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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

7:30 p.m.

Monday, December 1, 2008

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

I would ask the Assembly to revert to Introduction of Guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, we've all enjoyed the music, I think, coming in today. There was a choir here at lunch and a string group, a cello group, here this evening. I must say that they make much sweeter sounds than we do in here, don't they? [interjections] Anyway, it marks the beginning of the Christmas season and helps us all get into the spirit of celebration.

The group who was playing tonight is a group from the constituency of Edmonton-Riverview called the Edmonton Endpins. They're talented young musicians ranging in age from four to 18. They are accompanied by their teacher and musical director, Mrs. Diana Nuttall, and many parents and family members. They come and perform every year and do an outstanding job of it. I would ask all the performers and their families and guests, please, to rise and receive the warm welcome of all MLAs.

Thank you.

Motions Other than Government Motions

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmor.

Energy Efficiency

515. Mrs. McQueen moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to pursue initiatives which would eliminate the sale of energy intense appliances, lights, and electronics when an energy efficient alternative is available.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour and a privilege to rise this evening to open debate on Motion 515, which urges the government to pursue initiatives which could eliminate the sale of energy intense appliances, lights, and electronics, encouraging instead the purchase of an energy efficient alternative.

Mr. Speaker, the energy used in our homes produces a proportional amount of greenhouse gases, so less energy consumed means less greenhouse gases emitted. Many individuals also take steps to lessen the amount of energy used by doing things like turning off lights and turning down the heat when no one is at home. These steps contribute significantly to lowering greenhouse gas emissions. However, these methods can only go so far. We can't, for example, turn off our fridge or deep-freezes when we're not using them, but we can choose to purchase a fridge or a deep-freeze that uses less energy over the same period of time. This motion works towards that goal, encouraging the use of energy efficient appliances, lights, and electronics.

Energy efficient appliances such as fridges and deep-freezes along with such things as fluorescent light bulbs are designed to minimize the draw of energy while maintaining the same level of performance. I believe this is the next logical step in continuing the trend of

decreasing energy usage, and this belief is shared by many of my colleagues.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, in January of 2008 the hon. Minister of Environment revealed Alberta's 2008 climate change strategy. This is, indeed, a very proactive strategy that will have a positive outcome and impact on our environment for generations to come. This strategy lists three main goals. One goal is to green our energy production, transforming the way we produce energy by introducing cleaner and more sustainable approaches. Another is to implement carbon capture and storage, a goal which was initiated in the summer of 2008. The last is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through conservation and efficiency. This Motion 515 supports government's environmental climate change strategy to conserve energy and ensure efficient use.

The federal government also has an aggressive plan to encourage the use of efficient appliances, lights, and electronics. In 1992 the federal Energy Efficiency Act came into effect, which gave the federal government the authority to establish efficiency standards for appliances that are both imported and manufactured here in Canada. This began the elimination of the least efficient appliances on the market. More recently the government of Canada took bigger strides to protect air quality with the Clean Air Act, which amends the Energy Efficiency Act, allowing the government to set standards for a wider range of consumer and commercial products.

Other provinces, too, have taken steps to encourage consumers to purchase more efficient appliances. The government of B.C., for example, currently offers a provincial sales tax exemption on certain products, including windows, skylights, doors, and forced-air furnaces, if they meet certain efficiency standards. Saskatchewan, too, offers a provincial sales tax exemption for qualifying appliances, including refrigerators, dishwashers, and clothes washers. Ontario passed a provincial Energy Efficiency Act, that regulates the sale of appliances by establishing efficiency standards for more than 50 product categories. The United States Energy Policy Act, which was signed in August of 2005, provides Americans with tax credits for the purchase of energy efficient appliances, household materials, and even hybrid cars.

Mr. Speaker, Motion 515 encourages Albertans to similarly make sound purchases both in terms of their pocketbook and their environment. Earlier this year the hon. Minister of Environment announced one simple act, a way each Albertan can do our part to make a difference to this environment. This Motion 515 speaks to the individual acts we can make. It would help to ensure that Alberta maintains its leadership in using energy efficiently. Altogether, I see Alberta's 2008 climate change strategy aligning in principle with other provinces' programs and being supportive of the federal government's direction. I see this Motion 515 as a complement to both provincial and federal initiatives. Together I believe these directions will contribute to Alberta's continuing commitment to protect our environment for today and future generations.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing others' thoughts and comments on Motion 515. Thank you.

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to speak to this, especially when there are a number of my constituents in the gallery. I would like, if I might, to ever so briefly explain to them that this evening we're debating a motion which is a motion that's not binding on the government, but if it passes here – we have one hour to discuss it – we urge the government as an Assembly to take a particular action. In this case, if this was to pass, the motion would urge the government to “pursue initiatives which would

eliminate the sale of energy intense appliances, lights, and electronics when an energy efficient alternative is available.” That’s what we’re doing right now and for the next 50 minutes.

I commend the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar for bringing this idea forward. I think it’s a great idea. I think, if anything, I’d like it to go a lot farther. I’d like it to be seen as a first step for this government. We live in a world where energy issues challenge us in all kinds of ways. Of course, you mentioned greenhouse gas emissions and the concerns for the environment, which I think are in the long term the single biggest challenge and threat and also opportunity that we face as a society, not just in Alberta but around the world.

Energy also challenges us because of its economic costs. If we become a more energy efficient society, a more energy efficient economy, we become a more efficient competitor in terms of global production, in terms of exporting products around the world. Japan and Europe, who are major exporters, manage to use about half the level of energy per person that Canadians use and Albertans use. Right away they have a tremendous cost advantage in their economy, so increasing energy efficiency helps there.

It’s also, not so much for us but for the United States, a matter of national security because countries that import a tremendous amount of oil, for example, are dependent on security issues in the Middle East or in Russia or elsewhere to sustain their economy. Then they get drawn into conflicts and wars and so on. So there are environmental, economic, and security issues to be addressed through this development.

7:40

I think there would be challenges, perhaps, in implementing this. When it comes down to the details, how do we sort out the energy efficiency around different appliances and light bulbs and computers, microwaves, all kinds of things? Nonetheless, I think it’s absolutely a step in the right direction. In fact, other jurisdictions are blazing the trail for us. We would be in the case of energy efficient light bulbs trailing Australia, Ontario, Ireland, I think, and a number of other jurisdictions who already have taken steps to ban the old-fashioned kind of light bulbs that we see so many of up there, quite a few of which are burned out, actually, when I look now.

An Hon. Member: That saves energy.

Dr. Taft: That saves energy.

I think that also we should be looking at other steps. I would love to see this kind of idea applied not just to appliances and lights and electronics but also to building codes, for example. There’s no question that we could have much better building codes in Alberta, much more focused on improving energy efficiency, higher levels of insulation. There are now quite cost-effective technologies to capture the waste heat that leaves houses both through hot water and through warm air, recapturing that heat and using it over again. I think there are real gains to be made there. In addition to building codes, urban design and public transit both, I think, need to be rethought in terms of our environmental impact.

Finally – and I don’t want to take up everybody’s time here because we only have one hour – I would urge the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, who is minister of – what’s her title? – Service Alberta, to get on with it with the government fleet. We are really not leading by example when we allow so many government officials to drive huge, gas-guzzling vehicles. I think it would be a powerful symbol of leadership from this minister and from this government to say, you know, that from January 1, 2009, onwards the vehicles driven by cabinet ministers and deputy ministers and so

on have to meet high environmental standards. I hope you bring that sort of leadership in, and that would be in the spirit of this motion. [interjection] I’ve been asked what I drive. I drive a little Acura, which actually gets really quite good gas mileage.

I’m just throwing a few other ideas out there. I won’t propose amendments to the motion, but I will tell you that I as one MLA endorse it and will support it and hope we see a lot more action like this. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mrs. Forsyth: Good evening and thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s a pleasure to rise and join debate on Motion 515. I want to commend the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar for bringing this motion forward. Motion 515 is a positive step because it will raise awareness about the importance of energy efficiency. The issues surrounding greenhouse gas emissions are very complex and very meaningful. We need to take steps, where possible, to limit our energy use.

This motion promotes a solution which is environmentally friendly but still allows for economic growth. It is important to allow Alberta’s vital industries to grow while at the same time encouraging responsible energy use. In order to maintain this delicate balance between the economy and our environment, we need to seek out cutting-edge technology. This motion will not only encourage an end to inefficient technologies but also encourage the development of new technologies. This could be a boon for Alberta’s economy. We’re always a leader in so many areas. It would be great if we could also be a leader in energy efficiency.

The branding of our province is also important for Alberta’s tourist industry. We have so much natural beauty here, Mr. Speaker: the Rocky Mountains, clear lakes, Calgary’s Fish Creek park, and endless blue skies. Alberta is truly a nature lover’s paradise. In order to further develop this type of tourism, it is important to market Alberta as a green destination. Encouraging energy efficiency would certainly help achieve this.

Government can’t do everything, Mr. Speaker. There is a sizable element of personal responsibility in energy use. It is important for Albertans to think about the impact of their actions on the environment and to take steps to minimize it. Buying energy efficient appliances to replace older, worn-out ones is a practical step.

I support this motion, and I encourage all my colleagues to consider supporting it as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It’s an honour to rise and join debate tonight on Motion 515:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to pursue initiatives which would eliminate the sale of energy intense appliances, lights, and electronics when an energy efficient alternative is available.

As my colleague the Leader of the Opposition said a few minutes ago, motions are about the Legislative Assembly urging the government to take certain actions, and at that level I have absolutely no problem whatsoever in fully supporting this motion.

However, I had an interesting experience a couple of weeks ago. I have a husband-and-wife couple, constituents in Calgary-Currie, who are sustainable home builders. She’s the architect; he’s the builder, basically. That’s oversimplifying it a little bit, but that’s how it works. They have just completed a fully sustainable house, that is beyond my price range, Mr. Speaker, at over a million dollars, but they have incorporated some incredibly innovative and imaginative techniques, the cost of which, if encouraged through amend-

ments to building codes and changes to building code legislation and if done on a certain volume scale, I'm sure would come down.

There's one particular thing that I want to zero in on because this was something that surprised me as I went through the house. It's one of those things that you see right off the bat and go: *hmm*. This is a sustainable, highly, highly ultra-efficient house, the kind of house that can deliver you a monthly natural gas bill in the single digits if it's not too cold outside, gas bills that are remarkably lower than what you would find in the average house in Alberta. I happened to look up at the ceiling, and I noticed that all the lights were not compact fluorescent light bulbs, which of course are all the rage. They're talked about all over the place these days.

It was mentioned that the province of Ontario has decided to ban incandescent bulbs by 2012 and that the province of Ontario has said that replacing the roughly 87 million incandescent bulbs in Ontario homes with compact fluorescents or other efficient lighting – and I'll come back to the other efficient lighting – by 2012 could cut electricity demand by 6 million megawatt hours over the course of the year, which, for example, would be enough to power 600,000 households or in terms of greenhouse gas emissions is the equivalent of taking a quarter million cars off the road.

Naturally, given that I think the compact fluorescent light bulb industry, if there is such a thing, or industry lobby, has done quite a good marketing job on their product, you know, when you go into this ultra-low emissions, ultra-efficient house and you don't see any compact fluorescent bulbs, your first question is: *why?* The builder is standing right there, so I thought I would ask him. He said: *well, do you know that each compact fluorescent bulb has a little bit of mercury in it? You need the mercury – now he was the engineer and the whiz behind all this – to make the fluorescent thing work. As we all know in this House, I do not have a degree in science, so I want to use highly technical jargon: the fluorescent thing. Okay. Fine.*

Imagine if you had 87 million compact fluorescent bulbs replacing 87 million incandescent bulbs. These things do last a good deal longer than incandescent bulbs and all the rest of that. They use considerably less energy over the course of their lifetime, but eventually the compact fluorescent bulb will burn out, and since it's about that size, what do you think the average homeowner is most likely to do? Reach up, unscrew the light, throw it in the wastebasket. It goes into the wastebasket, and from the wastebasket it goes into the garbage can in the alley. It goes into the truck in the alley, and it gets dumped in a landfill. Eventually, the mercury leaches out, and we have a potential real problem on our hands with that. So my builder argued, and as I recall, I think he said that's why he was using xenon lights, which are very similar to halogen lights. They don't burn quite as hot. They're a little more efficient than halogen lights and much more efficient than incandescent bulbs.

7:50

I guess why I'm focusing on this is that when we look at energy efficient alternatives to the incandescent light bulbs, if we're successful tonight in passing this motion and if it actually has the effect of prompting the government to take action on this, I would just urge that we not go for the easy answer right off the bat and say, "Okay; compact fluorescents are the answer to all our prayers," because they are not, and that we look a little deeper and see what the other alternatives are.

It was quite an experience, Mr. Speaker, to go through this house. I can't begin in the time that's allotted to us tonight to talk about the innovations in this house, from the poured concrete floors, the in-floor hot water heating, and the innovative heating and furnace technology that they had down in the basement that brings in kind of a minimal amount of fresh air from outside, heats it through a heat

exchanger, and takes the heat out before the air is exhausted back outside the house to the greater world. I mean, it was just one idea after another.

As you can see if you picked up the little real estate explanation, you know, which you always find in a house that's for sale, where it explains the features of the house, you've got a whole shopping list of features, and at the bottom you've got a price of \$1,300,000, which, like I said, Mr. Speaker, is out of my snack bracket. You can't help but think that there are a number of technologies, a number of innovations, a number of developments being employed in this particular house, which you have to look at as a demonstration house to an extent. If we were to take the spirit of this approach in Motion 515 further and apply it to building codes, apply it to our approach to developing cities so that we develop walkable neighbourhoods and, you know, transit-friendly cities and so on, we could make a heck of a difference over a relatively short period of time.

With the condition that as we talk up the government after we pass Motion 515, that we try and persuade them and urge them to explore the range of energy efficient options to the status quo that are out there, I will be happy to support this motion and vote for it when the time comes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mrs. Leskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Motion 515, brought forward by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmor. This motion encourages initiatives that would "eliminate the sale of energy intense appliances, lights, and electronics when an energy efficient alternative is available." This movement towards energy efficiency is not only beneficial for our environment today but will ensure a healthy climate for Alberta's future generations.

Standard appliances contribute greenhouse gas emissions through the burning of fossil fuels. These energy intense appliances contribute a significant amount of greenhouse gas emissions, that are destructive to our environment and, more specifically, our atmosphere. The government of Alberta's overall environmental objectives are to be resourceful and to be responsible. That being said, our goal is to reduce, where possible, the use of fossil fuels that produce those destructive greenhouse gases.

Mr. Speaker, I'm a major believer in practising what one preaches. Some time ago I made a choice as a conscientious consumer to purchase energy efficient appliances. Every appliance in my home is now energy efficient, even my light bulbs. There are many advantages to converting to energy efficient appliances. New washers can use up to 25 per cent less energy than the average washer, new dryers can use up to 8 per cent less energy, and a new dishwasher can use up to 28 per cent less energy than previous models. The biggest energy saver within your household could be your new refrigerator, using up to 39 per cent less energy. Light-emitting diodes, or LEDs, also reduce electricity consumption up to 90 per cent and have an exceptionally long life. My daughter, when putting up her first Christmas tree this year, bought LED lights. She is also doing her part to help the environment. Consumers are able to recognize these efficient appliances with the proper use of labelling, using an Energy Star. Models with these labels are approximately 10 to 50 per cent more efficient than a conventional model.

Mr. Speaker, a component of the Progressive Conservative Party platform in the previous election was to establish an energy efficiency act that among other things will replace appliances with energy efficient models. The goal is to transform how we use

energy, apply energy efficient solutions, and conserve overall energy. I believe these goals to be extremely critical to the state of our environment.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to once again thank the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmor for bringing forward this motion, that clearly attempts to improve Alberta's environment. I practise this initiative at home, and I encourage all Albertans as well.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regard to Motion 515 what we are doing tonight is in effect attempting to legislate common sense and, in so doing, saving dollars and cents. It's refreshing to see a government member recommend regulating energy in a deregulated power market.

It's a bit of a hard act to follow both the hon. members for Edmonton-Riverview and Calgary-Currie and not repeat some of the gems they've provided, so I'll try and go over them very quickly. Like both members mentioned, the Legislature would be a good place to start with more efficient use of light bulbs. From the Legislature we could move out to all government buildings and improve our lighting efficiency with low-power light bulbs.

I'd like to add also, as the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview pointed out, the possibility of government hybrid and electric vehicles. Now, I'm aware, having run Cataract Creek and depended on conservation officers and SRD people to provide backup support for myself and for my campers, that current technology would be difficult to apply to these conservation vehicles, that are needing to be of a heavier nature, four-wheel drive and so on. I don't think the former Minister of Environment's Smart car would have done terribly well on the forestry road banging out to Cataract Creek.

I would like to see the government incent or provide subsidies for retrofitting homes and, as both the Member for Calgary-Currie and Member for Edmonton-Riverview pointed out, improve building codes for insulation in our cold climate and also for fireproofing. Imagine the amount of money we could save if building codes required that we have drywall, for example, outside so that the chances of fire spreading from house to house were considerably reduced.

I would like to take it further. If we're going to require more energy efficient appliances and electronics as energy efficient alternatives in this province, let's take it the next step and require stricter emission codes. When the federal government, whatever it may be, whether it's a coalition or whether it's some type of redrawing of our existing governments, potentially incents the car industry, then let's go for stricter emission controls. Let's go for greater fuel efficiency. There has been all kinds of talk about the big three being dinosaurs and not keeping up with foreign imports, so here's a chance for Alberta to lead and require that more efficient vehicles are developed into the future.

8:00

I would like to see power of a nonnuclear nature produced close to the area requiring it rather than through long, inefficient transmission lines. I would like to see coal gasified rather than burning it in its raw state, as currently the major source of not only power but pollution in Alberta.

A personal experience of efficiency, as the hon. member, also a teacher, pointed out, was when our old dryer died this fall. While waiting to purchase a more efficient dryer, we hung our clothes out on the line, and that's become more of a routine, tossing them in the dryer only to serve as a bit of an ironing circumstance, again saving power.

The town of Okotoks, just south of Calgary, is a leader in alternative energy. The town of Okotoks has developments where solar power is the primary source of power from both an electrical point of view and also for water heaters. My hon. colleague from Calgary-Mountain View has solar panels to heat his water. Developments are happening so that you can have heat on demand, where you no longer have to keep a water heater.

Low-flush toilets: when we're making recommendations about energy usage, let's include water conservation. Let's consider inciting innovation and technology to support postsecondary research designed to come up with batteries that would store wind and solar power in an economical fashion. Let's explore geothermal possibilities, explore nondamming, river-run power generation, where we don't have to dam up the river but use the current of the river as it is to produce degrees of electricity.

In talking to one of the CEOs from Enmax, he talked about the possibility of having your own little electricity-generating wind turbine, that would allow individuals, without causing noise or distraction to their neighbours, to generate a significant amount of their own power, which in European countries is then sold back onto the grid.

Let's extract, refine, and produce nonrenewable energy in a more efficient, environmentally sound manner, which not only reduces our environmental footprint but reduces our reliance on water and natural gas. This motion from the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmor is a wonderful first step. Let's take it for a test drive, and let's take it further.

I thank the hon. member for putting forward this motion. I know that from having spoken to her when she was the mayor of Drayton Valley, she would like to see a lot less traffic, particularly the oil and gas rig-related traffic, on the bridge leading into Drayton Valley. Any kind of a more economical production of power of a nonrenewable nature could cut down on that traffic and lead to greater energy efficiency, conservation, and preservation.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It was an honour to participate in the debate over Motion 515.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'm fully in support of this motion. I think there are a lot of communities that could really gain from a motion such as this. I have a question, though. When the mover of the motion speaks, I'd like to know what her plan would be with the opportunity for the appliances and maybe the efficient furnaces that may end up in other places rather than for recycling. I remember a federal government initiative to put in energy efficient furnaces, and they found that about 85 per cent of those furnaces went into garages that weren't heated before, and it, in turn, created some environmental problems. Sometimes where there are best intentions, we end up having a second fridge now as the beer fridge downstairs, where there wasn't a second fridge before. So we have an energy efficient fridge upstairs and a non energy efficient fridge downstairs with a dozen or so cool ones in it. The same with the furnaces.

Overall, the intention of the motion is honourable. I support it. I think that any time we can get appliances that are more generally accepted as energy efficient, it is very important. I question, though, some of the companies that like to label energy efficient. I wonder if there is some way we can ensure that what the consumer is being told is actually what they're buying because I'm also understanding that some of the appliances that we're buying that are supposed to be energy efficient under a certain code are not. I'm wondering if the mover has had an opportunity to think about that as well.

I have had some encouragement from my constituents. I've talked to the member opposite from Drayton Valley-Calmar about this motion. I think it's a great motion and a great initiative, and I'd be interested to hear her comments on some of the concerns I have with it.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Olson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's also my honour to get to say a few words about Motion 515, which, of course, has an intent to urge the government to pursue initiatives which could eliminate the sale of energy intense appliances, lights, and electronics when an energy efficient alternative is available.

I also want to thank the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar for her initiative in bringing this forward. I'm very happy to have the opportunity to be part of the discussion on environment. As a new MLA that was one of the things that I came here wanting to talk about, and I'm very pleased that we have this opportunity tonight. I also want to congratulate the member on the other work that she's doing in the environmental area. I think she can be very proud of that work, and we certainly are proud of her.

My sense also is that in jurisdictions all around the world discussions of the environment are coming to the forefront. A number of years ago probably it wasn't so much on the radar, but I find that in my time here it's almost a matter of daily public discourse. I think that governments are taking initiative and doing what they can to preserve our environment. A good example of that is our government's initiative last January with the climate change strategy. As has already been enunciated, it had three goals, one of which was to conserve energy through energy efficient appliances and so on. There were also nine actions that were enumerated in terms of ways that that might be done – conserving energy, that is – and one of them was an incentive program to promote the use of energy efficient appliances. Another was public awareness.

In view of those actions already taken by our government, I think it makes sense that we would now be having this discussion to talk about conservation. Certainly, anybody listening to this discussion tonight will have heard a common thread through all of the comments by all of the speakers in terms of their support for this initiative. I think that everyone here is aware of the challenges that we have, of the need to meet these challenges. I think we all know that Alberta's electricity is right now 90 per cent generated by nonrenewable resources, so these initiatives, anything that would lead to a reduction of the use of electricity, would certainly be worth while. My colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake kind of scooped me on some of the numbers in terms of energy savings of new appliances compared to old appliances. Those are significant reductions and certainly would motivate us to want to incent behaviour to use those appliances as opposed to the old ones.

8:10

There are all kinds of good ideas in terms of how to incent that behaviour. Actually, there is an almost dizzying array of tools that have been used by various jurisdictions across Canada and around the world, and I think they're all worth while. It's a matter of us picking which ones we think will do the best job for us. Everything from various incentives to rebates, grants, interest-free loans, tax exemptions, education, awareness, labelling: all of these things are great tools and are very worth while.

It may be that this motion infers that there's maybe something even a little bit more that could be done, and I'm thinking of

standards. Rather than something voluntary, like you can get the rebate if you buy a new stove or whatever it might be, there may be a place for some standards that create some expectations in terms of what people should be using and what they should not be using, a little bit more of the things that you must do or that you should not do.

I'm just thinking of some examples I'm aware of that impressed me. I don't know a lot of the details, but I know, for example, that in Germany back in the 1990s – this doesn't have to do with electricity, but the principle still works – wholesalers who sold a TV or whatever to a retailer were required to take the cardboard box back. That then evolved into the retailer having to keep the box when somebody bought anything, down to some toothpaste. So it put some responsibility on the people that are providing the product to deal with the refuse from those products. Also, I understand that now if you buy a fridge in Germany and it wears out, the manufacturer has to take it back and recycle it. Those are just some examples, I think, of some innovative ideas that could be used to give a little bit of a nudge rather than just relying on people voluntarily doing their part.

Now, this is a motion, so I don't interpret anything in this motion as prescribing a certain kind of tool. I think it's very broad, very wide open that way. I think it leaves open the possibility of using all of these tools. When you read the motion, I don't really know how one could vote against it. I'm going to certainly be voting for it, and I'm going to be encouraging all of my colleagues to vote for it. Once again, I'd like to thank the member for bringing it forward.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Motion 515, the energy efficient appliances, lights, and electronics, proposed by the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

I'd just like to talk to energy efficiency in general. I recall a story from the campaign, where I had this very angry gentleman phone me who said that he wasn't going to vote for me because the price of energy was too high and his bills were too high, that he couldn't afford to pay his bills. So I said: "Well, why don't you get out your bill? Let's talk."

I had just built a new home a few years earlier for my extended family. We looked at the square footage of his home and compared it to my home. We looked at how many gigajoules his home used and how many gigajoules my home used. Then I asked him what kind of appliances, furnace, hot water tank, insulation, windows he had. We discovered after he climbed up into his attic that he didn't have enough insulation. He had an old fridge. He had an old stove. He had energy inefficient appliances and inefficient windows. For 34 years he had been blowing not only heat but his money out the window, because his house was built in the early '70s.

Mr. Speaker, I got him in touch with a fellow who did insulation, we got him in touch with somebody who gave him a good deal on a nice energy efficient fridge, and he upgraded the efficiency of his windows by putting plastic on the windows. He asked me to bring by 20 signs so he could help me on my campaign. The point is that we have to be very cautious about the energy we've been using. Yes, costs are high, but the bigger thing is that we're blowing greenhouse gases into the air because 30 years ago, 40 years ago inefficient appliances and windows and building standards existed.

Greenhouse gas emissions and energy insecurity are areas of apprehension today; however, the government of Alberta is address-

ing these concerns through a comprehensive climate change strategy. One of its stated goals is to conserve and use energy efficiently. Motion 515 is a practical step on the path to achieving this objective.

One of the key successful implementations of this strategy depends in large part on transforming how Albertans use and conserve energy. It's the thing that Albertans do best. It's that sense of personal responsibility in your own area, where you live, work, and play. As we all know, responsible energy management requires not only that we become environmentally conscious but that we decide to act on our convictions. Obviously, this is where economic realities play a primary role in determining how to balance the initial costs of energy efficiency with expected long-term benefits.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans should remember that despite the slightly higher initial costs of newer, more efficient appliances, lights, and electronics, over the long term energy conservation leads to several beneficial outcomes. For example, modern, energy efficient refrigerators, washing machines, dishwashers, computer systems reduce the amount of energy resources consumed, which translates into savings on utilities and better environmental stewardship. I was astounded when I saw these numbers.

Newer refrigerators use 39 per cent less energy than the average model in homes today. This is a great area of opportunity considering that 25 per cent of Canadian households have more than one refrigerator. Some of the refrigerators, the beer fridges in the garages, are about 40 years old. We need to get those 10-year-old refrigerators into that garage to replace that one and the newest ones into the house.

New washers use 25 per cent less energy and 15 per cent less water. Alberta estimates, based on EPCOR's regulated rate tariff for residential service, shows a possible utilities savings of \$26.17 per year. Replacing a 1990 dishwashing machine with a new Energy Star brand can save up to \$40 a year and 40 litres of water per load.

Finally, the average initial cost of computer systems has fallen while energy efficiency has increased. Certain new laptops and desktop computers consume up to 70 per cent less power than their previous generations. Features such as sleep mode and scheduled start-ups and shutdowns ensure increased energy efficiency.

Mr. Speaker, Motion 515, energy efficient appliances, lights, and electronics, will artificially stimulate demand for these energy efficient products. This will give positive outcomes for all Albertans in terms of energy conservation and additional long-term savings for those who purchase them. Thus, the motion reinforces Alberta's climate change strategy and ultimately rewards consumers for making responsible choices.

Mr. Speaker, there are many other things that we can do. One, not only can we change the light bulb; we can just turn the lights off. Let's not keep all the lights on in the house at the same time. Turn the heat down, especially at bedtime and when you're away from home. In the summer hang your clothes out to dry. Drive less and walk more. You can use less water or turn the temperature down on your hot water heater. Wrap a little bit of insulation around your heater.

Mr. Speaker, ultimately this is about personal responsibility. I think every Albertan and every Canadian can play a role in energy conservation. I thank the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar for bringing this forward. It shows true leadership on her part in discussing this in the House today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak in support of Motion 515:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to pursue initiatives which would eliminate the sale of energy intense appliances, lights, and electronics when an energy efficient alternative is available.

There has been some good debate on this motion, Mr. Speaker, both from the government and opposition sides. I'm glad there's been no ennui about it at all.

8:20

I do want to mention something that came on my Facebook a long time ago along these lines. On April 22, which is Earth Day, somebody put an anonymous gift on my Facebook. It says: for my Conservative friend, who has a great personal record on the environment; now bring it to government. I'm hoping that by way of my mentioning this, the anonymous person comes forward, but this is exactly what this motion seeks to do as proposed by the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

I want to talk about a couple of people I met during the campaign. One of the first gentlemen I met lives in the community of Acadia. He's very environmentally minded, and we discussed the environment at length. My point to him was that it's all about personal responsibility; it's about demand. That's the best way to reduce the impact on our planet, just reduce aggregate demand. Interestingly enough, the same night I also met a voter who was saying that he was voting Green. The first thing that I said was that I drive a car, not a van or anything; I don't drive a hybrid like the Member for Red Deer-South. Then this person says: "Oh, really? I drive an SUV." So this person was a Green voter and said that they drove an SUV. That goes back to my point that it's about personal responsibility.

Demand being the key, we want to influence consumer behaviour, and we can only do so much as to supply. If people demand this type of energy, at the same time it has to be supplied somewhere, be it from Alberta or elsewhere. We have, of course, a lot of wind farms here, but you need baseload power to run the power grid. That usually is run by hydro, coal, oil, or gas, or nuclear elsewhere. Again, the key is reducing demand.

One thing to remember is that many people have said to me over the years that we have to get rid of these big, bad, nasty polluters. The largest polluter, however, Mr. Speaker, is the home, the aggregate home. I, myself, am proud to have fluorescent bulbs, and I use power bars as I found at Earth Day that that saves power. It eliminates something called vampire draw off appliances that are actually not in use, especially important, of course, since obviously we're here half the time.

Motion 515 seeks to have the government pursuing initiatives that could eliminate the sale of some of these appliances. Obviously, greenhouse gases are produced by the burning of fossil fuels, which are most often used to energize household appliances. The average person may not realize that. It's our goal to reduce where possible the use of fossil fuels that produce greenhouse gases. This motion is consistent with the government's overall goal: resourceful and responsible.

Let's take a look for a minute at energy consumption in our province. Alberta's electrical power comes mostly from coal. I've asked some people about this, and a lot of people don't realize this. Some of it is from natural gas, and a slight bit is from hydro and wind. In 2007 Alberta Environment released a report stating that looking at the leading emitters of carbon dioxide around world, Canada actually ranked seventh overall in the world. Canada is responsible for 2 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, and this is largely because of Alberta's role as the leading energy producer in Canada. Albertans are obviously, again, reliant on coal-fired energy, and in total Alberta's greenhouse gas emissions in 2004

were 235 megatonnes. That's 235 million tonnes. I don't think any of us can really grasp the true gravity of that.

Between 1990 and 2003 Canada's total energy consumption rose 23 per cent, from 8,549 petajoules to 10,477 petajoules, again fuelled by a growing population, especially by economic growth and prosperity enjoyed in our nation. Alberta, though, had the biggest jump, 38 per cent in the same period, and this is partly due to a 24 per cent population surge. Also notable is that in 2003 refined petroleum products, natural gas, and coal accounted for 87 per cent of consumption.

Now, to look at the flip side of the equation, Mr. Speaker, the demand side, on average 10 per cent of all household energy is to produce light. In an energy efficiency information kit released by the government of Alberta, compact fluorescent lamps, or CFLs, will fit most standard light fixtures and provide the same warm, natural light as incandescent bulbs, and they use 25 per cent of the energy. That's not a 25 per cent reduction: 25 per cent of the energy of incandescent bulbs. They last 10 times longer, meaning that in the lifetime of one CFL you'd have to replace a regular incandescent bulb 10 times. I realize there are some mercury issues, as the Member for Calgary-Currie had mentioned, but I think that all things considered, this is the way to go.

Let's just do a comparison of costs here, purchase costs for 10,000 hours of light. Using a 100-watt incandescent bulb, it's \$30 for six bulbs. Using a CFL, 26 watts, is \$150 for six bulbs. The energy cost at 7.5 cents a kilowatt hour here is \$450 for the incandescent bulb, \$117 for the compact fluorescent, resulting in a zero sum gain of a net savings of \$213. So, basically, by converting just six of your existing light fixtures to compact fluorescents, you can reduce your personal greenhouse gas emissions by 4,400 kilograms during the lifetime of those compact fluorescent bulbs. This is an initiative that we should pursue.

Also notable is that with growth in power you have more power lines, more power plants that need to be created, more maintenance, the steel and cement that obviously goes into them. These are all things to consider.

One thing I also wanted to mention, Mr. Speaker, is that this isn't about shutting down the economy; rather, it's about being competitive. The Leader of the Opposition had a good point as well, that it's important to be competitive. Obviously, if you have less of an input cost in your particular area, there is more of a profit margin then for the businesses and less cost for the end user.

Again, I don't think we should shut down our economy. But should we be responsible? Absolutely. This creates a lot of balance, and this is something that is worth supporting. I urge all members to support it and thank the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar for procuring this excellent initiative.

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

Mr. Xiao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure to rise and speak to Motion 515, brought forward by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar. This motion urges the government to pursue initiatives that could eliminate the sale of energy intense appliances, lights, and electronics when an energy efficient alternative is available. I would like to sincerely thank and congratulate my hon. colleague for bringing forward this timely motion as I believe it strongly complements this government's efforts to reduce greenhouse emissions and ensure a healthy, sustainable environment for all Albertans. Using the leverage of supply and demand is the best way to achieve that.

Mr. Speaker, if we are to be successful in these efforts, all participants in our society must play their parts. Governments must

lead by establishing regulations and incentives to provide a framework in which corporations and consumers work to build and maintain a healthy environment. This motion encourages all three parties – corporate, consumer, and the government – to participate in reducing our reliance on nonrenewable energy sources by encouraging the use of more energy efficient products.

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member. Standing Order 8(4) provides up to five minutes for the sponsor of the motion to close the debate. I would like to invite the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar to close the debate.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real honour to have listened to everyone speak this evening on this motion. I've been elected and we've all been elected to make a difference for our children and, I'm really proud now to be able to say, for our grandchildren and for my new grandson, Rylan. I sincerely want to thank all the hon. members that chose to participate today. We've heard some really important and supportive messages, and I thank you for those. Tonight we've heard many different ways efforts are being made to use energy more efficiently.

I'd like to also commend our minister, the Minister of Environment, for the stewardship programs to respond a little bit with regard to the recycling question with regard to the electronics recycling, that the minister through his leadership has brought forward in stewardship programs that deals with some of those, especially the new electronics recycling and how we can deal with that. New products are being created that work to decrease energy consumption: washing machines, dryers, and lights. Generating stations such as the third unit at Genesee generation station in my constituency are taking strides in ensuring that energy is being produced more efficiently.

I heard tonight hon. members speak about many things: one simple act, a government initiative that the hon. Minister of Environment initiated earlier this year, that encourages Albertans to make one commitment toward reducing waste, water, or energy consumption. We also heard this evening about the government's climate change strategy and its three goals, one of which is to promote efficient use of energy. All of these tell me that Albertans are moving towards conservation and efficient energy usage. I believe that Motion 515 complements these initiatives.

8:30

I also heard ideas on how we can possibly include things like building code standards and ensuring that we are indeed bringing forward energy efficiency in the appliances mentioned. I understand the concerns about how initial costs of energy efficient appliances are greater, but I also know, after being a retail owner of an electronics store for 16 years, how bringing on these new products will also reduce the costs.

Further to long-term savings on utility bills, Motion 515 would increase market demand for energy efficient lights, appliances, and electronics, which would likely result, we know, in a decrease in price. In addition, this demand would foster a competition that will drive the discovery of newer technologies, allowing for the continual development of increasingly more efficient products.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I believe that Motion 515 is the next logical step in increasing energy efficiency. I stand here urging all of the members to commit one simple act this evening by supporting Motion 515.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 515 carried]

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

[Mr. Cao in the chair]

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

Bill 53

Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2008 (No. 2)

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill?

Hon. Members: Question.

[The clauses of Bill 53 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that the committee now rise and report Bill 53.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti. Sorry. The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Mr. Weadick: We look a lot alike.

Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 53.

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

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

**Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading**

Bill 51

**Appropriation (Supplementary Supply)
Act, 2008 (No. 2)**

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. President of the Treasury Board.

Mr. Snelgrove: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to move second reading of Bill 51, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2008 (No. 2).

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll raise a number of questions with this piece of legislation, I'm sure none of which will be a great shock or surprise to the President of the Treasury Board, but I will

try to keep him engaged and amused. That's going to be a tough challenge, I can see.

Every year we come here at least once, sometimes twice a year with supplementary supply bills, and every year they raise some of the same questions. This year they raised a few others. Every year I think it's incumbent on the opposition to raise the concern around a budget process that is in this case about a billion dollars off target. The budget itself was under target. We need a billion dollars more, and we are less than nine months through the fiscal year, so we may very well be back here next year providing another chunk of money to further top up the budget.

When that happens, Mr. Speaker, it always takes me back to a time when I had a real job, unlike the job all of us have here now. That was in the middle '80s or so, in fact working with the provincial government. At a time when budgets were very tight, there was a general rule of thumb, more than a rule of thumb, really – it was an unspoken policy originating from the deputy minister of the department I was in – that budgets given at the beginning of the year had to be delivered within 1 per cent by the end of the year. Anything more than that was considered a career move, so you can bet that the attention to staying within budget was pretty intense.

I fully understand, as we all do here, that unexpected things come up. There are times when world events or natural catastrophes or whatever arise, but I would urge this government to return to a philosophy where the budgets really are the budgets and that we stick to that budget at the beginning of the year. I think this happens in part, obviously, because we have had 13 years of surplus amounts of money, driven at one point by very, very large revenues from oil and gas. We're in a province where there's a tremendous amount of wealth, as I've said many times quite possibly more wealth per person than in any jurisdiction on earth.

I think the more profound cause of slipping off budget is that we don't have a fiscal objective any longer. We had one through the 1990s, which was paying off the debt, and that was an objective that always provided a measure of discipline. Once that was met, we've really not had another goal, and I think we need another goal. I've argued for just about five years now, I suppose, Mr. Speaker, that the goal I believe we have and that the opposition caucus believes we need to have is saving enough in the heritage fund or some equivalent so that we can eventually earn as much from the heritage fund as we do from oil and gas royalties. At that point we're free from this global dependence on oil and gas royalties. We've done the math on this. We've done the spreadsheets. It had lots of variables, but if we got serious about it, in 15 to 20 years we could actually have a heritage fund large enough to free us forever from this dependence on oil and gas royalties.

Now, we're not alone in this. The chambers of commerce, Jack Mintz, a whole bunch of other people have just variations on that theme. What that would do in terms of budget would be to give us a goal. It would give us a reason to say no, and I think that's so, so important in a budget process. We could say no because we have built into our budget, we've proposed, 30 per cent. Maybe it's 20 per cent. Some people propose that 40 per cent of royalties go into savings. It's exactly the same budgeting approach that probably most of us are counselled to follow by, you know, mom and dad or our financial advisers or whoever they are: pay yourself first. Every month just take off a little chunk of your income and put it into Canada savings bonds or RRSPs or whatever. If it goes off the top, you never miss it, but there's a discipline there. If you don't do that, then you're just going to spend it, and I'm afraid that's what's happening here.

8:40

We're at the point now, Mr. Speaker, where this government is spending per capita 23 per cent above the Canadian average of other provinces. Twenty-three per cent. As I've said once or twice in this Assembly, if you look at the other two wealthiest provinces in Canada, we're spending 28 per cent more per person than B.C. and 38 per cent more per person than Ontario, which is a bit hard to believe, actually. You wonder where all the money is going, how they are getting value for money. Maybe they're embarking on some of the mistakes that we've learned the hard way they shouldn't do. Maybe they're not spending on maintaining infrastructure or other things. But there's no question that at 23 per cent above the average of the other provinces, we're spending plenty, and that was the budgeted amount. That figure will actually go up when we pass this particular piece of legislation.

The question is always, then, put to me: well, if you don't want to spend the money, where are you going to cut? A fair enough question. Our response to that has been that we need to take a serious value-for-money audit of everything this government spends money on. Now, we need an arm's-length team with a business representative, a hard-nosed senior civil servant, quite possibly from outside Alberta, maybe an academic, to go through everything that this government spends and look at every program and say: "Can we reduce this? Can we do this more efficiently?"

If we're spending 23 per cent above the Canadian average, Mr. Speaker, our view is that there's at least 5 per cent that could be saved. You could find 5 per cent, and we'd still be spending 18 per cent above the Canadian average. Those are the kinds of broad, sweeping concerns that we've got with the government's budget and the government's budget process. I think that until we have that fiscal goal – and I can't think of a better one than building the heritage fund up to have enough to offset our oil and gas royalties – until we have some kind of goal, we're kind of like the teenager who gets his nice big allowance every month and just spends it all, and I'm deeply, deeply concerned about that as an Albertan.

Those are my broad comments on this particular bill. I'm very pleased that the Solicitor General is in here because I have a specific question. He may have answered this elsewhere in debate. There's \$20 million in lottery fund payments listed in Bill 51 under Solicitor General and Public Security. I don't know what that's for, and I'm wondering if the minister would be able to inform me.

I also have to note that about a third of the entire amount goes to one department, and that one department is Agriculture and Rural Development: 332 million further dollars to our agriculture sector. I hear some applauding for that, but I have to say: wow, that's an awful lot of money. Three hundred million of that – in other words, almost a third of this entire supplementary supply bill – is for the Alberta farm recovery plan to provide support to help transition the livestock industry towards more competitive production and marketing. We've had some debate about that.

I think many of us here, certainly those of us who hear from rural constituents in the cattle industry, know that the cattle industry is actually quite divided on this issue. People are not all thrilled at what's being imposed on or requested of them by the government for this strategy. I'm not aware of any other jurisdiction in North America that's going this far in terms of the cattle ID program and all the adjacent surveillance and databases and staffing and everything else. I just find myself asking: \$300 million, is that really money that has to be spent on this? At what point do we stop pouring more money in and let this industry sort itself out a little bit?

You know, we are watching right now the debates around bailouts for the automotive sector, and I've got mixed feelings on that. I'm not keen at all on a blanket bailout for that sector. I can see that

there are issues and that maybe a conditional bailout is a good idea. We need at some point to have those kinds of discussions with our agriculture sector. How long do we keep pouring more money – this is hundreds of millions of dollars. I am concerned. Again, I'll say this as an Albertan and as the agriculture critic on this side of the House. Is this money well spent? Is there a better way of helping this industry get along?

I know my colleagues have questions about other expenditures in here. I will let them go on the record with those questions. There may well be questions from government MLAs. I would remind all of you that we're all here as representatives of taxpayers, and this is about a billion dollars. It's a tremendous amount of money, so I'm sure all of us have constituents who have views on how that money is spent.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat and let other colleagues register their thoughts. Thank you.

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to join debate now on the supplementary supply estimates. I'm going to join it by starting out with sort of a general comment, a general observation that goes back to my previous job. There are some in this House who think that being a talk show host is not a real job. In close to 10 years as a talk show host I heard from many, many callers – many, many people – who were complaining about the taxes that they had to pay. You know, when you drill down with somebody who is bringing that message to your radio show, you pretty quickly discover that while there are a few people who genuinely believe that they shouldn't have to pay any tax whatsoever – and I call those people the selfish people – most people, when they complain that their taxes are too high, if you question them and quiz them a little bit on it, what they're really saying is: I cannot see, I cannot track the value that I'm getting as a taxpayer for the taxes that I'm paying.

I would submit, Mr. Speaker, that it is difficult, and it's increasingly difficult, to track the value for money when the money spent keeps going up at the rate that it does in this province. In the last 10 years, since fiscal year 1999-2000, the total additional money requested through supplementary supply is \$14 billion, \$1.4 billion a year over the last 10 years. In the last five years it works out to \$1.6 billion a year. The first actual budget that I had the opportunity to take part in the debate of, which was four fiscal years ago, was a budget for \$25 billion, and now we're up to a budget of \$37 billion before we start talking about the off-budget spending and the supplementary supply requests and the constant coming back like, you know, a college student to his father for more money.

Dr. Taft: Speaking from experience?

Mr. Taylor: Yeah, I am speaking from experience, quite frankly, hon. member. It does happen from time to time.

I mean, just on the budget process alone we've seen a 50 per cent increase, from \$25 billion to \$37 billion in four years. It's like the home renovation project from hell. We just keep pouring money down this black hole, and we're never, ever done. I think, Mr. Speaker, that we ought to be able to get to a point where we can get a handle on this and say: we should be done; we should be done with the constant increase.

8:50

No. You're never ever done with the budgeting process. Absolutely. As my colleague the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, you know, things, unanticipated issues pop up. It could be a bad

year for forest fires. There could be something else happen that wasn't anticipated in the budget cycle or in the preparation of the budget. It's understandable that from time to time the government would have to come back to this Assembly, which I think would be rather understanding of such requests, and say: "You know what? This thing happened, and we've got to pay for it. We need you guys to approve it." But \$1.4 billion to \$1.6 billion a year, year in and year out: I don't think that cuts it.

Look, we all have been, I think, or we all should have been individually in a situation at some point in our lives – and hopefully we've kept it up as our own financial situations and prospects have gotten better over the years and, hopefully, for most of us they have – of having to do a household budget. In a household budget from the time you first accumulate that first great whack of debt – and, no, I'm not talking about student loans, but maybe that is the first big whack of debt; I'm talking about the mortgage – you have to do three things. You have to pay your debts in an orderly fashion, you have to set aside the money that you need to pay your regular monthly expenses and feed the family and all the rest of that, and you have to set aside some for savings because you don't want to be in this situation year in and year out for the rest of your life. You want to get ahead of the game at some point.

You know that at some point the mortgage will be paid, and at some point your income will go up, but you know that your life will be better if, in addition to counting on those two things happening, you have also saved and put away a substantial amount, whether it's for your retirement or for after the kids have gone off to university, returning periodically to ask you for more money – you know, you can travel – or whatever your goals in life are. But you need to do three things.

I think it's not radically different to put together a budget to pay the expenses and pay off the debts and engage in some savings on behalf of the 3 and a half million citizens of this province. Then when you come up with the budget, you need to stick to it, I think, a little better than this.

Some of the questions that I have. Well, the big general one that I guess I would put to the President of the Treasury Board is: what is this government's plan to curb spending increases? I've talked about the spending increases over the last 10 years. I've talked about it being – well, I haven't used this word yet, but I'll use it right now – unsustainable. We just cannot continue to go on like this time after time after time, year after year after year. It borders on insanity. What is the government's plan to curb spending increases? I would be delighted, Mr. Speaker, to hear an answer to that question because at \$37 billion a year – and we're about to go to \$38 billion – I think we ought to be able to live within those means. I think. I really do.

I think there are probably a lot of things in the budget that we could stop spending money on and within the context of that \$38 billion redirect money to build the hospitals that we need in the places where they're needed, in places like Grande Prairie and places like Medicine Hat and places like Calgary, and also find the operating dollars to follow the capital dollars so that when you open a new hospital or double the size of an existing hospital, you actually have the staff and the operating funds to properly administer and staff that hospital so that you don't run into a situation like we've run into in Calgary with the Rockyview hospital, where they finished the new section, which virtually doubled the size of the hospital, and they basically took the patients out of the beds in the old section and moved them into beds in the new section and shut down the beds in the old section because they don't have enough staff and enough operating dollars to open the whole thing. I believe there was a net loss of two or three beds in that brilliant manoeuvre. I think we can do better, Mr. Speaker.

I do have a couple of specific areas that I wanted to ask about. One is Advanced Education and Technology, where the request is for another \$29.5 million. It is requested to provide over \$50 million all told, partially offset by a \$20,800,000 lapse in other programs: \$8 million for increased scholarships for graduate students – you won't get any argument from this member about the wisdom of doing that; I think that's a good thing – \$30 million for construction of the trades and technology complex at SAIT in Calgary, 2 and a half million dollars for administration and maintenance of apprenticeship individual learning modules, and \$9.8 million for innovation and service excellence program initiatives. Okay. Fine.

Mr. Speaker, why were these funds not part of the spring budget? Why were these funds not expenditures that could have been anticipated in time for the spring budget? The SAIT complex has been in the works for years now, going back to 2005. Why could that not have been properly budgeted for this spring? Why is there a need for additional administrative costs associated with these apprenticeship learning modules? What specifically will the \$9.8 million for innovation and service excellence be used for? About the \$20.8 million being used from a lapse in other programs, what specific programs lapsed? Where is that funding coming from?

Culture and Community Spirit. Of the supplementary amount of \$14,350,000 that's being requested, \$2 million of that is supposed to support fibre installation in the Olds region for access to the SuperNet. Why is funding for the SuperNet fibre installation coming from Culture and Community Spirit and not Service Alberta? That doesn't make any sense to me.

Health and Wellness. Well, you know, they didn't spend it all on agriculture. They spent another \$157 million on Health and Wellness, requested to provide in total \$177 million, partially offset, again, by a close to \$20 million lapse in provincial programs: \$97 million to fund the health authorities' net accumulated deficits as of March 31, 2008 – well, that's pretty much something that the province had to do, fund those accumulated health region deficits – but \$80 million in one-time funding for health authority restructuring and transition costs.

So far – let me see if I've got this right – we're into the glue for \$80 million for the collapsing of the health regions. Oh, I suppose the good news in all that is there won't be net accumulated deficits for the health regions anymore. It'll be just one big deficit that we're sup supplying this time next year. We collapsed all the health boards into one superboard, the Health Services Board, and we've yet to see a single patient get into emergency or get a bed in the hospital or get through the system or find a doctor that they couldn't find. We've yet to see a single street-level, retail improvement in access to or quality of health care in this province. What are we spending the money for? This sure looks to me like further proof that the health minister did not have a plan. I don't think he has a plan yet. He's got his glossy new multicolour booklet out today, but it doesn't look like much of a plan.

Since we debated and voted on the budget after we came back into session this spring after the election campaign, during which the government did not talk at all about plans to blow up and, you know, recreate the health care system out of the ashes of the old one, but seeing as how when we came back into session, the minister was starting to talk about that pretty soon afterwards, the minister must have known in advance that he was going to restructure the health care system. Why didn't he budget these expenses in the 2008 budget? What's the plan for how the \$80 million is being spent? How is the \$80 million going to be spent in terms of the restructuring? Is it going to facilities? Is it going to front-line staff? Is it going someplace that is going to make a difference, or is it going to upper management?

How am I doing for time? I'm going to squeeze one more in: Housing and Urban Affairs.

An Hon. Member: You're finished. You're done.

Mr. Taylor: That was a rhetorical question, member. It really was. Try to stay awake for this.

9:00

Housing and Urban Affairs. We are spending another \$33,500,000 for the homeless and eviction prevention fund. We are now at a total expenditure in that fund of close to \$80 million. Last year when the program was announced, it was intended to cost \$7 million. This program costs now more than 10 times that. I would love an explanation of this dramatic increase, and I would love also an explanation of why it is that the rent supplement program, originally budgeted for \$9 million in 2007, is now over \$120 million.

The \$200 million we have spent in these two programs battling the affordable housing crisis and talking about doing something about homelessness, in part we have spent that money because philosophically this government refused to consider rent controls or temporary rent caps or any kind of protection like that for tenants. They subsidized landlords – they have no philosophical problem with that – through the direct-to-tenant rent supplement program, but they won't subsidize tenants by keeping a lid on obscene rent increases. Now the taxpayers of Alberta, the vast majority of whom I think subscribe to the notion that everybody needs a home, are out \$200 million. I think we can quite justifiably ask on their behalf: have we made any progress on the affordable housing issue with this \$200 million collectively that we have spent on two programs?

I could go on . . .

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Taylor: Maybe I will if I get that kind of encouragement.

I could go on, but I know that the Member for Calgary-Varsity wants his kick at the cat. I stand here in eternal hope that one of the yippers in the backbenches on the government side might actually get up and ask a question or two on sup supply on behalf of their constituents.

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

Seeing none, the hon. President of the Treasury Board.

Mr. Snelgrove: There were some statements in there that we can clarify, for sure. Most of it I don't think was intended for an answer but simply to make his point, and that's his prerogative.

The \$2 million to Olds was funded through Culture and Community Spirit because they're the only granting agency that was able to do that. The money came from Service Alberta, Transportation, and Advanced Ed. The \$32 million that he talked about in Aboriginal Relations is much the same because of the connection with the lottery fund. Sol Gen is the only department that actually handles the transition for the lottery funds. The \$32 million that's addressed in Aboriginal Relations is the same money that's addressed on that page, \$20 million in new and then the \$12 million. It's simply stated there. To follow through, it comes from their department through the relationship with Aboriginal Relations.

The interesting part seems to be that I just never know from one day to the next whether this is the spend-more day or the save-more day. We talk about wanting to do something with health care, and we continually hear: "You can't do anything with health care. The

only thing you're going to do," something none of us have talked about, "is privatize it. You can't reorganize it. That might result in a better system, so don't do that." So we get: save. We're well aware, and I'm sure the hon. member is too, that with the growth rate in health care, if we just let things go, in 15 years it will be well over 50 per cent of our budget. In 20 years it will be 60 per cent of our budget. Now, giving them the benefit of the doubt, that's growing at 10 per cent and our economy growing at 4 per cent.

We're seeing some changes in the world right now. Not only might our economy not grow at 4 per cent; it might go flat. It might grow at 1 per cent. So if there aren't some changes to the health care system – and Alberta will probably be able to survive it for 40 years compared to other provinces, although most of the other provinces have a callous disregard for borrowing money, so they may be able to fool themselves into thinking that they are affording unaffordable health care. It must trouble even the hon. members to know that, as we said, our neighbour to the west is nearly \$45 billion in debt, that Quebec is \$125 billion in debt, and it depends what government comes to Ottawa at the end of an election, where they redo the numbers, hundreds of billions of dollars in debt. I don't think most Albertans really feel that they have been all that mismanaged.

The continual rhetoric: "You have to have a savings plan so we're not going to be dependent on oil and gas." Now, I can agree that spending money unwisely or foolishly is improper, but I can also agree that if you're not going to be dependent on oil and gas because you have money in the bank, then you are dependent on the markets for your income. You're dependent on interest, and you're also at the whim of the return from the market and inflation. There's no question that you can do that or you can take Albertans' money and invest it in universities.

You talked about NAIT or SAIT. The expansion that we've done into all of the technical institutes and colleges in Alberta is a far better investment, to me, so that my kids aren't going to have to worry about a benevolent government with money in the bank. They're going to have a job. They're going to be able to get an education and have a job.

I don't believe that most Albertans want their future dependent on a fund. I've seen families, and we see them on the news just about every night: the Paris Hiltons of the world, who have been set up very well. If that's what you want for future Albertans, well, it might be good for news; it's not good for an economy. It's not good for people to think that there's a free ride.

Should we be investing? Yeah. Should we balance the risk and where we go to invest? I think so. I think of the work that has been done in advanced ed around some of the nanotechnology sectors and some of the research sectors. We fund on behalf of Albertans, on behalf of most western Canadians. Any really, really sick babies come to Edmonton or Calgary. We are one of the top half-dozen heart research centres in the world. So with the wealth that's being created, we can either give a gift of money to the east or we can give ongoing benefits forever.

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. I had intended to be considerably shorter, but the hon. President of the Treasury Board brought up health care inflation, and I repeat this number each time that he talks about it taking up larger and larger portions of our budget. If you go back over the last number of years, go back even 20 years if you like, to the present, our spending on health care as a portion of our GDP has yet to exceed 7 per cent, and I'm talking about this year as well. However, in the future, because of this government's mismanagement, the President of the Treasury Board is right that health care

costs are going to be increasing because our GDP will not be at the standard that it has been in the past years. We're going to start seeing reduced surpluses partly due to reduced royalty revenue but also due to global effects and our inability to insulate ourselves and make wise investment choices.

Now, what I'd like to spend the majority of my time talking about tonight is the idea of one-third. The Mormon church, of which I'm not a member, sets aside a tithe, or a tenth. What I'm talking about is the strategic early investment of one-third, which in several cases results in dramatic long-term savings and returns. It took a while for the government to get the message that looking after the hardest to house, the most vulnerable individuals, was one-third as costly as institutionalizing them.

9:10

What we now have are approximately 50 people out of the 4,600 individuals that were counted in the street count that are going to receive 24/7 care. Not only are those individuals that have a variety of problems, whether it be drug addiction, whether it be mental illness, but we're going to look after them. Not only are we going to look after them, but we're going to look after their landlords, provide 24/7 response and care to these individuals at one-third of the cost. That makes not only fiscal sense; it makes heart sense because we're doing something for people who are the most vulnerable.

In terms of strategic early investments and traditional models the Canadian Union of Public Employees did a study on P3 schools, and they found that for every two schools built using the P3 funding, you could have a third school. So there is another example of a third.

Liberal policy going back to 2004, when I was first elected, basically said: set aside a third of all nonrenewable resource revenue, and of that third, put one-third of the third of the savings into the heritage trust fund, continue to build it. It said: take another third, approximately – 35 per cent was the actual figure that we recommended – and invest that in postsecondary education. Obviously, the Treasury minister thinks that investing in education is a very good way to go, so we can agree that the Liberal policy of setting aside a third for postsecondary education promotion is a very worthwhile investment.

Now, we didn't quite set aside a third for infrastructure; we set aside, actually, 25 per cent. We set aside another 5 per cent to have a permanent, sustainable arts and culture endowment fund, and we suggested that when that endowment fund rose to approximately \$500 million, at that point we would consider capping it. But the idea was that we would continue to build up that fund and that arts and culture, which is as important to the Alberta spirit as a variety of other expenditures, would be supported.

Now, interestingly, the government has a sort of a third/a third/a third situation, but that only kicks in when there are surpluses. If you don't have a surplus, one-third of the money isn't going to go into the heritage trust fund, according to the government's logic, one-third of it isn't going to go into infrastructure, and one-third of it is not going to make its way into the sustainability fund. So this government has basically been saying that the only way we're going to save is if we have a surplus.

We have seen this year the dramatic drop in surplus. The idea that going into the future the heritage trust fund gets continuously drawn down from as opposed to being built up: well, obviously, that heritage trust fund is going to run out very quickly. Now, because this government had not maintained the heritage trust fund, had not made the investments that Peter Lougheed had suggested and had intended for the heritage trust fund, then we Liberals, that you so frequently refer to as tax and spend, said: look; while we have the

strong surpluses, we had better take all the money from the royalty surpluses, and we'd better plug that whole thing into the heritage trust fund because we want to get over our dependency on nonrenewable resources.

Now, the President of the Treasury Board didn't feel that this was a good way of securing investments. I gather that he philosophically disagrees with the idea of building up the heritage trust fund, which would then provide us with a savings account. Of course, it's not going to approximate Norway. Norway is a country. Norway taxes. I understand the difference, hon. President of the Treasury Board, but our proposal would have built up a fund along the lines of the heritage trust fund that would continue to provide a base of interest, a principal with interest, and we would be able to live off the interest. I don't know why it's such a foreign concept.

For example, the hon. leader of the NDP travelled to Alaska. He saw the value of their fund. He talked to the would-be vice-president of the United States, and in their discussions he brought back what he thought was a very good idea, and I agree. That's the idea that the Alaska fund pays out dividends. They not only save, but they pay it out. We're suggesting more in the way of savings.

Another third that comes up is the fact that between a third and a quarter of students currently drop out of high school. What I've been pushing in terms of budget expenditures: I've been trying to get across to the Minister of Education that dealing with kids in the first third of their school year will keep them in the last third. I've been promoting the idea of full-day kindergarten funding for kids at risk. I've been promoting the idea of junior kindergartens, again, for kids at risk because I, having been a teacher for 34 years, recognize that if you invest early in a child's future, if you give them the self-esteem, if you give them the skills that they need to survive, they're going to stay in the system, and – guess what? – they're going to provide a third more in tax revenue having gone through a post-secondary circumstance because we know that every dollar you invest in education produces a \$3 return. Again we have the third idea coming into play.

This notion of pouring your investment early into the system: with Children and Youth Services it's considerably easier and less expensive to support the child in their home. If there is a problem within that home, deal with that problem within the home unless, of course, there is deprivation or violence. Deal with it in the home.

We know, for example – and I don't think the hon. President of the Treasury Board would argue the fact – that it's one-third as expensive to keep seniors supported in their own homes as it is to institutionalize them. If you are going to institutionalize them, for heaven's sake have a worthy, supportive long-term care arrangement because a long-term care arrangement is one-third as costly as if they're taking acute bed space in a hospital. Again there's a third.

What I am saying to the hon. President of the Treasury Board is that if we are going to save, we can save by strategically investing one-third of the money that is required up front as opposed to expending two-thirds later. It's called investment. What the government sees in terms of health care and education as a liability we across the floor see as an investment. I would hope that the notion of the one-third makes a degree of sense. I'm sure the hon. President of the Treasury Board will feel compelled to suggest that strategic early investment doesn't make sense, but I believe that the idea, the notion, of the third and the savings that it produces in the long term are worthy of consideration.

With that, I'll take my seat.

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

Any other hon. member who wishes to speak? The hon. leader of the third party.

9:20

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to stand and speak to second reading of Bill 51.

An Hon. Member: Put it in a poem.

Mr. Mason: Yeah. Before I leave this place, you know, Mr. Speaker, I'll rap something but not in the meantime. It's a good way to embarrass your son in front of his friends.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the financial history of this government. Before I got elected to this place, I was, of course, involved in municipal government, and we had to work our way through the cuts that the government had imposed on municipal government. We saw the elimination of all sorts of services: the closure of wards; the cuts of programs to municipalities, which were extensive; the cancellation of regional planning. All sorts of things went by the board.

Why did that happen? Well, it happened because the Progressive Conservative government had run up a debt of approximately \$23 billion, which they suddenly decided needed to be eliminated. That notion had been propagated in the first instance by Mr. Laurence Decore, who was then the Liberal leader, but it was taken up by the Conservatives with gusto, and there were massive cuts and brutal cuts throughout the system. These cuts, I think, have been ably discredited as unnecessary by the current leader of the Alberta Liberal Party in his book *Shredding the Public Interest*.

Nevertheless, the government engaged in this campaign. We lost thousands of health professionals. We lost teachers. We lost full-day kindergarten. The services that citizens had received and many other things less noticeable were eliminated. One of the major things that I think has had profound impact on this province was the loss of the energy efficiency unit of the Department of Energy. All sorts of programs to save energy and to economize in the government and throughout the government sector were eliminated. The costs of that are very difficult to calculate but, I suggest, run perhaps into the billions of dollars.

What has been the result? Well, the result has been that we are now in a severe deficit of another kind, and that is a deficit with respect to infrastructure. I've heard different numbers bandied about by members of this government as to what the total infrastructure debt is in this province, but the best calculations we've been able to come up with are that it is very nearly equal to the financial debt that the government set about cutting in the first place. They've simply transferred the debt from the bank account of the province into the roof and the foundation of the structures of this province, and I think any homeowner would understand that either debt is equally serious.

Now we're setting about correcting that with large-scale spending on infrastructure, and of course a lot of that infrastructure is going to be built with the P3 model, which in my view has been clearly demonstrated to have higher costs and is simply a way of borrowing money without it showing as a financial debt. Obviously, if a project is built in the P3 model, there is a profit margin that has to be incorporated and higher costs for financing in the private sector than are available to the government, so for those two reasons it's normally a more expensive way to go. But the government is seemingly wishing to reward its friends and build political and financial alliances to support itself in coming elections by using taxpayers' money essentially to subsidize their friends in the private sector.

Now, there's a lot that's been made about savings. I have to say that I don't quite agree with the position of the Liberal party with respect to financial savings. I think that the government has a point when it says that savings – especially a savings in equity, invest-

ments in equity as a form of savings – are very volatile during times of economic downturn.

What the government really needs to do is something that Peter Lougheed used to talk about, but we haven't heard about it much since, in the last period of time since Mr. Klein became the Premier, and that is the diversification of the economy away from the dependence on oil and natural gas. Now, the government makes little sallies here and there into diversification, but they do not have a comprehensive plan for diversifying the economy. That ultimately is the best way to do it. Providing good, solid education coupled with an economic development strategy which involves diversification I think is key. What we have are little pieces of the puzzle, but there is certainly no comprehensive plan on the part of government to do those things.

Now, some savings are probably a very good idea, but what we would propose to do is invest in renewable energy as a key economic strategy for the future of the province to ensure that Alberta remains the energy centre of Canada in the future, when we are no longer able to sell our oil and the natural gas is gone. We think that this needs to be a very high priority in order to create the kinds of jobs for our children and grandchildren which we have enjoyed so that Alberta remains a prosperous place and the leader in the country in energy. That, I think, is the best investment, certainly better than putting it into the stock market and certainly better than letting the oil companies keep it all, which is the government's approach, having amongst the lowest royalties in the world.

Now, the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity talked about my trip to Alaska, but he misrepresented some of the position that I took. Certainly, while I was in Alaska and meeting with the people on both sides of their House and Senate, I learned that Alaska had indeed collected substantially higher royalties than Alberta had. [interjections] Yes, I could see Russia from her house, Mr. Speaker. Russia has, of course, even higher royalties, substantially higher even than Alaska's, and so does Britain. Of course, everyone is a piker compared to Venezuela, but that's another story.

Alaska, at \$100 a barrel, collects 60 per cent more per barrel than Alberta does. That's a very significant amount. They have a very elastic formula so that when oil prices are low, as they are now, royalties are also very low. But when oil reaches high prices, at \$100 a barrel or more, their royalties are quite a bit higher than here in Alberta. So if we don't collect this, what happens to it? Well, Mr. Speaker, it flows to the shareholders of the big oil companies, many of whom are located in the United States. It leaves this province, and it's not available to develop the province for the future and to ensure economic prosperity for future generations. That's why I think that the government's low-royalty policy is really a crime against future generations of Albertans. It really is saying to those people: you know, when we run out of oil, you guys are on your own. I think that's completely wrong. We've missed a huge opportunity to collect large amounts of money to invest in important things for Albertans' future, but I'm sure that oil prices will again rise, and we'll be able to collect more.

9:30

Now, the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity says that I was in favour of the Alaska system of dividends to individual citizens. That was not the position that I took when I came back. I certainly did have a look at it, and it's an interesting approach, but it was not the position that we actually took.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about a couple of other things. I know that the Liberals have been on the government in the last few weeks about reducing expenditures, and I think there certainly are some areas where the government could reduce expenditures. Certainly,

we've been long-standing critics of the government's policy of subsidizing the horse-racing industry. That's a fairly small amount of money, but \$50 million is \$50 million.

We certainly don't support the \$2 billion the government has allocated for carbon capture. We were able to produce a document which shows, contrary to what the government has maintained, that in fact carbon capture will not work with respect to tar sands emissions, which is the major thing that the government has advocated it for, because the emissions from the tar sands are too diluted. There's not a high enough percentage of CO₂ for that to be effective.

Now, it goes on to say that it might be effective for coal-fired power plants, and that's worth taking a look at, Mr. Speaker, but I certainly think that the government is selling a \$2 billion bill of goods to the people of Alberta when they claim that we can do something about emissions from the tar sands and the developments that occur in the tar sands through carbon capture. That's, in fact, what they're trying to say, and they're trying to say that to the rest of the world.

Mr. Speaker, if the government had not done such an obviously bad job of cleaning up the tar sands, whether it comes to tar ponds or to emissions, water, water quality, the impact on people downstream, or any number of things, if it hadn't done such an abysmal and negligent job on the tar sands, then the world would not be focusing so much on what's happening in the tar sands. We have a major black eye in this province internationally, which the government is attempting in a knee-jerk and poorly thought out fashion to spend billions of dollars to correct by funding transit – that is something we support, but we need a better plan than the government has – and the \$2 billion subsidy to private tar sands companies, which is an absolutely wrong priority for public funds.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk about one other thing that I think the government should focus on if it wants to correct this, and that's poverty. The government does not have a systematic plan to eliminate poverty. In fact, it has perpetuated poverty with its policies around minimum wage and social assistance rates and AISH rates and so on. All of those place people well below the poverty line, but the costs to the taxpayer of not dealing with poverty are more expenditures for police, more expenditures for social services, more expenditures for housing, more expenditures for health care. These are all expenditures that we could be controlling more effectively if the government didn't have an ideological blind spot when it comes to the poor in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I think that all around the government has failed Albertans in its financial planning, its fiscal policy going back a very, very long time. Far from digging us out of debt as they promised to do, they've allowed most of the wealth of this province, at least from its oil and gas industry, to flow south to the United

States to shareholders there, and they have amassed an enormous debt embedded in our infrastructure while claiming to have eliminated debt in the province.

I just want to leave, Mr. Speaker, by saying that this disregard of the ordinary people of this province by this Tory government is exactly what has led to the current situation federally, with the government's Tory cousins being in the last days of their time as the government of Canada because all of the parties in the House of Commons except the Conservatives are coming together to insist that something be done.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) allows for five minutes of comments or questions. The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As people here know, I am a proud Canadian, as many others. I'm also a proud Albertan. I'd like to know, specifically with reference to the leader of the third party's commentary about the last few days of the federal government, how he feels about his party in Ottawa getting in bed with the separatists.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I feel better about the fact that we're going to put the Progressive Conservatives on the side of the House where they belong; that is, in opposition. This government has brought this down on itself. They have no stimulus package. Their economic policies are not going to do anything to create or protect jobs in this country, and they have failed Canadians. They were going to outlaw the right to strike for federal employees, something they never promised to do in the election, and they were going to break their word when it comes to election financing. So I think it's pretty clear that the Prime Minister has completely overplayed his hand with respect to this, and he's going to carry the burden of that mistake because it's going to end this government and not a moment too soon.

[Motion carried; Bill 51 read a second time]

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

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the Assembly now stand adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[Motion carried; at 9:38 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

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