interchanges?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, I can't believe the hon. member next door: always behind the times and never really knows what's going on. I've met with both mayors on that overpass. We had an agreement. It never ever was planned to be a full interchange. I tried to explain that yesterday. There's a flyover there. There's no development west of Anthony Henday on 137th, and it would be a complete waste of taxpayers' money to build something when it's not needed.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given that the city of Edmonton presented figures that showed that the traffic usage justified this interchange now and the government committed to building all the interchanges, why is the hon. minister trying to back out of this one now by claiming it isn't needed?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, we committed to building a free-flowing road. This hon. member is taking his research from the newspapers again, and the only people in there that are complaining happen to be two Edmonton city councillors that are behind the times again. The city planned the southwest leg, and we took it over and ended up with the thing, and we're fixing it.

2:30

**Mr. MacDonald:** Again, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: given that the P3 contract for this project places, as the minister himself acknowledged yesterday, a 20 per cent premium on later changes, why is the hon. minister tying future generations of either Albertans or Edmontonians to a vastly inflated change that will undoubtedly have to be made because of the mismanagement of this government?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, God, he just keeps proving more and more that he knows little about what's going on. I told him yesterday in the House. I explained that our provincial highways are our responsibility. What we're talking about on that interchange to do with developers and development and other parts of the city is a municipal responsibility, so there'll be no changes to our contract.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

#### Mountain Pine Beetle Control

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta recently completed surveys of trees attacked by mountain pine beetle. My question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. What is the current status of pine beetle infestations in the province?

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have completed our fall aerial surveys, and I have good news and bad news. The good news in northern Alberta is that there are 20 per cent fewer infested trees than there were a year ago. This is where we've had our proactive focus for the last year, and it's having the desired effect. The bad news, however, is in southwestern Alberta. The number of infested

trees there continues to grow. The problem seems to be in-migration from southern British Columbia, where the beetle population is expected to continue to grow. Accordingly, we're making the eastern slopes, southwestern Alberta, our top priority in the coming year.

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

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. Given that three-quarters of southwest Alberta's forests are in parks, how is her ministry involved in fighting mountain pine beetle in the region?

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

**Mrs. Ady:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, we do have pine beetle in the parks, so we're working very closely with the Minister of SRD to help mitigate this. Of course, in parks like Kananaskis, which we all love, we do see it there. We've used in the past tools that are available to us like controlled burns. As well, we've identified those trees, and this winter we will be removing those trees. I say to Albertans and hon. members: if you see us in the park removing trees, it's about pine beetle mitigation. We are trying to stop this infestation because in B.C. we know it destroyed 80 per cent of their pine forest eventually.

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

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental question is to the same minister. How is she working with her federal counterparts to ensure that infestations are controlled in Banff and Jasper national parks?

**Mrs. Ady:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a good working relationship with Parks Canada. They've played an important role in helping us with some of our prescribed burns. In fact, some people think that the federal parks have done nothing. It's not accurate. They did these burns on about 5,500 acres, and they've removed some 9,000 trees since 2002. As well, the Minister of SRD and I have both written to our counterpart in the federal government and asked to ensure that he has budget to help us as we fight this beetle. It's a terrible thing, but we need to fight it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

#### Postsecondary Student Residential Rent Costs

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rent at postsecondary residences has steadily increased over recent years. The University of Alberta has seen an increase in residential rents of almost 30 per cent over the last three years. The situation is similar at several other institutions throughout the province, including the University of Calgary, which I represent. Will the minister now provide students with an update on his residence policy, which has yet to prevent or subsidize 30 per cent increases?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not exactly sure what the hon. member is referring to. If he's referring to the affordability framework, many times in this House I have stood and talked about the collaborative way that the students' associations and our department have been working together to make that framework a reality. Indeed, student financial assistance, cost-of-living adjustments made

to the percentage increases that we did in this year's budget have been fairly substantial. I would say that the student financial aid that we provide to students in Alberta is by far among the leaders in the country.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. The problem remains the 30 per cent increase.

Given that these increases are largely cited as being necessary to address escalating deferred maintenance costs, something which this government has neglected to adequately address, what steps are being taken to work on eliminating these deferred maintenance costs instead of letting them steadily increase?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, again, the hon. member may want to have a discussion with the University of Calgary's executive because this year in our budget I believe we close to doubled the infrastructure maintenance funding for the University of Calgary. Indeed, many of our institutions around the province enjoyed a fairly substantial increase in their maintenance funding. We have more than a billion dollars' worth of infrastructure going into Calgary this year. When we talk about residences, a study was recently announced in collaboration with the students' union there to do exactly what the hon. member is talking about, to look at student residences and what we can do. My colleague the minister of affordable housing was very instrumental in that.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. The University of Alberta is a hundred years old. The University of Calgary is 42 years old. They're getting older, and the residences are needing repair. What immediate short-term action is being taken to address skyrocketing rent increases, and when can postsecondary students staying in residence expect to no longer face huge rent hikes and focus instead on their studies? Without a place to live, there's no place to learn.

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member makes great use of question period and the time to espouse some wonderful rhetoric which is actually meaningless because we're working with the students to address the problems as opposed to turning it into a political issue.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

#### **Support for Low-income Seniors**

**Mr. Weadick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Cost fluctuations are impacting the budgets of all Albertans, especially seniors on fixed incomes. My question is to the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. Since 1994 residents in seniors' lodges have been guaranteed that they will retain a minimum of \$265 in discretionary spending each month. A group of seniors from Garden View Lodge in Lethbridge do not feel that this is enough. As this amount has not been increased in 14 years, is the government looking at increasing this amount?

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

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is committed to the well-being of our seniors. Alberta continues to

have the highest minimum disposable monthly income for low-income lodge residents in Canada. Although lodge operators must ensure that each resident has at least \$265 per month in disposable income, many lodge residents are left with more than that after paying their monthly accommodation fee, which includes their room, their meals, their housekeeping services, and their recreational services. Financial benefits for seniors in long-term care are also calculated to ensure that they have at least \$265.

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the same minister. What other things can this government do to help low-income seniors in these uncertain times?

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, we are committed to helping seniors. Alberta seniors are eligible for one of the most comprehensive packages of seniors' benefits in the country. We focus on providing a higher level of assistance to low-income seniors who are most in need. Across all ministries this government provides more than \$2.5 billion each year to seniors through benefits such as income supplements, prescription drug coverage, long-term care, housing, dental work, and eyeglasses.

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

**Mr. Weadick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final supplemental was to be to the minister of health, but I'll ask the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports. With the minimum monthly income exemption of \$265, some seniors in lodge programs are struggling to pay for their daily diabetes treatments, especially when they require insulin pumps, which run around \$5,000. What measures are in place to support low-income seniors with diabetes, and are there provisions planned for insulin pumps?

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of any plans for providing insulin pumps at this point in time, and I'll take that question under advisement.

2:40

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that was 108 questions and responses. We will move to the conclusion of Members' Statements and the vignette in 30 seconds from now.

Hon. members, 43 years of marital bliss and happiness are being celebrated by the Minister of Energy today.

**Mr. Knight:** Thank you very much for that, Mr. Speaker. You know by the exemplary attitude and the actions that I present here in the House that it's been very easy for my lovely wife, Diana, to spend that amount of time with me.

#### **Members' Statements**

*(continued)*

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

#### **Alberta Student Engagement Initiative**

**Mrs. Sarich:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to encourage Alberta students to get involved in Speak Out, Alberta's student engagement initiative, which was launched today by government. The Speak Out initiative fulfills a promise from the February 2008 throne speech, when government announced it would strengthen Alberta's education system by establishing a youth

advisory committee to provide a fresh and youthful perspective on learning. Speak Out is an opportunity for Alberta youth to participate in an ongoing province-wide forum on education.

Mr. Speaker, there is a growing body of evidence that links student engagement with graduation rates and academic success. Asking for students' input and taking action on their ideas will move us forward, creating more actively engaged citizens and a stronger education system in our province. Government is seeking input from the youth across the province, youth with diverse backgrounds and experience, by providing them with a number of opportunities to share their voice both online and in person. Youth can participate through our new Speak Out interactive website, [speakout.alberta.ca](http://speakout.alberta.ca). Students can participate in regional forums in their schools, or they can apply to attend an annual student conference in May of 2009. Students also can apply to become members of the Minister of Education's student advisory council, which will be formed in the spring. The Minister of Education's student advisory council on education will explore new ways to improve learning opportunities, and members will represent the Alberta student engagement initiative in their communities and schools.

Youth can have a voice, Mr. Speaker, in the decisions that affect them and their lives. Their perspectives are essential to future changes and decisions being made in education. I am looking forward to hearing what students have to say because each opinion counts. I urge all young Albertans to become involved in Speak Out.

Thank you.

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

#### Active Communities Awards

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As many of our fellow members in this House are aware, the Alberta active communities initiative is contributing to the development of healthy, active communities and the overall well-being of all Albertans. Albertans have always been hard workers, but it's vital to take time for recreational activities in order to maintain overall good health on physical, mental, and spiritual levels.

The Lieutenant Governor's leadership for active communities award recognizes the success of individuals who are leading and, Mr. Speaker, transforming their communities towards an improved quality of life. The awards categories are arranged into five distinct categories: community leader award, group spirit of community leadership award, community leader of tomorrow award, elected community leader award, and, of course, the corporate community leader award.

Mr. Speaker, few know more about the importance of leading a healthy, active lifestyle than our very own Lieutenant Governor, His Honour the Honourable Norman Kwong. His Honour's life and career have always been about healthy living and being active, which was easily seen if you ever watched him burst through a defensive line as he raced or, rather, stormed towards a first down or a touchdown. With Grey Cup wins from two different teams His Honour was one of the fittest, toughest, and healthiest athletes of his day in the CFL. Knowing how important health and active living are, who better to take up the ball, who better to storm the line, and who better to champion the cause of healthy, active communities and community leaders? We must take a moment to recognize His Honour for his involvement in initiating this legacy awards program, which will be managed through the provincial not-for-profit and charitable Alberta Recreation and Parks Association.

The inaugural awards recipients will be honoured at the gala awards ceremony on April 23, 2009. I encourage all Albertans to

pick up a brochure, read the information, look around for those active communities, and recognize those community leaders with a nomination today. Members will be receiving their information package in the upcoming days. Mr. Speaker, it's my hope that this encourages all of us to take up a healthy, active lifestyle.

Thank you.

#### Statement by the Speaker

##### Leaders of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I have a vignette today with respect to the leaders of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

On December 13, 2008, the Alberta Liberal Party will announce a new leader who will become the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, the 29th different person in Alberta's history to serve in that capacity and the 30th Leader of the Opposition.

From 1906 until an amendment to the Legislative Assembly Act came into effect in 1972, the terms of the leaders of the Official Opposition were based on actual session dates. In other words, one was the Leader of the Official Opposition when the Legislature sat and was not when the Legislature did not sit.

Between 1906 and 1971 Alberta had 18 leaders of the opposition from 17 different individuals who served as leaders of the Official Opposition. There were times, many times in fact, between 1906 and 1972 when the Legislative Assembly had no recognized Leader of the Official Opposition. One member, James Walker from Warner, nicknamed Farmer Jim, served as opposition leader in the House as an independent briefly in 1941 and as leader of the Progressives briefly in 1944; thus, we had the 30 leaders from 29 different individuals.

On June 1, 1972, the Legislative Assembly Act addressed the actual tenure of the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. Since that time the leader has been the leader on a full-time basis, unlike the practice which existed from 1906 to 1971.

Former Premier Harry Strom, Social Credit representing the constituency of Cypress, served in 1972. He is the only member to have served as Premier and then Leader of the Official Opposition. In 1973 James D. Henderson, Social Credit representing Wetaskiwin-Leduc, served for a brief period before Robert C. Clark, Social Credit representing Olds-Didsbury, was elected leader. Mr. Clark served as Leader of the Official Opposition from 1973 to 1980. In 1980 Raymond A. Speaker, Social Credit representing Little Bow, became the leader and served to 1982.

Grant Notley of the New Democratic Party and representing the constituency of Spirit River-Fairview served as the opposition leader in 1983 and 1984. Following Mr. Notley's untimely death Ray Martin, a member of the New Democratic Party representing the constituency of Edmonton-Norwood, assumed the position and served from 1984 to 1993.

Laurence Decore, a Liberal representing Edmonton-Glengarry, served in 1993 and 1994, when D. Grant Mitchell became the new Liberal leader from the Edmonton-McClung constituency. Mr. Mitchell served as Leader of the Official Opposition from 1994 to 1998. From July 7, 1998, to March 12, 2001, Nancy J. MacBeth, a Liberal representing the constituency of Edmonton-McClung, served as the leader. In 2001 Dr. Ken Nicol, a Liberal representing Lethbridge-East, became the leader and served in that capacity to March 27, 2004, when the current Member for Edmonton-Riverview, a Liberal, assumed the position.

Alberta has had 28 different leaders of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, 16 Lieutenant Governors, 13 Premiers, and 11 Speakers. Only one former Leader of the Official Opposition has been elected as Premier of Alberta, E. Peter Lougheed, who was sworn in as Alberta's 10th Premier on September 10, 1971.

## Introduction of Bills

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

### Bill 53

#### Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2008 (No. 2)

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to request leave to introduce Bill 53, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2008 (No. 2).

Bill 53 contains a number of provisions which are noncontentious. I'll just briefly list those acts which are affected by this particular bill: the Alberta Capital Finance Authority Act, the Condominium Property Act, the Cooperatives Act, the Fair Trading Act, the Family Law Act, schedule 6 of the Government Organization Act, the Legal Profession Act, the Provincial Offences Procedure Act, the Real Estate Act, and the Residential Tenancies Act.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 53 read a first time]

## Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm pleased to table five copies of the 2006 Alberta vital statistics annual review. This report is a summary of all vital events during 2006, with information about the births, stillbirths, marriages, deaths, adoptions, and changes of name that occurred in Alberta. Completion of the report often takes upwards of one year as the information provided by hospitals, municipalities, and other organizations is compiled and verified before the report is finalized. This report is produced primarily to provide the public and health care related professionals with a resource document of provincial statistical data.

Thank you.

2:50

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

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to table the requisite number of copies of the 2006 annual report of the Alberta Teachers' Association. The 2007 annual report, interestingly enough, was tabled as an intersessional document, but we hadn't at that time been provided with the 2006 annual report, so we take the opportunity to table it now.

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

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. the Premier and as deputy chair of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities I'm pleased to table the requisite number of copies of the annual report of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities for the year ended March 31, 2008.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today, one I mentioned yesterday in question period is copies of letters, correspondence between me and the Ethics Commissioner in which the Ethics Commissioner makes clear that owning shares in Stantec is a conflict of interest because Stantec does so much business with the Alberta government.

The second set of letters, from Shelley Drake, Cecilia Drake, Sandra Gillies, Yoko Gillies, Patti Nicol-Pharo, and Doug Wright, expresses serious concern about wait times for gynecological cancer surgery.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today, and they're all associated with question period earlier. The first is an article by Mr. Saunders in the *Hospital Quarterly*, and the quote that I used is recorded in there.

The second tabling I have is from the Alberta corporate registry system, and it would be documents surrounding HRG, Health Resource Group Inc., and the fact that Mr. Jim Saunders has 10.4 per cent of voting.

My last tabling is the Health Care Protection Act report to Albertans. This is the term February 1, 2007, through to March 31, 2012. It's regarding the provision of insured surgical services to the Health Resource Centre, and it's signed by then deputy minister for Alberta Health and Wellness, Paddy Meade.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my hon. colleague from Calgary-Mountain View I am tabling hundreds of pieces of correspondence from his constituents calling upon the government to enact first contract legislation, extend full legal recognition of bargaining rights, establish one labour law for all unionized workers, require automatic certification for workplaces where over 50 per cent of employees are seeking union status, and outlaw replacement workers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. First, I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of background information prepared by our caucus staff which pertains to my questions today. This contrasts statements made by the minister of health on the syphilis outbreak with documents I've received through a freedom of information request on the same subject.

The second tabling is the appropriate number of copies of documents regarding the carbon capture and storage project in Alberta which provide background for the questions asked today by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. These are a list of corporations that have applied for public funding for carbon capture and storage, questions and answers for expression of interest in carbon capture projects, and the interim report of the Alberta Carbon Capture and Storage Development Council.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

## Orders of the Day

### Committee of Supply

[Mr. Cao in the chair]

**The Chair:** I would like to call the Committee of supply to order.

### Supplementary Supply Estimates 2008-09 General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund

**The Chair:** I would like to recognize the hon. President of the Treasury Board.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to move the supplementary supply estimates 2008-09 for the general revenue fund and the lottery fund.

Mr. Chairman, the supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund and the lottery fund are presented for support to the Legislative Assembly and the 14 different departments of the government of Alberta. The Legislative Assembly will be asked to appropriate spending authority from the general revenue fund and the lottery fund pursuant to the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2008 (No. 2). The supplementary supply estimates reflect the same budgeting methodology used in the 2008-09 estimates, which were tabled back on April 22. The supplementary estimates will authorize a \$958,036,000 increase in voted expense and equipment/inventory purchases, a \$38,150,000 increase in voted capital investment, and a \$20 million increase in lottery fund payments.

Mr. Chairman, the documents have been circulated to all people, and I certainly respect that this may not be all the time although I think these supplementary supply estimates are very clear. I would request that the chair allow to-and-fro from the members that wish to ask questions. Rather than my going through and trying to explain all of the different areas in there and then having other interested members of the opposition re-ask, I would prefer at this time to just start the question-and-answer session to whatever degree the Opposition House Leader wishes to do. The ministers that are here will obviously respond for their departments, and I have responses for any of the other questions that they want to direct to ministers that aren't here.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much. As the President of the Treasury Board mentioned, he and I already have an agreement to combine our first 10 minutes for a total of 20 because I think a number of those questions are more around government policy.

Very briefly I just want to comment on process around Committee of Supply. I went back and did a bit of research about what's happening here, and I continue to be concerned about the amount of spending that is coming. Sometimes some of it's even announced as we're still in the budget debates in the spring. They're already announcing unallocated spending or off-budget spending or unanticipated surplus spending. There are so many different euphemisms now that it's a bit hard for me to keep up.

I went back and looked from the beginning of my time here. In 1997 we had a supplementary supply, one of them, and it was for a total of \$217 million plus \$5.6 million in capital investment. That involved one ministry. I don't have a breakdown beyond that. In 2000 for the first supplementary supply we had four ministries involved, \$31 million in operating and \$1.5 million in capital. The second supplementary supply in 2000 had nine ministries and almost a billion. It was \$978 million. When I looked at 2004, we had nine ministries again, \$114 million and \$6 million in capital. I'm sorry. There's the rest of the information on '97. So '97 had five ministries, \$217 million in operating and \$5 million in capital expenditures.

So we have definitely seen an acceleration, particularly in the number of ministries that are receiving additional funding under

supplementary supply. This year we're looking at 14 ministries at just under a billion dollars, and we still just are allocated, according to the process that we have available to us in this House at the time, one afternoon to debate this.

3:00

We have been able to start very close to 3 o'clock. If we go till approximately 5:30, we'll get about 150 minutes in. Fourteen ministries: we'll get about 10 minutes per ministry, and that includes questions being asked and answered, which is, I would argue, an inadequate amount of time to be able to adequately supervise that.

I think this is a great disservice to the Official Opposition, but I also think it's a disservice to the government. I'm sure that my colleagues on the opposite side will disagree with me. It's difficult for them to say, "Well, yes, we were able to be held totally accountable in that period of time," when, clearly, at 10 minutes apiece for ministries you can't. It's very difficult to hold someone accountable. So it works on both sides: the criticism that the opposition can't get enough out and that the government doesn't have enough time as well.

I think that there needs to be a different agreement where we can either look at a certain amount of time based on the number of ministries that are under scrutiny for supplementary supply or a total dollar amount. I would argue that a billion dollars and 14 ministries being done in one afternoon is not sufficient.

I'm going to move on and talk here about some general comments on financial management, that I invite the President of the Treasury Board to respond to. I'm really intrigued by the amount of money that we spend in this province, especially in comparison to other Canadian provinces. I'm wondering if the President of the Treasury Board has considered doing a value-for-money audit across the board because I am pretty sure that we could find 5 per cent to cut out of everything.

I look and compare us and go: we're spending 23 per cent more in Alberta per capita than they are as a national average – 23 per cent more than they are as a national average. We're spending 28 per cent more than B.C. spends and 38 per cent more than Ontario spends. That's before Ontario really started to struggle, folks, so it's an even comparison here. That's a lot of extra money to be spending. On the one hand you go: "Wow, great for us. Yippee. We're in Alberta. We get the benefit of all of this largesse. Wonderful." On the other hand, as a manager – and I used to run nonprofits, so we were always pinching pennies – I'm looking at this and going: that's a lot of money to be spending beyond what comparable provinces are spending. Let's face it. Ontario is bigger, B.C. is bigger, and we're still spending more per capita than they are.

I'm wondering if the President of the Treasury Board has considered this, has looked at a value-for-money audit and has spent any time, either prior to – we're in a situation right now which is going to take us more time because they're talking about what we all had planned up to about five weeks ago or six weeks ago. Since then things have changed. I know they've changed for the government process. They've changed for a lot of people out there in the system. In some ways we're talking before and after or before and during. He may choose to answer it that way if he wants to.

I'm interested in that overall policy. We keep hearing a minister of finance who comes forward and says: "We really, really mean it that there's going to be savings this time. Just you wait. Next year at this time there'll be savings for sure." We don't see it. We just see more and more and more.

When I was first elected, the budget was \$17 billion – \$17 billion.

**An Hon. Member:** You're the problem.



**Ms Blakeman:** Well, I haven't been the Treasurer, haven't been President of the Treasury Board, so I don't think you can pin this on me.

Now we're looking at, you know, in-budget spending of I think we were in the \$37 billion range plus additional monies that come in supplementary supply. As I pointed out as I sort of jumped through history there, some years we have two supplementary supplies. One of them is not big enough to hold all the extra money that we're spending.

I am interested in, I guess, a brief but general discussion from the President of the Treasury Board about this constant spending and this whole process where we have a budget in March, and then often in the spring the government is coming back with a supplementary supply and, for sure, a supplementary supply in the fall, which we've had every single year of the 12 years I've been here. That makes me hold you up and go: as managers you guys aren't very good because you can't get it right. In that 12-year period we've had nothing but good times, so you should have been able to do a better job on this and be closer to the mark. I'd like to hear some of the president's thoughts on that.

Thank you.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** There's no question that when your spending is that much greater than other provinces' – I guess, in all fairness, even when you have revenue that is that much greater than other provinces' and weren't spending and were banking it, so to say, I think that may even cause greater issues around some of the things we do as provinces. When you have a province that's generating so much wealth and is accumulating more and more in the funds that they continually like us to put it into, they become a target for more and more federal government policy. That, in fact, probably will be harder to keep the country together than not. Simply, if you're the only one on the block with a lawnmower, you've got to cut all the lawns. It's not that our spending, obviously, isn't an issue, but I think you're going to have a really difficult time, in a country that has transfer payments as one of its base federal, fundamental programs, if you accumulate so much wealth that the interest stands, and the other things are there. There is a price to pay for that, too.

I don't have as great an issue around supplementary estimates for this reason. If you're going to give all of the departments everything they want in the spring, there's really no reason to be dealing on an ongoing basis with what expenditures may arise. I would far rather tighten the allocations down to the point where if there is something up – nothing probably frustrates someone in my position more than a department who comes in with a sizable request who has said, "Well, we don't have the money," and then be told, "Well, we've got it in our department." That could be the byproduct of saying: no, no, we can't go into supplementary estimates; it shows we're not doing good planning, so let's put enough cookies in the jar to make sure we get through. I don't think that's what the hon. member would want us to do. So that's certainly a report card half way around: what did you do?

To go to the hon. member's questions about what we are doing about it, last year we initiated a core review. We tried to be somewhat selective and asked at that time for about a 1 per cent finding of excesses in departments. We didn't have a lot of luck, but I don't believe that at that time we had the full support of all of the administrative components of the government. I think there's no question that the political legislative component has to be in sync with the bureaucracy for them to understand what we're trying to accomplish when you ask for a core review. It's not about doing less if there's more to do; it's about doing what we should be doing more efficiently. Sometimes it's difficult to get those that have

developed programs or policies over years to suggest that that might not be perfect.

This year in an interim update, where we had not as much buy-in last year, I've been told by our chief of deputies that we have over 50 significant core reviews that we're going to be able to bring into our business plans and processes that will form a part of it. It's extremely encouraging. I think that one of the reasons that it's able to be successful now is trying to accommodate the fact that if departments can initiate efficiencies and thus savings and deliver the level of service that we mandate them to do, then we have to support that they can reinvest that. Historically you've probably heard from governments of all sizes: it's the end of March; we've got to spend it, or we're going to lose it. One of the first things I ran into as Treasury Board president two years ago was Grand & Toy trucks showing up in the last week of our budget.

3:10

**Ms Blakeman:** March madness.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** March madness. The traditional thinking was that you did lose it if you didn't spend it.

It is an issue we have to work around with the Auditor, but it's essential that we're able to work with the departments and say: show us how you're going to do it, and then give us your plan for reinvesting those dollars back into the really important things your department has done. I think we will get to a better, more efficient department and government when we can work a little more on that process and when the accounting requirements don't get in the way of good, practical decisions, really, for the people of Alberta that are receiving the service and being able to display to the people of Alberta that are paying for the service that we've got those two as closely aligned as we can.

On a savings policy I still think that no matter how we do it, you can't disconnect savings and investment from sound, ongoing policy. I know that the Leader of the Opposition and others have talked about the report that suggested that we had to put money in, using the example of someone going into retirement. I don't buy that argument. The province as a working entity will never retire. Someday, maybe sooner than I want, I will, and we all will. So from an individual point of view, I need to look after my individual needs because I won't be able to work or will choose not to. But the province itself will always have the ongoing economic activities that allow it to generate money, so that's quite a bit different than a retirement plan.

Now, does it make sense to put aside for things we're faced with, like a global downturn or unintended events? Absolutely. The more that we can save to support a stable income stream from investments around the world and in Alberta through our pension funds, which are acceptable investments, through infrastructure that builds economic growth – I think these are all really appropriate methods of savings and investment.

Of course, the finance minister is in charge of developing the savings policy, but from personal experience in business the best money that I had in business was what I reinvested in the successful parts of our business so it could grow and I could employ more people. On the other hand, looking after my own personal needs down the road was a different thing. Lots of times I had to give that a holiday, take a rest on retirement, to make sure that the business stayed strong and viable. I think that's the most important single thing we do as a province, ensure that the playing field and the opportunity for individuals and business to grow is there. Aside from that, then, the issues of how much you save and what you do with it are a debate that I'm sure will go on for a while.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much. Clearly, not having a really strong focus has allowed you to be subject to those pressures of: here's all the projects that we want. This government in the '90s had a huge goal in front of it, and that was to eliminate the cash deficit. That kept everybody focused. It was easy to say no. Well, not easy, but there was a focus on saying no because the emphasis was on reducing that cash deficit. My argument to you is that developing a savings plan can have that same focus and goal for you and can give you that same ability to prioritize the demands that are coming at you.

I disagree with your example of your own business. You're saying: reinvest in the successful parts of the business, and sometimes in order to keep the business viable you have to forgo the savings part. I think that what we're really trying to say here is that you're looking at revenue replacement. We are going to have a decline in nonrenewable resource revenue. It is going to come at us. How it comes at us we can debate for a long time. We won't do it here. But it is going to happen, and what we're saying is that if you've got the savings, you're redirecting it into a different revenue source, which allows us to continue.

You talked about: well, the province is always going to have some revenue coming in. True enough, but if you've got less revenue coming from a source that you've depended on for a long time, you need to be replacing that revenue source in a significant way, and the way to do that, in my opinion, is through savings and the interest that you would gain on the savings.

The other part of what's happening here is that approximately a third of everything we spend is directly and instantly subsidized by nonrenewable resource revenue. Of the money that we spend for every man, woman, and child in Alberta, you are only pulling in traditional revenue sources – income tax, licences, fees, program fees, that kind of thing – on about two-thirds of what you're spending. We are directly transferring energy revenue, nonrenewable resource revenue, into this year's budget, and it's going out. So you are pumping it out of the ground and pumping it out of the government's paycheque in exactly the same fiscal year, and it's gone. Once it's gone, it's gone. We can't get that back. We can't make any more money off it. It's gone. We've already been living off our future by subsidizing about a third of what we spend every year through those nonrenewable resource revenues, which is why I'm pressuring so hard on a savings plan.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, we just completed the first 20 minutes, so may I have some clarification from you? You said: 20 minutes total for each minister.

**Ms Blakeman:** He and I combined our first set, and I think we're willing to combine the second set, so we would start a second 20 minutes. Thank you.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** You just can't have too much fun, Mr. Chairman. I really do appreciate this discussion, though.

One of the criticisms that has come back to us over time was the fact that we were too aggressive in paying down the accumulated debt and that as a result of that, the infrastructure spending that would have more appropriately balanced out or been ready to accommodate some of the growth in our province was left undone. There's kind of a fine line between a focused goal that says that we have to do this in spite of all the other pressures on it as opposed to

a more practical approach that says: yeah, there's a plan, and we will move forward on this plan, and when finances are available, we can save or invest.

Probably the thing that I would caution against the most from, say, simply having cash is that inflation kills you if you want to live off cash investments in bonds or in normal bank investments. It's very difficult with interest. I mean, it's been very low. So much of what you might set aside over the long term simply disappears into inflation. The reinvestment into infrastructure and, as you mentioned, the economic drivers: I absolutely agree that if you can use some of those to develop our nanotechnology sector or other sectors, whether they be environmental or agricultural research, those are incredibly important parts of any of the strategies, to really look at developing the other streams to ensure against when we have a slowdown. But I think it's fair to point out about the energy wealth in Alberta, be it from the oil sands or conventional gas, nonconventional gas, where we've published – and it's accepted – that there are around 175 billion barrels, that is the number we're using as a reserve.

Many industry folks or analysts would say that the actual amount of oil that is there somewhere is in excess of 2 trillion barrels. No, we cannot get it all, for sure. Given the advances in technology, you know, we'll get more. We're getting more today than we could have gotten last year, and we will get more 10 years from now than we're getting now. But if they only get half of what's there, that's more oil reserves than all the rest of the known reserves in the world combined.

Now, we're not saying that that's proven, and Alberta is not putting that out there as a fact. But say that it's only a quarter of what they say is there. That's still 500 billion barrels, or at 5 million barrels a day 200 years just from that. We can deliver a hundred thousand barrels a day to every state in the union for 200 years. I don't know if we'll even need it in 200 years. But even the finds that we know of in some of the coal-bed methane and the American opportunities they found in their shale gas – they knew the gas was there 20 years ago. They didn't know how to get it. Now they're producing over 10 billion mcf a day, which is just slightly less than we produce totally up here, and I think we'll find more and more ways of releasing the energy that's there.

3:20

That in no way should diminish the efforts towards renewable energy sources, and in no way should Alberta back away from their commitment to developing these alternative energy/new energy sources. As a matter of fact, last night at a supper in Calgary one of the chief operators for Cargill said that they are working on developing a cogen plant at their plant in High River that would completely run off animal waste and would generate in excess of their needs 200 megawatts back into the grid. Now, that struck me as one really good project that takes a nonusable product in many ways, a product that we have to pay to dispose of, turns that into power, runs the plant completely self-sufficiently, and generates back into the grid. Yeah, we've got to keep investing in these kinds of things. We need to help research, identify things like that that are driven by a good market decision. That, I think, is a win-win-win all the way around.

Yes, we've got to continue to work on other streams of solid resource dollars, and we need to make sure that the research and technology part, that we have a play in, has got the opportunity to both get a reward for its dollars and help us kind of streamline them into the same focus. It's kind of wandering, but I only have a short page, and then I run out.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. Yeah, I was referring to this argument that we're now in, but I wasn't going to go into it. I think the other half of the argument, that you're not doing, is that it may be about how much we've actually got and whether we can afford to get it out or whether we have the technology to get it out when we're talking about nonrenewable resource revenue, energy wealth, but it's also about whether people want to buy it from us, which is the other part of what's happening and which, you know, 10 or 20 years ago we never could have anticipated. Now it's a reality. You guys are dropping \$4 billion on talking about that in other places and trying to deal with – I mean, there have been how many trips that have been taken already this fiscal year by way of promoting that green . . .

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Green TRIP.

**Ms Blakeman:** Green TRIP. That's it, your Public Affairs "we are environmentally a good group of people" campaign. I mean, you've already invested a lot of travel, a lot of your own time, and a lot of your Public Affairs money to go out there and tell people that because currently that's where our problem is coming from. We can have lots of it, but if people won't buy it from us, the same problem. It ends up being the same problem when you look at the bottom of your bank account. That's the point I was making there.

I'm going to get specific for a while here. On page 8 of the supplementary supply it talks about all the various amounts that were voted through orders in council, through Treasury Board minutes. There's a number for the minutes but not a date for the minutes, and I'm interested in the date of the minutes. Could the President of the Treasury Board supply me with the corresponding dates of those Treasury Board minutes that are listed on page 8? Clearly, he's not going to have that off the top of his head, so if he can just supply it in writing to me as soon as possible, that would be helpful.

I did note the transfers that were taking place, and I would like to move on to talk about – I guess you've got the information on this. The first section that comes up is support to the Legislative Assembly, and a supplementary amount of almost \$2 million is requested for additional committee support, which is the fifth policy field committee that the government put in place after the election, and changes to remuneration for members sitting on the standing committees. Could I get that broken down, please? It's given in a lump sum here under one vote, but I don't have the breakdown of the vote beyond that. It's just listed as vote 1, and it's not appearing in any other category. It's not going to opposition services or caucus funding contingencies or anything else. If I could get the way that breaks down, please.

Maybe I should let you answer those two, and then my next question is to Aboriginal Relations. Do we have that minister here?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** I'm happy to get the dates of the Treasury Board meetings.

On the breakdown you wanted: now, I don't know whether we break it down to the individuals that received the money for work on committees or whether it was support for the committee, but I will break it down as much as the Speaker allows us to break it down.

**Ms Blakeman:** That's good.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. Am I talking to you for Aboriginal Relations? Okay.

I'm interested in what's happening here, so I'm looking for a

degree of explanation. What I know is that the province cannot regulate, cannot give a yea or a nay, a green light or a red light or any other colour to activity on First Nations reserves. That's federal and/or First Nation business. The province, when the First Nations started to look at having their own casinos, negotiated a deal for the use of the government slot machines in the casinos. We now have a three-tiered structure with the revenue from slot machines. Normally the percentages are broken down, and I'm going off the top of my head, so I'm not going to be perfectly accurate here. It's like 15 per cent of the take from slots goes to the people that own the casino, 15 per cent goes to the community group that is sponsoring the casino on that given night, and then there's a percentage that comes back to the government that flows directly into the lottery funds, and from that, the money is then redistributed.

Now, there was a second deal, that was negotiated with the racing entertainment centres, and those are slightly different percentages in that the racing entertainment centres get to keep more of it because they turn that money around and enhance their purses and the other parts of the deal, which is a flow-through amount of money.

Then, finally, I'm interested in what the deal is here for the slot revenue that is coming through Aboriginal Relations. My understanding was that they were going to set up a fund and that the money would go in the fund and then would be used for various initiatives for First Nations people, including possibly what we're referring to now as urban reserves. What I'm looking for is some detail about what this \$32 million is. It says that it is to "provide additional spending authority to the First Nations Development Fund." The first question is: is that this government's entity or the entity that is set up jointly between the government and the First Nations casinos, or is this the First Nations fund that money is being deposited into? Whose fund is it?

The fund receives money from the lottery fund based on proceeds from the slot machines. I've already gone through that little history for the backbenchers here, a little historical vignette. I'm asking for how that works exactly. Then it talks about the "Development Fund to support economic, social and community development of First Nation communities." How is that (a) negotiated, (b) determined, (c) monitored, (d) enforced? I know there was a long, drawn-out court case in, let me just say, eastern Canada between a provincial government and a First Nation that had a casino. They decided not to turn their money over to the government, and from that ensued a very long court case. Again, I'm wondering how this actually works.

One of the things I've been hearing – and this is rumour. I'll say that up front. But there's always truth in rumour somewhere, and I'm trying to dig it out. There has been talk about using some of this First Nations money, either the land or the money, for things like private hospitals. More specifically, what we're hearing from other provinces, particularly Saskatchewan, is urban reserve private hospitals to deliver services specifically to First Nation peoples. Saskatchewan in particular seems to have a number of these urban reservations.

3:30

So I'm trying to figure out what this is. There's 32 million bucks. I think it's money that's actually flowing through, that it's a transfer from one thing to another, but let's get that on the record. Then I'm interested in how this all works and who monitors it and especially where the transparency and accountability is around economic, social, and community development of First Nations communities. That's my specific question on Aboriginal Relations.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Public Security and Solicitor General.

**Mr. Lindsay:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In regard to the First Nations gaming policy, the lottery fund dollars for the First Nations development fund grant program depend on the performance of the slot machines that are located in the casinos on aboriginal lands in First Nations casinos. So the money is collected by the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission. It's returned to the First Nations by the Alberta gaming commission to the charity that's set up on that First Nation. In any event, the slot machines in these casinos are performing better than budgeted; therefore, more funding is made available to them.

Hopefully that answers the question of the hon. member.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. No, not quite. What I may be hearing from you is that all of the money collected from the slot machines – literally, the machines are emptied by AGLC staff, who bring it back – is processed, and then all of that money, a hundred per cent of the money from the slots, goes back to the reserve. That's what I was asking. That's why I'm asking for the percentage breakdown of where the money goes. I'm assuming the government has taken a piece off this, and probably some of it is going into the lottery fund directly or indirectly, and the rest of the percentage is going back to the First Nations. That's part of what I was asking you in the questions I was asking. I'll let you answer that.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Public Security and Solicitor General.

**Mr. Lindsay:** Thank you again, Mr. Chairman. I certainly apologize if I gave the impression that all of the money is returned to the First Nation because it's only a per cent, but it is a higher per cent than would be returned through a traditional casino off aboriginal land in recognition of the fact that there are bigger needs in our aboriginal communities. Again, in regard to the charities, it's 15 per cent of the funds that are gathered through the machines that are turned back to the charity in that particular aboriginal community. There's another percentage that goes to the First Nation development fund, which is shared with all aboriginal communities across our province. I don't have those exact figures here, but I can certainly get them for the hon. member.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you. Okay. So the second 15 per cent, then, that's collected off those slots is going into this fund, but it's money that's collected on behalf of the First Nations, and it's going back to them. I'm still back to: who's responsible? Where does the buck stop on this fund? Who's responsible for making sure that that money is spent in the way that it was mandated to be spent? Is it the Solicitor General through AGLC? Is it Minister of Aboriginal Affairs? Is it the First Nations community itself?

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

**Mr. Snelgrove:** The First Nations have their agreement on how the funds will be distributed. Now, they would report through the Minister of Aboriginal Relations.

I want to go back to the urban reserve issue. Our legislation does not allow for the creation of an urban reserve. Saskatchewan does, where the First Nations can go in and buy a property and declare it an urban reserve. Our legislation doesn't allow that. The only expansions that you would have here are when there is a purchase or an agreement around a coterminous boundary that exists with the

reserve right now or with the federal and provincial and First Nations agreeing on the creation of another reserve settlement. We don't have the opportunity to develop urban reserves. They do have the opportunity to fund initiatives in urban settings from these funds.

**Ms Blakeman:** So if they wanted to, they could build a hospital on the reserve, or they could buy land in the city and build a hospital in the city. It's their money. They're responsible for it.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** They could build a hospital on a reserve. They can do what they want on a reserve because – you are correct – that is a federal responsibility, and technically they could build a hospital on some land they wanted to buy just exactly the same as you could build a hospital. Now, what you would do with that hospital would be the point of dispute down the road. Anybody in Alberta can buy land and build a hospital.

**Mr. Liepert:** They build hotels all the time.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Yeah. We just don't put an operating room in it, and we call it a hotel.

There has been some discussion about reserves across Canada building medical facilities on reserves. I've even heard – and I don't know – about one that was suggested in Alberta. But those are things that are really not related to this flow through from their casino dollars.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks for the clarification. It was very helpful.

I think I've got about a minute left. I'm just going to try and get in a couple more questions here on advanced ed. Appearing on page 22 there's \$8 million for increased scholarships for graduate students. I'm wondering if this is sustainable or if it's one time only. [Ms Blakeman's speaking time expired] I'm going to have to try again later. I'll put my name back on the list.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, will you be sharing the 10-minute times?

**Ms Pastoor:** Yes. Okay.

**The Deputy Chair:** Okay. A full 20, then?

**Ms Pastoor:** Okay.

**The Deputy Chair:** All right. Thank you.

**Ms Pastoor:** Yeah; 10 and 10.

Before I start asking some questions, I'll just make some comments that I'm sure have already been said, but I'll just perhaps say them in a different way. When I look at some of the supplementary supply, I can't even say that I think it's poor budgeting because it would appear that over the last 10 years, when \$1.4 billion was the average a year for supplemental dollars, it actually has now become a planned procedure. Having said that, I've just given the government credit for planning, but in my mind even that word is a stretch. How can some of this be explained? Some of it is because we can and because we lowball oil prices, and then we count on huge surpluses, and we cover what was missed on the first budget. This has gone on for about 10 years.

To me the question would be: what kind of a message is this sending to the finance department of all the different ministries in the government, knowing that they don't really have to meet their budget because there are going to be surplus dollars that they can then stand in line and fight with everybody else for? Needless to say, I think the story may be a little different next year.

Having said that, in Education there is \$8 million to provide for modular classrooms, \$15 million to begin the replacement project of the Ernest Manning high school in Calgary, and \$2,500,000 for cost escalation of the current approved projects. My questions, of course, would be: of those current approved projects, are they P3s? What's accounting for that \$2.5 million in the escalation of the approved project? Again, is it because they're P3s? Is there a detailed breakdown of where the funds will go? What measures are being implemented to ensure accountability and that project costs will not continue to escalate? How tight a control in the P3 projects is there in terms of the escalation costs that well may come?

How can we ensure that Ernest Manning will be completed on schedule and, certainly, on budget? Do these all contain the 10 per cent contingency funds, and if they do contain that 10 per cent, is that actually in the first budget or is it in the second budget, that you call the supplementary supply? When will the government commit the other \$15 million to complete that project?

3:40

The minister is forecasting \$20 million in expenses for the P3s and not requesting supplemental funding. I can understand that perhaps happening for this year, but what about in next year's budget? Will that not be a consideration that they're going to have to look at for the spring budget? Maybe they'll do their budgeting a little bit different so that we don't have a fall budget called supplementary supply. Why has this expense increased?

I think my other question will probably be answered by the minister when he talks about the P3s.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** None of the capital dollars here are to do with the P3s whatsoever. The opportunity to partner up with the city of Calgary to replace the Ernest Manning high school so that they could proceed with their LRT was an opportunity that the government doesn't get very often, that we can actually work together with the municipality to move ahead a project which enables them to proceed with their LRT development and us to get a new school at a fixed price that Calgary has entered into.

The \$8 million for classrooms. I think it would be generally agreed that the modular classroom program right now is building a far better product than we originally set out to make 35 years ago, so the uptake is greater. Plus, with the common design we're able to make designs where it's already established how to expand with modulars. I think you're going to see, certainly, an increase in that. It's a very appropriate use of money.

I will have to get back to the hon. member on the \$2.5 million. But in a building budget of several hundred million dollars, 2 and a half million in escalation for even one school would not be extreme. I don't know what particular school or if that was one school, but we can find that out for the hon. member.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That \$2,500,000 on that escalation, why would that not be included in whatever contingency percentage? Do not most projects come with a contingency, and why wouldn't that be included in that particular amount?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** They could be. They could be over and above. Most projects are built around a best guess with contingency built into them. As the hon. member is aware, normally a contingency allowance of 10 per cent would have been adequate, and in the last couple of years that hasn't been adequate to keep up.

**Ms Pastoor:** Then, in the last couple of years if it hasn't been, what is the percentage that you're now locking into the P3s for contingency?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** The P3s are bid. That's why there's the benefit of the P3s, so we don't get that. That company takes all of the requirements. They go together, and they competitively bid on that. It's done. They have to maintain, build – not the maintenance: that's school boards. But they have to make sure the furnaces are still at a level when they're done, the roof, the windows, the walls. That's all built in. It's a fixed-cost contract with escalator opportunities if things change around maintenance that are specified in the contract. But that's one of the really good things about P3s, that when they sign that contract to build those 20 schools, that's the end of the story.

**Ms Pastoor:** So it's built in to their RFP?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** It could be.

**Ms Pastoor:** Okay. I'll move on to the employment and immigration. Just a couple of very quick questions on this one. Why was an increase in earning exemptions for the income supports not anticipated in the spring budget? You know, if it had been better planned and sufficient resources had been put into the supports for the shelter rates and core benefits rates, this increase wouldn't have been needed. I mean, clearly, these shelter rates and core benefit rates and those: we know that they're there. We know that they're going to grow. There's population growth in all of those other contingencies that would create that need. Why wasn't that thought of in the spring? I hope that it will be increased for the next spring budget, keeping that in mind.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Minister of Employment and Immigration.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'll see if I can respond to the comments and questions. As you noted in the supplementary estimates, we are requesting \$5.7 million to go towards the income supports increase which came into effect November 1. We constantly review our programs, and there's an ongoing attempt to see how we can make things better for the clients, so Treasury Board approved an additional \$18 million in funding for income supports earnings exemptions, the shelter rates and core benefit rate increases. With that, there were places where we could cut back, so we're asking for the difference of \$5.7 million to go towards the income supports increases. You'll note that about 46,500 Alberta households will benefit from this increase.

I want to also add that with the prospect of an economic slowdown, these income supports benefit increases will prove more important than ever for Albertans in need. You know, a few months ago we weren't really seeing the economic slowdown that we're seeing today.

We've reviewed our expenditures for the second quarter and have identified areas to reduce spending by approximately \$12.3 million, so our request, then, is for funding of \$5.7 million to absorb the remaining cost of the increases for our income supports clients.

**Ms Pastoor:** Okay. I guess part of my question, too, was: why wasn't that anticipated in the last spring budget, and are you going to be able to get enough in your next spring budget?

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. As I indicated, we do ongoing reviews of our particular programs. Certainly, as we were planning our spring budgets, not very many of us knew that the economic conditions would change. We're finding that we've got a few more individuals that require additional and even greater assistance, so we're doing these adjustments midway. And, yes, we have built our requests for these increases into our next year's budgets. That will be debated later on.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll move on to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. We're looking at \$49,650,000: \$1,150,000 for operating costs associated with the development of a thousand acres of land in Parsons Creek in Fort McMurray and \$33,500,000 for the homeless and eviction prevention fund. I'm not sure just how much control has been put on this, but unfortunately landlords are the ones that are really gaining from this. They up the ante because they know that these people will be covered, particularly with the eviction prevention fund.

Then we're asking for \$15 million more for the direct to tenant rent supplement, which again helps landlords. Unfortunately, sometimes they're slum landlords. People are just happy to be able to live somewhere, so they'll pay. Then when they get the eviction prevention or actually get tenant rent supplements, it often just goes to the landlord when, in fact, where these people are living, well, is probably a roof over their head sometimes and can't be much better than that. I think we should be looking at some of that.

3:50

I know that there is some good legislation coming down in terms of secondary suites. My problem with secondary suites is that I don't mind having students in secondary suites that are in the basement, but I really object to seniors who have had to move out of apartments because they've been condo-ized and actually had to move into a basement because (a) it's not safe, and (b) most basement suites have long narrow stairs. So I'm really concerned. Hopefully, that's not what we're looking at for our seniors.

With the economic downturn are we looking at perhaps postponing that development in Fort McMurray that was to have housed, I believe, 40,000 people. Will the minister go ahead with this project even if it doesn't make particular economic sense with the given change in the market? However, it does make sense that we are providing housing for people that need it. Then again, have those numbers been reassessed? My understanding was that a year ago there were seven houses for sale and now there are 700 houses for sale. I'm not exactly sure of those figures, but I think the point is that there are a great many more houses for sale on the market. Now, whether they're affordable or not, of course, is another thing. But for someone who is probably living in a fifth wheel, it might look pretty inviting.

If we could maybe just work on those few questions for the moment, I would appreciate that.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs.

**Mrs. Fritz:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Those were great questions.

I'd be pleased to answer the last one first, hon. member, about the Parsons Creek project in Fort McMurray. That project, as you know, was released publicly – the announcement was in June – and it's for a thousand acres. I don't know if the hon. member has had a chance to see the Parsons Creek area in Fort McMurray. I was there about three weeks ago with the President of the Treasury Board and other MLAs. That is an area, as I said, that is being offered for sale, with the net proceeds – the land is going to be reinvested, as you know, into affordable housing. That is why it is such a good-news story for this area of low to moderate income and for people that are homeless – and there are homeless people in Fort McMurray – because of that reinvestment of the proceeds. Also, it will be reinvested in the schools, the recreational facilities, other social assets that are required in Fort McMurray.

Your question was: are we on track to move ahead with that project? The answer is very clearly yes. Today's request for the community development advisory board is the first step for developing the project and making recommendations to us in the ministry on the overall development of the project for Parsons Creek. I expect that the development advisory board will make recommendations regarding the design, the land use, the cost implications, you know, areas like that.

Having said that, your question as well was about what is being developed by way of how many houses and whatnot. The first phase of the development is scheduled for 2009, with the first housing expected to be available by 2010. It will house 20,000 people in 7,000 housing units, of which approximately 13 per cent of those housing units are going to be for affordable housing. So it is on track to proceed. What you're seeing here, as I go back, is for the development advisory board.

**Ms Pastoor:** I have to assume from that answer about the community advisory board that a developer actually hasn't been chosen at this point?

**Mrs. Fritz:** No.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member.

**Ms Pastoor:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. In the homeless support initiatives: another \$33,500,000 for the homeless and eviction prevention fund. This increase indicates how rampant poverty is in Canada's wealthiest province and how many people are so close to being homeless in Alberta that they're receiving funds from this program. I suspect, unfortunately, that those numbers may well go up with this new economic clime that we're going through. The budgeted amount for '08-09 for this program was \$44 million, which is a fair chunk of money. So why did the minister need 75 per cent more than was budgeted to fund this program? Last year, when the program was announced, it was intended to cost \$7 million, and now it's costing 10 times that. I think there may be an explanation other than the fact that there are more people requiring it because 10 times more is a huge jump.

What long-term solutions is the minister offering to address the root causes of homelessness, poverty, and the lack of affordable housing instead of short-term and expensive measures? I realize that it's difficult to look at long term when the whole objective is to do something in the short term and get people moving along. However, I think that we're looking at probably a couple of years of downturn in the economy, which will increase the number of people that will require help. We're going to have to ask for more and more, which will probably put a lot of pressure on the minister in the budget debates next spring.

Can the minister tell us what the homelessness secretariat has planned in the nine-year plan to end homelessness? The report was due this fall, and we have yet to see it.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I actually listened intently to some of the discussion going on, in particular, the exchange between the Member for Edmonton-Centre and the hon. President of the Treasury Board. I'd just like to offer my 2 cents, or my brief comments, on that exchange because I did find it extremely interesting in that I was very impressed with the back and forth.

Needless to say, there are a couple of things where I think the savings strategy comes into play in the longer term vision of Alberta that may be a little different from the hon. President of the Treasury Board's view. For instance, I think anyone in this room will agree that what has given us our competitive advantage, our ability to have a low tax regime, to do some of the things we have done in the western sedimentary base and the largesse that it creates, and we continue right now, as was pointed out, to use much of that revenue to fund our day-to-day operations.

Of the \$39 billion we spent this year, I think that after the supplementary budget \$22 billion will come from taxes and other revenues, and the rest will come directly from out of the ground. Let's also face it, of that tax revenue probably about one-half can be taken directly from the oil and gas industry, that is paying large corporate tax rates, as well as are their workers, yada yada yada. You're getting the point of where I'm going. Needless to say, you can see that the majority of our revenues come either directly or indirectly from our energy industry.

On that point, I think this a resource that is going to be gone at some time in the future, hopefully longer, as pointed out by the hon. President of the Treasury Board, than quicker. Nonetheless, this is a diminishing asset that needs to be replaced.

I think that's where the savings account comes in as well. I didn't agree with the postulation that this money that's saved can't be invested to beat inflation – okay? – that this money, whether it's in paper instruments or otherwise will not necessarily outpace inflation. I disagree with that. I believe that with, you know, the \$80 billion under investment right now we could have the best and the brightest. Although the best and the brightest could lose money with the best of them, as we see right now in this climate, over the long term I believe that these individuals can continue our good fortune going forward should we have a decent and thoughtful savings plan.

If you'd like to provide some comment on that, fine. Otherwise, I'll keep moving on.

4:00

**Mr. Snelgrove:** I guess it's easy now for people to look back and say: with all that wealth you've been able to eliminate your deficit and pay off your debt. But you've got to go back to the fact that when they eliminated the deficit and paid off the majority of the debt, oil averaged \$12 a barrel. The difference between Alberta and other provinces, certainly, is that there's oil here, but it's also an attitude in Alberta that you get things done and the willingness of Albertans to tackle issues and think differently.

I mean, obviously, the result of being on top of this oil is going to pay benefits down the road. But to say, "We have to put this money away because when the oil runs out, what are we going to do?" is a very troubling philosophy. The federal government did that to the Maritimes. They said: the fish are gone, so we're just going to pay you to stay there till the fish come back.

When Fort McMurray no longer produces oil, is it the intention of

this Assembly to pay the people to stay there? God, I don't think we have enough money to do that. So we have to use that money, and who knows what changes will happen in the development of energy sources or what the world accepts as our energy in the future? We can only have the best guess and use kind of the information we've got today. I don't buy for a minute the fact that we need to have that money so that when the oil runs out, we'll still be able to stay here. If we haven't developed other industries and been able to produce other goods or services that the world wants, we're in a heaping pile of trouble.

I would have to ask you: what's the rest of the world going to do? We still have some of the most abundant opportunities for renewable forests. We still have a multitude of other mines and the energy that's embedded in coal. We've got tourism capabilities that are just about as good as it gets in the world. We've got an agriculture industry that by taking some very difficult decisions and making choices now is probably going to put us on a level to compete globally that very few places can be and maintain the standards of food safety that we've got. No one else right now is close to what Alberta is accomplishing with animal identification and trace back.

Are we taking steps to be ready to go into what the next great wealth creator is? I don't know, but I know that I'm not one who says that the reason we need the money there is so that when the oil runs out, we can all sit around and spend it until it's gone. I'm thinking of reinvesting it. Like Gretzky said, I don't want to be where the puck is now; I want to be where the puck is going to be. Well, we need to use our oil wealth very strategically to make sure that we're where that puck is going to be.

**Mr. Hehr:** I understand that, and I appreciate those comments. Nonetheless, I think I'll make a couple of points. You know, I'm not really worried about what the rest of the world's going to do; I'm worried about what Alberta's going to do. I know that could have been formed as a bit of a cheap shot, but whatever. The thing is that I believe that with this savings plan well into the future we'd be able to diversify our economy and keep looking after our hospitals and things maybe to allow people some time. If they have to flee this province to go find other work, it might give some buffer zone for them to do it.

Let's hope that it doesn't come to that and that we're doing our due diligence in the House to ensure that, in fact, our citizens aren't having to leave on an emergency night run to Saskatchewan or wherever. Hopefully, we can be continuing to provide these services. Nevertheless, I think we could go round and round all day, but I appreciate the comments made by the hon. President of the Treasury Board. I will take them to put them in my mind to think about going on in the future.

If we move on to some of the line item and more mundane questions I have, this is for the Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security. If we could look at a couple of those line items, it appears that we're going to spend a greater portion of our revenue on a strategic information technology and information project. Can the minister tell us specifically what this funding will be spent on and how this funding will enhance delivery of police services or public security in Alberta? I guess the follow-up question is: why wasn't this funding included in the original budget?

Just moving on, a couple more questions before he can answer them all. Are the increased costs for, I guess, the energy security units for the Alberta Utilities Commission and the Energy Resources Conservation Board going to be one-time expenditures, or are these going to be ongoing expenses that are going to continue to be included in budgets now going forward?

I guess in terms of enhanced policing contracts I'm just wondering: are these in reference to the recent additions to the police force? Are these going to be used for the sheriff program? Where, in fact, is this enhanced policing contract? Where is that money going to go? What department will it be used for? If you had a number or even a jurisdiction where these police officers or sheriffs will be going, that information would be appreciated at this time.

**Mr. Lindsay:** First of all, I'll try to answer the hon. member's question in regard to information technology. That money is put in there because we're moving forward on our API3 program, which is a common database for all police services across the province. It's moving forward a little quicker than we thought it would. That is what that's all about.

In regard to protection and investigative services, you spoke about the protection through the ERCB, et cetera. That will be anticipated to be an ongoing expense.

Under the enhanced policing, again, those are agreements through the RCMP that are offered through the municipalities for policing above and beyond the provincial police service agreement.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Hehr:** Okay. Thank you very much for those answers.

I have some questions now for the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, if that would be okay. It's come to our attention – and this has not been in my time in the House, but I've heard about this in caucus now for some time – that we have forest fires in this province, yet our budgeting for these forest fires is always on the low side, and this here is the same. We can see that we budgeted I believe it was \$16.7 million for fighting forest fires when the actual amount is \$122 million. I've been told this; I don't have the evidence in front of me, but apparently this happens year after year after year. Is there a reason for budgeting in this way that we're not aware of? Are there more fires than the \$16.7 million? Is there a way this could be more accurately reflected if we know this is constantly going to come? Is there a reason for budgeting in this manner, that might help us from our side of the street, so to say. But I'll let you answer that one first; then we can go on.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Dr. Morton:** Yeah. Thank you, Chair. The funding for wildfires in the forestry protection branch is a bit arcane. The original base budget funding for that division each year is set basically to have it prepared and ready to fight fires and respond, but then the actual costs of the fires as they occur are done out of emergency funding through the sustainability fund. The rationale for that is that the one is a set, known expense and the other one is variable depending on the severity of the fire system.

4:10

**Mr. Hehr:** Just a few more questions for the hon. minister. You explained briefly why it's being transferred, you know, where it's coming from, the sustainability fund. Is there a reason why it's coming from this instead of the environmental fund, or the EPF, where it used to come from? I guess if you could explain that to me, we'll ask some other questions. Then we'll keep on going down the list, so to speak, so that you don't have to keep on popping up and down.

Another thing. Turning to the topic of the mountain pine beetle, can the minister provide a more detailed breakdown of what the \$15 million for the continuation of ground survey and control operation

entails. Are there expected good-news stories coming about the pine beetle, or has it continued its ever-continuous march onwards, I guess, so to speak? Also, is some of this money being used for controlled burns to stop the mountain pine beetle?

Last question. What money is the government spending on chronic wasting disease, and whereabouts within Alberta is this happening? Is it a risk to the human food chain? Just enlighten us on what this funding will go to or why it's necessary and how the battle is being won or fought at least.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Chair. To begin, to go back to the question of funding for wildfires in the forestry protection branch, the analogy that is sometimes used there is sort of like a sports team. You have a certain amount of costs that go into having the team ready – the uniforms, the equipment, so forth and so on – but then to actually put them on the field and play the game, i.e. fight the fire, that's additional, and that varies from year to year.

Your next question about the mountain pine beetle. We did budget, base budget, as you'll recall, approximately \$50 million last spring for this. The additional \$15 million that we requested for supplementary funding, again, as an emergency funding analogous to wildfires reflected the shift in what we consider to be the priority area for mountain pine beetle control. Our focus since 2006 has primarily been in the northwest, where we had the largest infestation after July, August of 2006. As I mentioned in my remarks during question period today, we actually believe we're making progress there, a combination of our proactive removal of infested trees, at-risk stands, and also a big help from Mother Nature with some cold weather last February.

Conversely, the bad news, as I called it this afternoon in question period, was that we're seeing an increase in the southwest in the eastern slopes from the Bow Valley right down into the Crownsnest Pass. That's reflecting the fact that, one, we haven't been as active there. We have been working there but not as intensely as in the northwest. Two, we haven't had the help from Mother Nature there. We didn't get the same extent of cold weather last February in southern Alberta as we did in the northwest. Third, the problem in part is the spillover or the in-migration from British Columbia.

The pine beetle population in northern B.C. is beginning to collapse because they've sort of eaten themselves to death – there's not much left to eat – whereas the population in southern British Columbia is still quite vigorous, and we're still getting the spillover from that population. That's expected to begin to decrease in 2011. Basically, the strategy in the eastern slopes, the southwest, is increased detection and removal, and that's why we asked for the additional \$15 million.

Also, you asked about prescribed burns. We are using prescribed burns both in conjunction with Alberta parks and Parks Canada. As the Alberta minister of parks commented this afternoon, the actual people in Banff and Jasper and Waterton have worked closely with us, particularly on prescribed burns, and on their own they're doing their own tree removals.

I guess I might as well use this opportunity to complain a little bit, though, that the government in Ottawa has cut the budget to the western parks for this activity. Both the minister of parks and myself have sent letters urging the new Minister of Natural Resources in Ottawa to restore full and adequate funding to the western parks, particularly to the parks on the Alberta-B.C. Rocky Mountain range to deal with this. [interjection] That's right, Brian.

Chronic wasting disease. Yes, we're fighting a war on two fronts.



We've got the beetles in the west and chronic wasting disease on the eastern front. Chronic wasting disease is a disease that is in cervids, elk and deer. It's a cousin to but different from BSE. So far we've never seen a species jump. [Dr. Morton's speaking time expired]

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

**Ms Blakeman:** We would certainly encourage and welcome any written information that you would like to provide to us, Minister of SRD. We'd appreciate that.

Thank you. I'm sort of organized for the minister of health to be here at this time, so I'm going to start my questions on his area. This is \$177 million, partly offset, but essentially what we've got happening is \$97 million for the health authority's debt and \$80 million for the restructuring for the superboard. This is coming out of vote 5.0.12, one-time financial assistance. My first question is about this line item. When I go back and I look at the budget that was out in the spring, this is something that got an additional \$1.4 million put into this account on this line item in the '07-08 budget.

Again, it had not been budgeted for at the beginning of that fiscal year, turns up as a supplementary supply further into the year. Now we're seeing the same thing here. This was not budgeted for. It has not come from a different account. It's assigned to vote 5.0.12, and it's \$177 million this time. If I could get the minister to talk a little bit about that line vote, 5.0.12, and how he anticipates it being used. I realize he's not responsible for the \$1.4 million from the '07-08 year. How does he anticipate that particular vote being used in the future?

There are a couple of other questions that I have around this. This minister was appointed before the budget was brought in. When he started, I'm assuming he had a plan of where he was going to go. He certainly talked that way when his appointment was first announced. I'm assuming that he was planning what he has since implemented and continues to talk about. So the obvious question is: why wasn't the restructuring money in the budget?

I'd appreciate getting the details from him on how that \$80 million is breaking down. Is it all severance? I don't want it broken down by individual person, by the way, but if we've got some kind of a breakdown available about: this is going to extra pensions or whatever. Or is it, you know, front-line staff? I'm assuming that this is a combination of things, and I'd like to see the detailed breakdown of what it is. That's what I'm looking for.

4:20

Can I draw the minister out a bit on the paying off of the net accumulated deficits, with as of March 31, 2008, \$97 million going to that? Every time I talk to a health minister, it's not going to happen again: by gosh, by darn, they've got a law, and those regional health authorities are going to obey it, and there won't be a deficit. And here I am again saying: well, that happened.

I guess it's about the philosophy of funding for health care. I wonder why you don't choose the kind of health care that you want people to have or the level, some benchmarks, some measurements of what kind of health care you want people to have and fund to that rather than picking an amount of money and saying: provide health care to that amount of money, and it has to be great health care, and it has to satisfy all these other demands. You're going to keep running a deficit if you go at it that way. I'll draw the minister out a bit on that.

Three final questions. AADAC has been abolished now. There's an R word that was used in the legislation . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Redundant.

**Ms Blakeman:** Well, yeah, made redundant. So where are the transfers for that? That's not appearing in the supplementary supply. Where is the financial footprint for AADAC disappearing? I'm aware that AADAC is being reassigned into some other department, so where's the trail, the money trail, as it gets segmented and assigned to different ministries?

I'm also wondering where the Cancer Board is. That appears as vote 5.0.11, the Alberta Cancer Board. In the budget for this year it was at \$294,185,000. The Cancer Board has now been struck. It's clearly still providing services, but shouldn't we be seeing some sort of an internal transfer or reassignment of money, or is the minister empowered to transfer between votes without having to report it outside of his department?

AADAC was vote 6, and it's in here, including the tobacco reduction strategy, for \$99.5 million. Now, where is it? Where's the money for the remainder of the year? I would expect to see it somewhere else.

Finally, mental health was the other. That's vote 5.0.13. I understood from what was included in the legislation that it was also being restructured or reassigned or brought under the superboard, so I was looking for a reassignment of its money or an explanation of where the money is under that category.

I will let the minister answer those.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. minister of health.

**Mr. Liepert:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll try and see if I can hit on all of the queries that the member threw out there. This is one-time funding. The member raised the issue about: why wouldn't it have been planned for? First of all, regional health authorities under their previous existence filed an audited financial statement with the department, and obviously that couldn't be filed until after the end of the fiscal year, which was March 31.

**Ms Blakeman:** For the deficits?

**Mr. Liepert:** For the deficits, yeah.

It's, I think, some time around June when you get the audited financial statements of the regional health authorities, and then you know what the actual deficit really is. If it isn't within the document, I can certainly provide to the member the actual deficits. There were some surpluses. So when you took the deficits, subtracted the surpluses, you ended up with \$97 million. Our intention there was to try and do our best.

You know, I have to acknowledge and agree with the hon. member that this seems to be a perennial issue. I guess that's one of the things that the new Alberta Health Services Board is struggling with today because not only did they inherit this deficit that we have paid through supplementary estimates but, quite frankly, inherited business plans that projected deficits in the current fiscal year of somewhere in the range of, I think, approaching \$400 million. We are attempting this year through the Alberta Health Services Board to deal with those projected deficits.

You know, Mr. Chairman, the merger that we have gone through is the largest merger in the history of Canada: \$8 billion annual budget, 80,000 employees. Unlike a corporate merger, you can't decide to shut down a production line while you go through administrative restructuring. You can't decide to close down an inefficient plant while you go through restructuring. It has been a major integration, and I would say that I believe it has actually been more successful than I had anticipated it would be because as we were going through the merger, frankly, health care has continued to be delivered probably no better than it was prior to the merger but

certainly no worse. Any time you can go through a restructuring and end up not diminishing services, I think it has been a success.

It was not possible to plan for the \$97 million deficit.

**Ms Blakeman:** It was the \$80 million that I was wondering about.

**Mr. Liepert:** The \$80 million? I'll get to that.

The member stated that surely this was part of the plan. You know, the way we operate on this side of the House is that as a minister we take a plan to caucus through the process through cabinet. I was never guaranteed until the day it was taken through caucus and announced on the 15th of May that this was going to be approved. Keep in mind that in the budget which we brought in April 22, which, quite honestly, was put to bed some two months prior to the delivery on April 22, there's no way we could anticipate the \$80 million.

The member asked about the breakdown. My recollection is that the anticipated severance packages are going to take up somewhere in the range of 50 per cent of that \$80 million. Let's keep in mind that that's not just CEO severances. As the administration is streamlined across the province, you don't need nine vice-presidents of whatever, so there's going to be ongoing severance that's going to be offered. You know, one of the things we're going to do is ensure that we treat people properly. If someone no longer has a job because it's redundant, we're going to make sure that they're treated appropriately. We can have a long discussion on whether the CEO severances were treated properly or not, but we're not going to get into that today.

We have now done an assessment of the number of different IT systems that exist within health care in Alberta today when you take into account doctors' offices and providers, and it's in excess of 500 different systems. Now, there is a huge cost associated with trying to pull those together. If we don't start to merge the IT systems, we are never going to have an electronic health record that is of any value, and we're not going to have doctors operating efficiently in their environment. That's the other major part of that \$80 million.

I'll try and quickly deal with the other issues. I think I can actually deal with all of them. When the member asks about AADAC, about cancer, and about mental health, keep in mind that this is supplementary estimates. This is not interdepartmental transfer estimates, I guess would be the way to put it. These are costs above and beyond what were approved in the budget last spring. We have approved a budget for AADAC that was simply a transfer from the department into Alberta Health Services, at least for that portion of AADAC that is moving to Alberta Health Services, and relative to the Alberta Mental Health Board and cancer it was simply part of the integration, the merger of assets, liabilities, and budget.

I think that answers the majority of the questions.

**Ms Blakeman:** Yes, it does. So everything else is inside of the department. Okay. Thank you for that, Mr. Minister.

I'm going to move on here, back to advanced education. A couple of questions arise from looking at that: \$8 million for increased scholarships for graduate students. I'm wondering if this is a sustainable contribution to the scholarships or if this is a one-time-only shot and is meant to be part of an endowment fund. I've got four questions here, so hang tough.

4:30

The \$30 million for construction of a trade and technology complex at SAIT. I'm wondering what stage this is at. Is this planning money? Is it first-stage money? Is it the total contribution

to this particular project? If you can just give me some idea of the state of that.

The \$9.8 million for innovation and service excellence program initiatives. That's almost \$10 million. That's a lot of money extra. I would like – if the minister can provide it in writing, that's fine – detail on all of the initiatives that are falling under this program that are going to be taking up the almost \$10 million.

I'm wondering about the \$2.5 million for admin and maintenance of the apprenticeship individual learning modules. Again, is that expected to be a sustainable amount, or is this is a one-time-only to cover a particular contingency? That SAIT complex has been in the works for a while now, so I'm wondering, I guess, why it wasn't in the spring budget. Is it just because you have the money now and that's why you're going to give the money to them?

That's it. Maybe if I could just get one other set on the record here because I think I'm going to lose my spot.

Under Culture and Community Spirit the \$14 million for the film development program. I'm pretty sure that this was to wipe out the backlog of requests of films that had been bid up. I'm wondering why the ministry doesn't move to a system, that the industry has been asking for, that's more around a revolving fund for employment credits. We can grow in this industry, but it keeps getting stifled by the fact that this is a limited fund. It's a fair number of hoops to jump through for, frankly, not a huge amount of money in their budget. They need it, they want it, they're glad to have it, but it's not like we're talking 50 per cent. If we had a revolving fund that was based more on the criteria that they've outlined to the minister, then the sky is the limit. You know, we can get much bigger productions in here or smaller productions or more productions, and every time they do well, that's okay because everybody in Alberta does well. I've always had a question about: why such a cap?

My second question that I'll leave on the record for the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit is: why is his department paying for the fibre installation for the Olds region for the SuperNet? That should have been coming out of Service Alberta, so why is it coming out of this ministry? [interjection] Well, originally it was Infrastructure. I'm suspecting this is because it's a library, but library funding is actually now under Municipal Affairs. That SuperNet funding was originally paid for by Infrastructure, and now I can understand it should be under Service Alberta, but how come it's coming out of the budget for Culture and Community Spirit?

Thanks very much. If I could hear from those two departments.

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

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Chair, and thanks to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre for the questions. Under the scholarships, the \$8 million for the scholarships, that is an increase to the total scholarship basket, if you will, for students within the province of Alberta. We had meetings with the university presidents and the grad students council and CAUS and the Students Finance Board and a number of other areas. The reality is that, partly, this is reallocating funds in our department, so we anticipate that we will be able to continue this on an ongoing basis for all of those students, which is very good news. It was a good-news announcement when we made it. I think the students received it very well, and it's also part of the affordability framework when you talk about increased bursaries and increased scholarships.

The hon. member mentioned SAIT. The trades and technologies complex is part of the announcements we made on the Calgary downtown corridor as well as SAIT this year. We did a needs

analysis of space and where the demand was the greatest. Obviously, as I've said in this House, Calgary had a fairly substantially higher demand, so our priority and our number one capital priority has been SAIT for probably the last 24 months if not further than that. A lot of the planning that they had done had already been done, so this is the initial allotment to SAIT to get them in the ground and get them working. It's a \$300 million commitment to SAIT to get the trades and technologies facility up and running. We anticipate close to 5,000 spaces, both full-time and part-time, at SAIT once it's complete, and it goes a long way to solving a lot of the issues that we were looking at there.

The innovation and service excellence part of this. Again, partly, this is reallocation within the ministry. Treasury Board had approved \$33 million.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have a few questions for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Maybe I can switch to some general questions for the President of the Treasury Board if he's willing to take some questions of a more general or background nature.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** With answers of a general background? No problem, yeah.

**Mr. Mason:** I'm basically interested in what the President of the Treasury Board sees in Alberta's economic future in the next year and the two-year period. What steps is the government taking to sort of analyze or scan the horizon to identify the opportunities and the threats that exist for Alberta's economy as we head into this very uncertain time internationally economically? The economic crisis seems to deepen from day to day, and now there are some fairly serious economists, politicians, and so on that are beginning to talk about it in terms of the 1929 situation and the Great Depression that followed from there. I'm hearing the word "depression" more, and it looks like a very serious situation.

Of course, as a commodity-based economy, particularly with oil and natural gas, wood, and beef being three of the major areas, I just wonder how vulnerable the minister feels we are in those sorts of areas and what projections he has for employment, for example, new jobs and jobs that may be lost in the next year and two years.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Well, obviously, we can find different economists, different groups that may have different bases to premise their projections on, but this is what I would say we would probably accept in Alberta, and it's very difficult when most global economists look at Canada as a whole. While they may recognize that there are differences in the west and the east, they have to look at our numbers.

4:40

It's interesting to see – I think they said it in September – that Canada grew 10,000 jobs. We grew 15,000 in Alberta. It meant that the rest of the provinces lost 5,000. I mean, the expectation with our unemployment rate is that the highest it will get – and it will not be this year but into the second year out – would be around just under 5 per cent, which many economies consider no unemployment. We expect that starting at the end of 2010, we will be back down into the 3 or 4 per cent range of unemployment. We're still, I would say, cautiously expecting to still maintain a positive growth, maybe 1 plus a little bit per cent, maybe slightly less, but that will be significantly better than most.

What we may see is a lot of capital and a lot of corporate decision-making that says: if we intend to be in business into the future, whatever business – wholesaling, production, storage, transportation – we might as well move our base to where there is a very positive-outlook economic situation right now and possibly recovering into the future and then maintain at least our head office in an area of relative stability both politically and economically and now with the connections through electronics and certainly transportation.

You can be in the world anywhere you want with funding. There are only so many areas in the world where money can locate with certainty that it is still their money. Now, they can lose money. There will be growth in the Middle East and Dubai and the Emirates, but that's very limited. Very few corporate structures, I think, would put all of their future earning possibilities in the hands of just about any South American or Latin American country simply because of the political instability. I would say that there may be opportunities for us to expand some trade as I think the very difficult situations in Europe are going to cause tremendous strain on the European Union itself to maintain some of the trade sacred cows that they've had there. So there are going to be parts of the world and parts of the world markets that are looking for stable trading partners to have a to-and-fro. It just doesn't work if it's all import, all export, and our outlook would show us still having higher than average disposable income and thus being able to buy probably more goods than suggested.

I know that Alberta is a small province in relative population numbers. We are challenged to have the critical mass that our own economy could grow. I guess it would be fair to say that we may be in a slowdown, but I believe that most corporate businesses are going to look and say: "Sooner or later we're going to be there. Why not take this opportunity to refocus, right-size our company, and become part of probably the next big growth spurt that will follow the economic rebalance?"

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much for that answer, Mr. Minister. I appreciate that.

I've got a few more questions along the same line. I'm wondering what the government has in mind in terms of oil and natural gas prices going forward into the next year and two years. I know that we've often criticized the government for lowballing the costs of oil and gas. We were a little more restrained this year because we suspected that there was going to be a drop in the price, and there certainly has been, I think more than we expected, so I think that in this particular year the government has been prudent on that. I'm wondering, you know, if the minister sees this going back up in the next two years, and of course then there's the gas as well.

I wonder if the government – and the minister did talk about how a lot of this is international and how the world views Canada without seeing Alberta as being something a little bit different. I'd be very concerned that the Alberta government needs to make sure that it's got the best possible information with respect to the economy going forward. I wonder if the minister can enlighten us as to what steps the government may have taken to obtain its own advice and its own analysis of the economic future so that Alberta's specific characteristics and advantages are taken into account and we don't just get some generalized information. If the minister could respond to that, then I just have one other question for him.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** The methods that are actually used by several departments in conjunction with how we develop policy in relation to the different issues that we're faced with are obviously very complex. As much as I know that it may seem that ministers spend a lot of time at different conferences and sometimes even in different

countries trying to understand what other entities are doing in relation to what we're trying to accomplish, a lot of the information collected about opportunities is done that way, the data collection that we talked about, the statistical data collection.

We use a lot of global projections with regard to oil and gas, but things can change so quickly. The hon. member will probably remember a few years ago that the threat to our natural gas pricing was going to be liquefied natural gas that they were going to ship across the ocean. News: that hasn't materialized. The handling of it has become extremely expensive, the terminals and such.

No one knew they were going to find all the shale gas in Oklahoma, Texas, and the southern states, which has thrown our opportunity to sell. You know, certainly, the cost of getting our natural gas to any of the states is putting us into quite an uncompetitive nature. I think businesses look for stability and certainty. They would hook stability at a higher price. I don't see gas prices – and once again, I mean, I'm going from some of the stuff we got – getting very far away from the \$7 range either way. The costs of production are such that even in the States, where it may be cheaper, in many ways the companies are better to just hold it there until they can get a return. It doesn't go bad.

I think the generally accepted forecasting in oil is that we're going to have a certain amount of volatility at the bottom, but when it starts its push upward again, it will mean that the OPEC nations have control of the production to a point. One thing about monopolies or cartels is that they are designed to push prices up. That's how they work very well. They're not really good at putting prices down because most of them have never had to do it. They've achieved it.

OPEC ran into a problem, too, when the prices of oil were probably what everyone would consider artificially high because of speculators in the market. In that case OPEC really had nothing they could do because it wasn't the commodity itself that was driving the price. But they can drive it up by scarce amounts to make it competitive. I think you'll see OPEC having a better opportunity to get the bottom into oil and move it. They've made it no secret that they believe a stable oil price is in that \$80 range, where they think the economies can function, and they can sustain what they're trying to do. I expect that they will continue to limit supply until oil gets back into that, and I think we should see that probably in less than a year from now.

I don't know if I've answered all of that.

**Mr. Mason:** The one point that the hon. president missed was, you know, what particular studies are we undertaking in terms of economics and analysis? I don't know if he can shed any light on that.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** One of the responsibilities of the minister of finance was to develop a long-term savings strategy. When you do that, you need to include a whole lot of economic models around what is a reasonable amount of expenditure and what is a good long-term investment on behalf of the public. So one of the things that we've seen and some have been critical about, but probably unfairly so, is bringing in world-class people to sit on the boards that are going to determine a lot of Alberta's financial future, whether it be the board of AIMCo, which I think was a very wise strategic move, to make sure that the money in our pension funds and other dollars that are surplus to us have a world-class view for investment.

4:50

I know it certainly hasn't had the hon. member's support, but understand that there are people around the world who have a different lens on health care, that different ideas from a world-class

system need world-class vision and experience. Whether it's in education – I mean, I think the hon. member is aware of how often we go to Albertans and to sources to bring forward in many ways what is leading-edge stuff. Sometimes we can wait for the outside world to come and affect us, or we can get ahead of them.

I think the sustainable land-use framework that the government is working on and the Water for Life strategy that is nearly a decade old are clear examples of where Alberta goes in front and lays out good, sound policy that you're able to move in. The work they're doing with the homeless strategy is coming forward and getting the co-ordinated approach from municipalities, from the different government departments, from the federal government, and from the stakeholders. This little button, Mr. Chairman, says a lot about how we're trying to do some things here, you know: Nothing about Us without Us, engaging the people that we're trying to help, the people that have loved ones or family that we're trying to help.

We get a lot of information in the day-to-day of government operations. Simply, the Premier organizing, encouraging the ministerial working groups we have now so that the departments that have the issue in front of them are required to be in the room with their deputies and talk about the issue and how we're each going to do our part to tackle that issue has an accountability that is very clear. I mean, there is not a case of it getting lost in an e-mail or: I didn't get your letter. Those kinds of things are making us more responsive and, actually, more keenly aware also of how it affects other departments when a department makes a decision. In some cases we can have unintended consequences of funding a program or cancelling a program and one that simply shifts to another.

It's a big, ongoing process, hon. member, and there is no hard-and-fast scientific approach that we've taken to say: this is the information we need. But on a day-to-day basis we're accumulating a lot of information about what Albertans suggest they need and trying to deliver on those.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to ask the Minister of Employment and Immigration some questions. Perhaps these have already been asked. If so, just let me know, and I'll read the answers in *Hansard*.

In your budget, hon. minister, \$810,000 have been cut from labour standards and workplace safety. I'd be very curious to know why that is and whether or not that represents a reduction in programs, particularly as it relates to the ongoing difficulties we've got in this province with workplace injuries and deaths and the ongoing commitments that have been made by many ministers in your spot to do something about it. You know, frankly, I'm concerned about this because we haven't seen the progress that we need.

There are \$8,251,000 that have been cut from the immigration budget, and I'm very curious about that. There's been \$1,779,000 removed from health workforce development and \$785,000 removed from the workers' compensation appeals. Now, these are all critical areas that protect working people and ensure that people have jobs and that they're safe in their jobs and that if they're injured, they're protected. They're obviously of real concern to us. I'd appreciate the minister's responses to those items.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Minister of Employment and Immigration.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I don't have the numbers right in front of me, but under labour standards and safety I can indicate to the hon. member that our numbers are

going down. The numbers of disabling injuries in the province of Alberta are going down. The lost-time claims are also going down.

Inasmuch as we had a blip last year in terms of deaths, a lot of them were related to occupational diseases. They were based on things that happened many, many years ago in terms of exposure to asbestos, for instance, where some of these are coming from, and individuals are dying because of those activities that happened a number of years ago. We anticipate seeing those actual numbers climb. Where we're seeing some reductions are in vehicle accidents at the workplace and actual incidences that are occurring on the work site. Those numbers are going down, but the medical ones, the deaths attributed to exposure, for instance, to asbestos, are still climbing, but those are activities that happened a number of years ago. We would hope that they would peak eventually and start going down because of the activities we've taken in the last 10, 15 years to recognize the threat that it poses to workers' safety.

Nonetheless, because of all of those kinds of things we tend to see lower numbers of appeals coming through, so there is less need for budget dollars in those areas. The number of claims, for instance, is going down, so we were able to maintain for this year some of the lowest WCB rates of any provinces across Canada. This year we'll be able to flatline those particular rates. They have been coming down over the last little while. Because of that we know that we're slowly heading in the right direction.

Any time somebody gets injured on the work site or any time an incident happens, we sort of say: what are the things that we could have done to prevent them? We're still actively engaged in that. We've increased the numbers of inspections over the last year. We're doing inspections . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** The time is up.  
The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Mr. Allred:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to make a few comments and pose a few questions with regard to the supply estimates. I would like to just continue in the question-and-answer format that we've been using, and I'll try to deal with it on a department-by-department basis.

My first question is with regard to Aboriginal Relations and the question that was posed earlier by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre to the hon. Solicitor General. It's indicated that the supplementary amount of \$32 million is being transferred to the First Nations development fund, and I believe you indicated that there was some extra revenue. But I don't see anywhere in the estimates in either the Solicitor General's budget or Culture and Community Spirit's budget where that revenue is shown.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Under Aboriginal Relations, 2.3, the First Nations fund, the projected amount originally was \$78 million. They have increased that amount by \$32 million. It just means that there are more people using it. It's in Aboriginal Relations, line 2.3.

**Mr. Allred:** I guess I don't quite understand. As I understand this, an extra amount is being transferred to the First Nations, but is there not a corresponding revenue amount?

**Mr. Snelgrove:** This is entirely the revenue generated by their gaming. It's an absolute flow through. It does not cost us anything. It's simply under the previous agreement that that revenue would flow through. We underestimated what they were going to produce by \$32 million. This is our best projection now. It is not a cost to us; it's a direct flow through.

5:00

**Mr. Allred:** Okay. Thank you. Moving on to Advanced Education and Technology, my question with regard to SAIT has been answered. Thank you.

**Culture and Community Spirit.** The question was asked with regard to the \$2 million to support fibre installation in the Olds region. I didn't quite understand the concept there. I understood that the Alberta SuperNet was all completed to facilities such as libraries and municipal facilities and hospitals, et cetera. Is there some further information on that to explain it?

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

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just thought I'd add a little bit of context to that as it was brought up a little bit earlier. The project that those funds went towards was actually multidepartmental. Advanced Education was working with Olds College, was working with the high school, was working with high schools in the outlying areas. Certainly, in order to make all of those things work, we needed to fund some of the last mile of the SuperNet and some of the technology that was going to be used for high school video conferencing hookups to Olds College.

I know the hon. member has an appreciation of this. We have a very small community out in the outlying area. They may only have two physics 30 students. Do you hire a physics 30 teacher for the small community for those two physics 30 students? It makes it very difficult. The option, then, is for those two students to get on a very long bus ride to wherever that classroom might be. This alternative provides for a teacher at Olds College to provide a virtual learning experience, totally interactive, I might add, for those students. It's a funding arrangement that worked in order to achieve the final result. The final result, hon. member, is that we're now able to offer both K to 12 education and some college courses in a virtual setting throughout those schools that are hooked up in a pilot project, in connection as well, I might add, with corporate donations from Bell and some other corporate sponsors. It's a great program.

**Mr. Allred:** I guess, Mr. Chair, a supplemental to that, then: will these be ongoing costs that will continue periodically throughout the coming years?

**Mr. Horner:** As a matter of fact, the pilot will continue to be supported through the normal budgeting process of Olds College and the school boards. I think it's Chinook school division, if I'm not mistaken, that is the other partner that's involved in the project. Of course, like any pilot, if it works and provides value for taxpayers, we'll continue it, and if not, we won't.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Allred:** Well, thank you. Just a comment on Employment and Immigration. I think it's commendable that the hon. Minister of Employment and Immigration is able to adjust within his budget and make those offsets to cover some extra, unforeseen costs. I think that's a sign of good administration.

With regard to Health and Wellness I note that the minister isn't here, but I think it's quite interesting that the amount of one-time funding required for the health authority restructuring is less than the amount of the accumulated deficits for the health regions.

With regard to Infrastructure I note that there's \$54,700,000 for

natural gas rebates. Do all the natural gas rebates come out of the Department of Infrastructure? If so, why Infrastructure? That seems odd.

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Hon. member, they do all come out of Infrastructure. The fact is that we don't know for sure that that is the final number. There may have to be another estimate because we don't know where the temperatures will go. It started as a program when it was infrastructure and transportation, and simply from an administrative point of view that was deemed the department that would administer the program.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Allred:** Okay. Thank you. With regard to Municipal Affairs and Sustainable Resource Development, actually, in the wildfire assistance programs I notice there are extra allocations for fire suppression in both departments. Could we perhaps have a short explanation on why both departments are dealing with firefighting?

**Dr. Morton:** I didn't quite hear the question. Could you repeat it, please?

**Mr. Allred:** Yes. My question was: why do we have extra costs, basically, for firefighting in both Sustainable Resource Development and Municipal Affairs? There must be a certain reason why you each have that in your budgets.

**Mr. Danyluk:** Well, first of all, I can say that we do have two different areas. One is the green zone; one is the white zone. Most of the firefighting that does take place, where there's assistance being brought forward, is by Sustainable Resource Development. Municipal Affairs has the agency that really looks after the co-ordination of disasters in Alberta. Sometimes you may have some duplication, but the agency does come in and try to co-ordinate with municipalities. Our involvement on green land is not as extensive as it is on white land.

**Mr. Allred:** Am I right, then, to say, Mr. Chair, that Sustainable Resource Development does the firefighting, Municipal Affairs does the co-ordinating, but Municipal Affairs pays for the ones in the municipalities and Sustainable Resource Development the green zone? Is that generally correct?

**Mr. Danyluk:** The Alberta Emergency Management Agency was created as a co-ordination body, and what that co-ordination body does is work with the municipalities. We not only work with the municipalities; we help in training, and we help in the occurrence of a fire or a disaster or whatever may take place. We are the emergency hub. That's where our input comes forward. If we talk about firefighting on green area, then that's where Sustainable Resource Development comes in on Alberta land.

**Mr. Allred:** I guess those are all my questions, then. Thank you.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. I can just feel the tension in this room from other people that were hoping to get on the speakers list, so I'm going to cut my remarks short, but I do want to put on the record my unhappiness with this process. We tried to get through 14 ministries and a billion dollars this afternoon. The Official Opposition is still short six of the 14 ministries we haven't

had the time to ask questions about. Let me just put some questions on the record for Agriculture and Rural Development, and then I know there are some members of the government caucus that would like to ask questions, as would my colleague the leader of the third party.

Three hundred million dollars is going to farm recovery plans, which is an extraordinary amount of money. That's a third of a billion dollars. It would go well on the way to providing a high-speed rail link between Edmonton and Calgary. I have a question about what is happening in the future of farm support here when I'm looking at a budget that is putting \$332.9 million as a supplementary into support for Agriculture and Rural Development, and they are almost all some kind of insurance or disaster relief. There's \$4.5 million for a share of crop insurance. We've got economic disaster for the Alberta farm recovery plan. We've got another 9 million bucks of assistance for the seed potato growers. We've got \$16 million on an Alberta livestock and meat strategy.

You know, I'm looking at the national numbers, and 40 per cent of the rural GDP is government support. What are we doing in this country? If we're talking about farmers being small businesspeople, then let's have a small-business program that also includes my small-business entrepreneurs in downtown Edmonton because they sure as heck are not getting access to this stuff. If we're talking about growing our own food, then let's get a strategy that starts to work with this. [interjections] I got everybody fired up, and that's great. But I would like to hear back from the minister on why we are looking at this. This is an extraordinary amount of money. It's the single largest request from any ministry. A third of a billion dollars is what is being requested through this department, and it is almost all some sort of disaster recovery.

Those are my comments. I'll leave that for the minister to respond to me in writing, and I'll cede the floor to others that have questions.

5:10

**Mr. Snelgrove:** Just briefly because I know that others want to do it. Mr. Chairman, when the minister of agriculture came to us a year ago, we said that there has to be an end to the ad hoc programs that continue to support inefficiencies. He has taken his entire department and rejiggered it so that it reflects modern-day agriculture. He's also gone into an industry that had to become competitive worldwide. We had lost markets to other countries with nowhere near, not even close to, the quality or the health or the ability to trace that we've got. He brought onboard people in the industry that are actually going to buy our product instead of dealing with farm groups that were concerned with: what am I going to do with my calf? The idea that we're forcing or pushing the industry towards animal identification and using this program to achieve those goals is a very positive step towards getting agriculture out of our hair and on the way into a competitive market. No question about that.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much. Very briefly – and to save time, I would be quite content to have the answers to my questions in writing – the follow-up question to the Minister of Employment and Immigration with respect to the four areas where there are reductions in his budget: I'd like to know what the impact on that is in terms of staffing, numbers of positions; what programs, if any, are being changed or reduced; and whether or not there are simply overexpenditures or lower utilization than expected in certain programs. I'd appreciate it if he could break it down for me a little bit.

Thanks very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Minister of Employment and Immigration.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. We will provide some detailed information on the questions you've asked.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I have to say first of all thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Centre as well as to Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for allowing the opportunity to some government members to respond here. The opposition, though, has done a very good job here. I have to say that I'm a little frustrated because a lot of my questions have already been asked and answered.

Just a few more here, Mr. Chair, regarding culture, page 30. On the SuperNet I'm interested to know why this \$2 million expense was not foreseen. Also, dealing with \$14 million for the film development program, why was that not foreseen? I'm somewhat concerned that this may spur some further costs, and I'd just like some response to that as well, please.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Minister of Culture and Community Spirit.

**Mr. Blackett:** Thank you. Hon. member, on the first point, the funding for the project at Olds College with respect to the SuperNet, it is not funding that actually came from my department. The other departments that were involved – that would be Service Alberta, Advanced Education and Technology, and Transportation – don't have a mechanism to deliver funds through a matching program. So this is not increasing funding but a reallocation of funding: \$500,000 from Service Alberta; advanced education with \$500,000; and Transportation, \$1 million. Infrastructure also provided \$500,000 through the capital for emergent projects, which does not require supplementary estimates. The funding will bring the town of Olds one step closer to having full Internet access and provide community engagement sites in another 13 communities. In essence, it's a flow-through to the departments. That money came to our department, and we issued the cheque for it.

On the second point, on the film development program, budgets were set in advance of my really being in the department. We've had \$20 million allocated to the film development program. The last couple of years we have had . . .

### **Vote on Supplementary Supply Estimates 2008-09 General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund**

**The Deputy Chair:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Minister of Culture and Community Spirit, but pursuant to Standing Order 62(2) and Government Motion 22, agreed to on November 24, 2008, I must now put the following question. Those members in favour of each of the resolutions relating to the 2008-2009 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund and the lottery fund, please say aye.

**Some Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed, please say no.

**Some Hon. Members:** No.

**The Deputy Chair:** That motion is carried.

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

All resolutions relating to the 2008-09 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund and the lottery fund have been approved.

Support to the Legislative Assembly: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$1,990,000.

Aboriginal Relations: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$32,000,000.

Advanced Education and Technology: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$29,500,000.

Agriculture and Rural Development: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$332,902,000.

Culture and Community Spirit: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$14,350,000; capital investment, \$1,650,000.

Education: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$25,500,000.

Employment and Immigration: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$5,734,000.

Health and Wellness: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$157,200,000.

Housing and Urban Affairs: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$49,650,000.

Infrastructure: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$58,943,000.

Municipal Affairs: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$27,500,000.

Service Alberta: capital investment, \$36,500,000.

Solicitor General and Public Security: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$2,394,000; lottery fund payments, \$20,000,000.

Sustainable Resource Development: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$134,373,000.

Transportation: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$86,000,000.

Transfer to Aboriginal Relations: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$1,300,000.

Transfer to Advanced Education and Technology: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$5,400,000.

Transfer to Agriculture and Rural Development: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$4,000,000.

Transfer from Finance and Enterprise: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, (\$14,000,000).

Transfer to Housing and Urban Affairs: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$2,300,000.

Transfer from Justice: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, (\$6,441,000).

Transfer to Solicitor General and Public Security: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$4,141,000.

Transfer to Sustainable Resource Development: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$3,000,000.

Transfer to Tourism, Parks and Recreation: expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$300,000.

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

**Hon. Members:** Concur.

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

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to seek unanimous consent to return to Introduction of Bills.

[Unanimous consent denied]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Renner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Having completed the business of the day, I would therefore move that the House now stand adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[Motion carried; at 5:20 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]





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