



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday, April 9, 2009

Issue 22

The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 27th Legislature

Second Session

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

Ady, Hon. Cindy, Calgary-Shaw (PC),
Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation
Allred, Ken, St. Albert (PC)
Amery, Moe, Calgary-East (PC)
Anderson, Rob, Airdrie-Chestermere (PC),
Parliamentary Assistant, Solicitor General and Public Security
Benito, Carl, Edmonton-Mill Woods (PC)
Berger, Evan, Livingstone-MacLeod (PC),
Parliamentary Assistant, Sustainable Resource Development
Bhardwaj, Naresh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (PC)
Bhullar, Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Montrose (PC),
Parliamentary Assistant, Advanced Education
and Technology
Blackett, Hon. Lindsay, Calgary-North West (PC),
Minister of Culture and Community Spirit
Blakeman, Laurie, Edmonton-Centre (AL),
Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
Official Opposition House Leader
Boutilier, Guy C., Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (PC)
Brown, Dr. Neil, QC, Calgary-Nose Hill (PC)
Calahasen, Pearl, Lesser Slave Lake (PC)
Campbell, Robin, West Yellowhead (PC),
Deputy Government Whip
Chase, Harry B., Calgary-Varsity (AL),
Official Opposition Whip
Dallas, Cal, Red Deer-South (PC)
Danyluk, Hon. Ray, Lac La Biche-St. Paul (PC),
Minister of Municipal Affairs
DeLong, Alana, Calgary-Bow (PC)
Denis, Jonathan, Calgary-Egmont (PC)
Doerksen, Arno, Strathmore-Brooks (PC)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC)
Elniski, Doug, Edmonton-Calder (PC)
Evans, Hon. Iris, Sherwood Park (PC),
Minister of Finance and Enterprise
Fawcett, Kyle, Calgary-North Hill (PC)
Forsyth, Heather, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)
Fritz, Hon. Yvonne, Calgary-Cross (PC),
Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs
Goudreau, Hon. Hector G., Dunvegan-Central Peace (PC),
Minister of Employment and Immigration
Griffiths, Doug, Battle River-Wainwright (PC),
Parliamentary Assistant, Agriculture and Rural Development
Groeneveld, Hon. George, Highwood (PC),
Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC, Edmonton-Whitemud (PC),
Minister of Education, Government House Leader
Hayden, Hon. Jack, Drumheller-Stettler (PC),
Minister of Infrastructure
Hehr, Kent, Calgary-Buffalo (AL)
Horne, Fred, Edmonton-Rutherford (PC)
Horner, Hon. Doug, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert (PC),
Minister of Advanced Education and Technology
Jablonski, Hon. Mary Anne, Red Deer-North (PC),
Minister of Seniors and Community Supports
Jacobs, Broyce, Cardston-Taber-Warner (PC)
Johnson, Jeff, Athabasca-Redwater (PC)
Johnston, Art, Calgary-Hays (PC)
Kang, Darshan S., Calgary-McCall (AL)
Klimchuk, Hon. Heather, Edmonton-Glenora (PC),
Minister of Service Alberta
Knight, Hon. Mel, Grande Prairie-Smoky (PC),
Minister of Energy
Leskiw, Genia, Bonnyville-Cold Lake (PC)
Liepert, Hon. Ron, Calgary-West (PC),
Minister of Health and Wellness
Lindsay, Hon. Fred, Stony Plain (PC),
Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security
Lukaszuk, Thomas A., Edmonton-Castle Downs (PC),
Parliamentary Assistant, Municipal Affairs
Lund, Ty, Rocky Mountain House (PC)
MacDonald, Hugh, Edmonton-Gold Bar (AL)
Marz, Richard, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (PC)
Mason, Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),
Leader of the NDP Opposition
McFarland, Barry, Little Bow (PC)
McQueen, Diana, Drayton Valley-Calmor (PC),
Parliamentary Assistant, Environment
Morton, Hon. F.L., Foothills-Rocky View (PC),
Minister of Sustainable Resource Development
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),
Deputy Leader of the NDP Opposition,
NDP Opposition House Leader
Oberle, Frank, Peace River (PC),
Government Whip
Olson, Verlyn, QC, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (PC)
Ouellette, Hon. Luke, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (PC),
Minister of Transportation
Pastoor, Bridget Brennan, Lethbridge-East (AL),
Deputy Official Opposition Whip
Prins, Ray, Lacombe-Ponoka (PC)
Quest, Dave, Strathcona (PC)
Redford, Hon. Alison M., QC, Calgary-Elbow (PC),
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Renner, Hon. Rob, Medicine Hat (PC),
Minister of Environment, Deputy Government House Leader
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)
Rogers, George, Leduc-Beaumont-Devon (PC)
Sandhu, Peter, Edmonton-Manning (PC)
Sarich, Janice, Edmonton-Decore (PC),
Parliamentary Assistant, Education
Sherman, Dr. Raj, Edmonton-Meadowlark (PC),
Parliamentary Assistant, Health and Wellness
Snelgrove, Hon. Lloyd, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),
President of the Treasury Board
Stelmach, Hon. Ed, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (PC),
Premier, President of Executive Council
Stevens, Hon. Ron, QC, Calgary-Glenmore (PC),
Deputy Premier, Minister of International and
Intergovernmental Relations
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL),
Leader of the Official Opposition
Taft, Dr. Kevin, Edmonton-Riverview (AL)
Tarchuk, Hon. Janis, Banff-Cochrane (PC),
Minister of Children and Youth Services
Taylor, Dave, Calgary-Currie (AL)
VanderBurg, George, Whitecourt-St. Anne (PC)
Vandermeer, Tony, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (PC)
Weadick, Greg, Lethbridge-West (PC)
Webber, Len, Calgary-Foothills (PC),
Parliamentary Assistant, Energy
Woo-Paw, Teresa, Calgary-Mackay (PC)
Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC),
Parliamentary Assistant, Employment and Immigration
Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene, Edmonton-Mill Creek (PC),
Minister of Aboriginal Relations,
Deputy Government House Leader

Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Clerk	W.J. David McNeil	Senior Parliamentary Counsel	Shannon Dean
Clerk Assistant/ Director of House Services	Louise J. Kamuchik	Sergeant-at-Arms	Brian G. Hodgson
Clerk of <i>Journals</i> /Table Research	Micheline S. Gravel	Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms	J. Ed Richard
Senior Parliamentary Counsel	Robert H. Reynolds, QC	Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms	William C. Semple
		Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>	Liz Sim

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 9, 2009

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon and welcome.

As we pray, let us also commemorate the 92nd anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge on April 9, 1917. We give thanks for the lives of the faithful men and women in our military who have defended and continue to defend the freedoms and values we cherish. Life is precious. When it is lost, all of us are impacted. On this day I would ask that all Members of Alberta's Legislative Assembly, all others present here, and those observing these proceedings in their homes join together as we reflect upon the lives of Canadian military personnel lost in service to their countrymen. May their souls rest in eternal peace, and may a nation be eternally grateful. God bless. Amen.

Introduction of Guests

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

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great pleasure and honour for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a rather large group of grade 6 students from the Woodhaven middle school, 103 visitors, who have had the opportunity to do your mock Legislature. When I was downstairs talking to them in the rotunda, they passed a bill that would allow school uniforms and as well cellphone usage in the classroom, which I know is very close to the Speaker's heart as well. These wonderful, intuitive students are accompanied by a great group of education professionals: Ms Jayna Butler, Mrs. Ashley Lyster, Ms Emily Pearce, Mrs. Deb Schellenberger, Miss Joanne Fuminger, Mrs. Dara Coles as well as parents and helpers Mrs. Shelley Gibson, Mrs. Jennifer McIntosh, Mrs. Courtney Haberjam, and Mr. Paul Snell. A large group like this I believe is in both of our galleries, and I would ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: For clarification that was to disallow cellphone use in the classroom.

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Mr. Rogers: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of seniors and juniors from the Leduc Family Worship Centre, located in the city of Leduc, my hometown. I actually watched the largest cross-shaped church in Canada being built across from our family home over 30 years ago. Our guests are Mrs. Pam Bakker, Mr. Josh Bakker, Mr. Harvey Bakker, Mr. Lawrence Glesman, Mrs. Linda Glesman, Mr. Jack Cathie, Mrs. Mary Cathie, Mr. Rex Stringer, Ms Clara Kuny, Ms Elsie Jabs, Ms Heidi Zerbin, Ms Violet Wilson, Mrs. Doris Rumak, and Mr. Lawrence Rumak. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Elniski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly eight

individuals from the 211 support network and distress centre. I'd like to introduce Nancy McCalder, the executive director of support direct; Nancy Douglas, the helpline director; Lynn Odynski, a board member; Andy Feher, a board member; Lenka Stuchlik, a board member; Mr. Paul Bartel, a program director with the distress centre in Calgary; and Mr. Tim Osborne of the United Way of the Alberta capital region. 211 is a free, nonemergency referral and information line that is available 24 hours a day to serve Edmonton and Calgary and their surrounding regions. I will be discussing 211 more later this afternoon. I would invite the group to rise now and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of honour and pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House and to all Albertans three people that made a presentation to rural caucus this afternoon. First of all, a constituent from Ponoka, Else Pedersen, who has been the president since 2002 of the Freehold Owners Association, a group that represents about 4,200 members and possibly up to 22,000 owners around Alberta. She's a retired businessperson from Ponoka. David Speirs, director and chairman of the Freehold Owners technical committee, is a geologist and geophysicist from Calgary. Ross Watson is a director of the Freehold Owners Association. He's a farmer and a business owner from Sylvan Lake. They have made a very compelling presentation to rural caucus this afternoon about issues and challenges facing owners of freehold minerals. I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two separate introductions to make to the Assembly today. The first introduction I'd like to make is Joseph Ryan Saunders. Mr. Saunders is joining us in the public gallery. He's a constituent of the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre, and he is a particular advocate on behalf of grizzly bears in Alberta and is hoping that there will be strong leadership taken in the Assembly to protect grizzly bears. I would ask Mr. Saunders to please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

My second introduction is a really interesting program that has been launched by the Terra Centre for pregnant and parenting teens, and that is their ambassadors program. The intent of the ambassadors program is to give young mothers the opportunity to develop leadership and public speaking skills by being active members of the community and participating in special events and also developing a supportive network with each other. We have one of the Terra Centre ambassadors with us today; that's Kayla Lamouch. She's joined by Laura Slomp Booy, who is the youth leadership facilitator. I would ask them both to please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly. Thank you very much for coming.

Members' Statements

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

211 Community Information

Mr. Elniski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first priority as an MLA is to serve my constituents. Often we are called upon and asked to direct our constituents to one of the 19,000 charities, government, and nongovernment organizations that exist in Alberta to serve the needs of people. Edmonton, Calgary, and their surrounding regions

have easy access to all 19,000 organizations via the phone number 211. 211 is a free, nonemergency referral and information line that is available 24 hours a day to help serve our constituents. When you dial 211, a person answers the phone, and the callers are able to describe the situation in their own words. 211's information and referral specialists then ask the right questions, assess the situation, and refer the caller to the programs or services best suited to meet their needs.

Currently 211 is available to 78 per cent of the American population. In Canada 211 is currently only available to about 28 per cent of our citizens. We want to join British Columbia and Ontario in expanding our 211 service to become a province-wide resource for all Albertans. 211 can help to reduce inappropriate calls to 911, avoid the fragmentation and duplication of support services, and increase our ability to serve our constituents without having to remember all 19,000 organizations that are available to them. We can do our part to help 211 be brought to all Albertans. Let's make 211 Alberta a reality.

Thank you.

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

Health System Restructuring

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the Premier rolled out his big budget deficit on Tuesday, he very carefully omitted the provincial health care deficit, which would have added over a billion dollars to an already staggering \$4.7 billion shortfall. The health minister has already tried to pin this deficit on Albertans, claiming that our aging population is forcing costs in health care to rise. But Edmonton and Calgary have among the youngest populations in Canada, with median ages of under 36 years old. In fact, demographically Alberta is the youngest province in the country. Seniors are not responsible for the health care deficits; this government's mismanagement is.

1:40

The fault, again, lies with a government that fired the regional health authorities to replace them with one hand-picked superboard. No reasonable government would implement such a massive radical change without a cost-benefit analysis, but this is not a reasonable government. The former deputy minister of health admitted that no research reviews, either external or internal, recommended that the government take this course.

Now we see how well this radical gamble has worked out. The Capital health region was regarded as one of the best health administrations in the nation: highly praised for innovation, efficiency, and patient care; ranked number one in a national survey of 50 Canadian health centres. Not only have we lost a crown jewel in Alberta's public health care system; the restructuring has sown chaos and confusion among health care professionals and patients alike, with the health minister and this government unable to determine when exactly we'll start to see improvements in patient care. Perhaps worst of all is that this gamble has already caused ballooning deficits that have cost Alberta taxpayers over a billion dollars in just a few short months.

Who knows what experiments this Premier and this health minister will perform next on our public health care system? I hope privatization is not one of them.

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

Energy Efficiency Incentives

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to say that Alberta's climate change strategy includes a commitment to help Albertans be more energy efficient in their day-to-day lives. Earlier today the province, through the hon. Minister of Environment, announced that it is investing \$36 million on energy efficiency rebates for consumers. The rebates encourage Albertans to reduce their daily energy use and allow them to save money at the same time. This pledge by the province encourages consumer spending on greener products and services, helping to shift the market towards greater energy efficiency. These initiatives will create an economic ripple effect that will benefit everyone across the province and help the environment at the same time.

The rebates themselves are significant, particularly to Albertans who are looking to retrofit their homes. They range from \$100 to \$10,000 and are available to existing homeowners who take steps to improve their energy efficiency, to new homebuyers who purchase energy efficient homes, and to taxi operators who are transitioning their fleet to hybrid vehicles. For those of us who are homeowners and are looking to make our homes greener, this program will help us to get a home energy evaluation to know what we need to do to become more energy efficient. The program will also help Albertans purchase more energy efficient washing machines, furnaces, hot water heaters, and insulation.

It's absolutely critical that all Albertans reduce their use of energy if we are to meet our greenhouse emission goals. The province's overall reduction target by 2050 is 200 megatonnes; 24 megatonnes of that will come through energy efficiency and conservation. This move towards energy efficiency demonstrates the government's commitment to building a culture of conservation in the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Home-care Workers

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recently spoke with a resident from Airdrie-Chestermere named Ms Grace Forsberg. Ms Forsberg has served patients as a home-care worker for 25 years. She'll be retiring soon, and she asked that I bring some awareness to the valuable role that home care plays in our health care system.

As such, I rise today to acknowledge the excellent work that is being done by Alberta's home-care workers and the critical role that they play in our health care system. Without the services provided by home-care personnel, many clients would have to live in long-term care facilities. While we have some wonderful facilities across the province, there is something to be said for being at home, sleeping in your own bed, and having your family with you to provide support.

Recognizing the desire of Albertans to age at home, the government announced additional funding for continuing care initiatives in Budget 2009. This financial support to home care and community programs is essential to keeping people healthier and safer in their homes and frees up needed space in our health care facilities. Home-care workers provide our province's patients with flexibility and support while recovering from illness. As such, home-care personnel are front-line workers in our health care system.

I would ask the Assembly to join me in recognizing the importance of home-care workers to the health of Albertans.

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

Alberta Job Losses

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's working people are rightfully concerned about the security of their jobs, and this government's budget did absolutely nothing to calm their fears. This morning we received word that last month a net total of 15,000 more Albertans are out of work, bringing the total for the first three months of the year to more than 45,000. That number is actually skewed because it includes all the entry-level part-time jobs that replaced good-paying full-time ones. What it means, of course, is that the people who are paying for this government's gross mismanagement of our economy are the ordinary people of our province, who struggle each and every month to make ends meet, while the well-connected friends of the Conservative government are receiving fat bonuses and big raises.

Of course, the fact that the finance minister left nearly a quarter-billion dollars of cuts on the table without explaining where they're going to come from does nothing to ease workers' fears. The Premier mused about cutting a thousand nursing jobs while increasing funding for doctors. By suggesting that public-sector jobs may be cut and/or their wages slashed, this government is attempting to intimidate workers.

Mr. Speaker, workers are the backbone of Alberta's economy. It should go without saying that no sector – not oil and gas, not agriculture, not retail – can flourish in our province without a well-paid, trained workforce. That's why it's inexplicable to us why this week's budget did so little to create the real jobs that would get Alberta back on track. Instead, this government's answer was to hope that things will return to what they once were. The only ones helped by this budget, Mr. Speaker, were the government's well-connected friends and insiders while working Albertans and those who want to were ignored.

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

Grande Prairie Storm Junior Hockey Team

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pride that I rise today to congratulate the outstanding athletes on the Grande Prairie Storm junior hockey team. Last Sunday in Grande Prairie a crowd of over 3,000 fans cheered on the Storm as they defeated the Spruce Grove Saints in double overtime to win the Enerflex Cup Alberta Junior Hockey League Championship. The Storm was not intimidated by the challenge of competing against the number one team in the league and beat Spruce Grove during the final in four straight games.

Storm coach and general manager Mike Vandekamp led the Storm in a spectacular season, with the most wins and points in team history. They had many close games throughout the season, but these athletes and their fans refused to give up, and their perseverance paid off with an outstanding victory on home ice.

The team draws players and fans from throughout the entire Grande Prairie region and is representative of Alberta's growing reputation for athletic and volunteerism excellence here at home and around the world. I congratulate all the athletes, the head coach, coaches, assistants, parents, and volunteers of the team on a job well done. They are a fine example of Albertans' courage, determination, dreams, and the spirit to achieve.

We all look forward to celebrating the Grande Prairie Storm's success as they take on the winner of the B.C. Hockey League for the Doyle Cup and their chance to advance to the Royal Bank Cup national championship. Good job and good luck.

Thank you.

Introduction of Bills

Bill 35

Gas Utilities Amendment Act, 2009

Mr. McFarland: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 35, the Gas Utilities Amendment Act, 2009.

This is an administrative bill that will amend existing legislation and give force to a ruling of the National Energy Board. Specifically, this ruling concerned the NOVA Gas Transmission segment of the TransCanada pipeline system. Mr. Speaker, extraprovincial pipeline reliance on the NOVA Gas Transmission system resulted in TransCanada applying for and the National Energy Board recently accepting that the NOVA system is subject to federal regulation. The amendments in this act will reflect a quasi-judicial ruling.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 35 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill 35 be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Provincial Deficit

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Premier makes claims to being open, accountable, and transparent, yet he has tabled a budget which makes no reference to a looming estimated \$1.3 billion in deficits, thirteen hundred million of overspending in one year by his minister. To the Premier: will the Premier at least admit, if he cannot give exact numbers, that there will be a very sizable deficit incurred in Health and Wellness this past year?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, I believe the health minister answered the question very clearly yesterday. The Health Services Board are having their March 31 year-end statements audited. Once the audit is complete, then the audited statements will be provided to the minister, and the minister will then share the information with the House.

Dr. Swann: How can the Premier claim to be open and accountable when he will only release the deficit on Health Services by June 30, when the Legislature is closed, hidden from debate and public scrutiny?

Mr. Stelmach: I don't know if we're going to be debating whatever the auditors deliver to Albertans, but this will be public information. Whatever the auditors decide, whatever figure they bring forward is not what will be debated. What we could debate when we come back next fall is: how do we further find efficiencies and savings in delivery of health in the province of Alberta?

Dr. Swann: Well, if the Premier is going to be accountable to Albertans, will he withhold the bonuses this year of the deputy minister and senior officials in Health, recognizing that they have failed their duty to the public? If not, why not?

Mr. Stelmach: We have.

Dr. Swann: For this year?

Mr. Stelmach: Yes, for this year. We clearly said that there will be no bonuses, and we're sticking with that decision. The bonuses are suspended.

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

Funding for Cancer Care

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, Albertans and health professionals find it unacceptable that after six years of raising concerns about shortages in cancer services at the Tom Baker in Calgary, there are still delays in treatment, risking both patients and professional reputations. People want to know how we have drifted so far from the basics of health care, the most basic of medical needs, in this province. To the Premier: will the Premier tell Albertans whether there are any plans in the next three years to grant the \$22 million funding request from the Tom Baker?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, this is a serious matter that the hon. leader raises in the House. Cancer affects every family in Alberta. We're fully aware of that. We have increased the budget for cancer drugs. In fact, the taxpayer pays for all of the drugs for cancer treatment. We're also going to be taking pressure off the Tom Baker Centre by opening radiation clinics in Red Deer and in Lethbridge as well so that people don't have to travel to Calgary. They can get some of the therapy in their own communities. We are aware of the pressures across Alberta, and we will be working with the Alberta health board to ensure that we find an appropriate way of dealing with the ever-increasing numbers of cancer patients.

Dr. Swann: This government is spending millions of dollars on administrative reshuffling in health care. Will the Premier get his act together and immediately shift back to basics now to make the number one priority the care of sick people?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, it is the number one priority. We want to improve access, improve quality. We want to get better value for the dollars that are being spent in health. The health budget takes about 40 per cent of the overall budget of the province of Alberta, and we want to ensure that we can increase the number of people that are treated in the province but at the same time work with all health care providers so that we can build those efficiencies.

Dr. Swann: Adding to people's outrage is the awareness that this government sold the cancer clinic along with the Holy Cross hospital a decade ago for a song. It is now buying back space for cancer care from a private company at a premium. Where have the priorities gone? Why has cancer care taken second place to private interests?

Mr. Stelmach: It hasn't taken second place to any delivery. As I said, I'm sure every family in this province is affected by cancer. We have family members, relatives that are being treated for various cancers in various parts of the province. It is an important goal of the minister and of the Alberta Health Services Board, and we'll continue to work towards improving access for those people that are in the system.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, this week through your good graces we had four young people that were in your gallery that have

received considerable cancer treatment. I spent time with the families. You know, they're from different parts of the province, and it is difficult because families have to travel to a larger centre. It is a difficult time for them all. We want to put policies in place and offer a wider range of services to extend out of the two major cities so that we reduce the impact on families.

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

Employment Supports

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In March, unfortunately, another 15,000 Alberta workers were laid off. We now have 45,000 job losses in the first three months of this year. That's three times the government's projection for the whole, entire year. The current budget shows very little leadership and does not take significant action to address these job losses through retraining programs. My first question is to the Premier. With unemployment numbers again rising today, unfortunately, showing very large job losses across the province, does the Premier finally recognize that his government's projections are completely unrealistic, inaccurate, and need to change now?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, our hearts go out to all those Albertans that have lost their jobs over the last number of months. There's been such a rapid change in the economy, totally unprecedented around the globe. You know, losing a job is never easy. Everybody wants to contribute to society. The budget that our minister introduced this week is going to help those families. We're going to help through retraining programs, keep investing in infrastructure, ensure that we're not laying off public-sector staff to add to the increasing roll, and we'll make sure, as we work through this year, that we put as many people as we can back to work. The 15,000 that was first estimated is an annual figure. They're using that as the figure for the whole year. There will be fluctuations from winter to summer to spring, but we hold firm on those figures.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Interesting.

Thank you. Again to the hon. Premier. Among 15- to 24-year-olds across this province the unemployment rate is 11 per cent, twice the provincial average. This government is neglecting a generation. Now, why is the government failing to train these young people to enable them to find long-term, stable, quality jobs where they can get pension benefits and afford to settle down and raise a family?

Mr. Stelmach: I wasn't quite sure if he said 11-year-olds or 11 per cent. I'd hope that at 11 years old they'd be in school and that even at 15 years of age they'd still be in school and completing their education program.

Now, of course, for those that have finished high school or finished university, we know that the oil and gas sector and forestry are two sectors that rely on sales outside the province into global markets, and those markets have been depressed. We're going to be working especially with those two sectors to see how we can help through not only provincial but federal policy to get those people back to work.

Mr. MacDonald: That response proves to me that the Premier is not listening.

Now, again to the Premier: given that funding for job creation and

training and income supports is only 2 per cent higher this year compared to the forecast for last year, is it the government policy not to take additional action to support the tens of thousands of Albertans that, unfortunately, through no fault of their own have lost their jobs recently?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Stelmach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A hundred and sixty-four million dollars for retraining and career counselling: that is a significant amount. We'll continue to support those families in need, but most importantly the dollars that we are reinvesting in infrastructure and keeping the public-sector jobs going are going to minimize those job losses in the province. I'm happy to say that as we're entering summer, more construction jobs are starting up, especially on roads. We'll see those numbers come down.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Provincial Budget

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. We've called this budget a welfare budget. We've called it half baked. It's both of those, but the simple reality is that it's a dishonest budget. This Tory government has deliberately left a health board deficit of \$1.4 billion off the books. To the Premier: why are you hiding the truth from Albertans that the real deficit in this budget is actually more than \$6 billion?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, the hon. leader, I guess, was preoccupied when I answered the very same question just a while ago. The Alberta Health Services annual statement, which ends March 31, just ended here a few days ago. It is being audited. Once the audit is complete, the results of that audit will be made public. All Albertans will know about the operations of the board, and when the information comes here, then we'll work on how we can best deliver the services.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, this government knows that there's a projected \$1.4 billion deficit in the health system because its own health board has told them so, but they are trying to hide it from Albertans. This government is cooking the books. To the Premier: if you can't table an honest budget, why should the taxpayers trust you with their money?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, you know, I guess different words will be used in the Assembly, but there's a lot of input that went into the budget after considerable consultation with various sectors, charitable organizations as well, and hard-working, taxpaying Albertans. We were told to build a budget that in terms of spending was the rate of inflation plus population. We did that. They asked us to focus on education and health and support for the most vulnerable, and this is what this budget delivered.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, can you imagine what would happen to a Wall Street banker who misstated a projected deficit by a third? This government couldn't handle money in the good times, and it obviously can't in the bad. Will the

Premier direct his finance minister to withdraw this phony budget and resubmit one that is transparent and exposes the fact that there's really a deficit of \$6 billion in this budget?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I lauded the hon. leader for being one of the few across the way to read the budget and understand it. Maybe that was premature. The \$2 billion that we're talking about is in fiscal period 2010-11, and for this year it will be \$4.7 billion. We're looking at savings of \$2 billion in the second year out. But we're the only jurisdiction – the only jurisdiction – that has a comprehensive three-year fiscal plan with all of the supporting documents tabled in the Legislature with the three-year budget, the only jurisdiction to do that.

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

Municipal Sustainability Initiative

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's municipalities will receive \$400 million this year for capital and operating expenses through the province's municipal sustainability initiative. My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. With \$100 million less in funding from last year, will this not result in a reduction in infrastructure spending by the municipalities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Danyluk: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our municipalities receive a level of support that is unmatched in this country, providing municipalities with \$5.6 billion over three years, and I do want to say \$400 million of MSI this year. In addition to that, I would like to say that this does not include the many projects that will be eligible under the federal program. MSI has made a very positive impact on Alberta municipalities.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is also for the same minister. The AUMA issued a news release that says that the MSI funding reduction is a disincentive to its members applying for federal funding under the building Canada fund. Can the minister tell us if he feels that this, in fact, is the case?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, Mr. Speaker, absolutely not. In fact, the programs complement each other. There are programs that qualify under the municipal sustainability initiative that could also qualify under the federal programs. Municipalities could end up seeing more money than they did last year. MSI criteria have also changed so that it enables municipalities to use interest as an eligible expense. So this is an opportunity for municipalities.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is again to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I understand that interest costs are now an eligible expense under MSI. How will this change benefit Albertans?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, Mr. Speaker, it will give municipalities the opportunity to move forward on vital infrastructure programs. Municipalities can take advantage of the 30 per cent less cost on construction costs. That is a substantial amount of money. Muni-

palities are on the front line of these projects. They will create jobs, and it will keep Alberta working.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Provincial Tax Policy

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This PC government's approach to budgeting for bad times reminds me of the smoker who says, "I'll quit when cigarettes hit 20 bucks a pack," or maybe Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind*, whose response to crisis was: I'll think about that tomorrow. So it is that we have this line in the budget about the \$2 billion fiscal correction in case the recession keeps getting deeper. We'd rather deal with that tomorrow than exercise the discipline to set things right today and hope and pray, hope to heck tomorrow never comes. To the finance minister. Perhaps I'm reading this wrong. Is the minister, in fact, already aware that her budget numbers are overly optimistic, and is she softening us all up for a \$2 billion tax hike?

Ms Evans: No, Mr. Speaker. We're certainly not softening anybody up for a \$2 billion tax hike. I have to compliment the hon. member. He took the time yesterday to share an experience with the Calgary chamber. There I said what I say here. There certainly are opportunities on two sides of the equation, to either figure out how we raise revenues – and that might happen for us with commodity prices – or reduce our expenditures. One thing that the Calgary papers have reported resoundingly is identify that one quick way to get \$700 million is if those dollars would come home to roost that the federal government owes us for health transfers, \$200 for every man, woman, and child. That would solve at least a third of our problem.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the finance minister: is this minister committed to not increasing income taxes?

Ms Evans: You know, Mr. Speaker, we indicated yesterday, both the President of Treasury Board and myself, that we couldn't leave any stone unturned. Our Premier very clearly identified, in response to a suggestion raised by the member opposite, that there would be no PST here, absolutely not, and that we would look instead at management of our budget on both sides of the equation in a way that would best help Albertans to keep on working and to keep our savings as whole as possible.

Mr. Taylor: Again to the minister: is she committed to not introducing any new taxes?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, I think everybody here would like to make that claim, but I want to be very honest and open with Albertans. When you have a situation where we don't know exactly how long this recession will last, we have to look at all the options. We believe it's to be a short-term decline. We believe that we'll be back into surplus budgets by 2012-13. During this period of time, however, we're going to have to look at the various options, and we want to make sure that we balance, do exactly what we did this year, make wise choices in spending, saving, and building capacity.

2:10

Travel Alberta

Mr. Webber: Mr. Speaker, Tuesday's budget highlighted \$57 million for tourism marketing through Travel Alberta. My first

question is to this colourful hon. member sitting beside me here, the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. Now that Travel Alberta is at arm's length, how will the government know, how will we know that this money is being used effectively?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Ady: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the compliment. It is spring.

Mr. Speaker, accountability is always important. I just want you to know that one week ago the lights of the Travel Alberta corporation turned on in this province, and I want to assure all members that we put in place a board with really good business expertise, so we're going to really look to this board. But under this new governance structure I will still continue to review and approve the business plan which was tabled in this Assembly yesterday. That business plan sets out how the funding will be spent. The plan is based on a research-based, market-driven model.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Webber: My second question to the same minister, Mr. Speaker: will the regions other than the Rockies or Calgary and Edmonton see any of this funding?

Mrs. Ady: Well, as I was saying before, Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General will also be looking to see that Albertans' money is well spent.

While the Rockies are iconic and people know about them all over the world and they're important to tourism, so are the other areas of this province that have wonderful things to see. I'm happy to say that \$7 million has been targeted towards ensuring that the story of all Alberta gets told and that people know what there is to be offered in this province. This week alone we had a Growing Rural Tourism Conference, that was held in Camrose, that helped those partners better understand how to move people around this province.

Mr. Webber: My final question to the same minister. Tourism is vulnerable to changes in world markets, so what is being done to minimize the risks and strengthen our position as a tourism destination here in Alberta?

Mrs. Ady: Well, Mr. Speaker, Travel Alberta and the board are paying very close attention to world conditions right now. We know that it is tougher out there, so they're doing all to make sure that we are being cautious. But we think it is the wrong thing to pull out of those markets. We've spent millions of dollars promoting this province all over the world. We think the wrong thing to do is to pull back. We're going to continue to press forward, stick with the plan. We think we have a good-news story to tell.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, followed by the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Grizzly Bear Protection

Mr. Hehr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like Blondie in her 1980s classic the Alberta Liberals are asking Albertans to call us, call us any time regarding Budget 2009. Carl from Calgary did just that by dialing 1.888.886.2834. Carl noted that the grizzly bear is a threatened species in Alberta and is an indicator of health in our ecosystem. Accordingly, a dollar spent to save the grizzly bear is also money spent to protect other plants and animals. To the minister of SRD: why is there no line item for species . . .

The Speaker: Sorry, hon. member. You spent too much time advertising.

Dr. Morton: Mr. Speaker, what was that telephone number again?

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hehr: Well, thank you. That was a long advertisement, but I'll get to the heart of the matter here. Why is there no line item for species at risk and conservation in the provincial budget for grizzly bears?

Dr. Morton: Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that there is significant funding for species at risk and specifically for grizzly bears. I'll be happy to send those numbers over to the hon. member.

Mr. Hehr: You wouldn't happen to have those numbers handy right now?

Dr. Morton: Mr. Speaker, I believe he received a rather tall pile of data yesterday, but I'll do his work for him and sort it out and send it over.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Mountain Pine Beetle Control

Mr. Jacobs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents are expressing concern about mountain pine beetle infestations in southwest Alberta, particularly as one-quarter of the area's land base is parks and protected areas, important to tourism and recreation. My question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. What is his department doing to safeguard this forested landscape?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner is correct. The pine beetle does not respect map boundaries between parks and working forest or between provincial boundaries. The pine beetle represents a threat to the entire Rocky Mountain ecosystem as a whole, and that's the problem we're addressing. I'm happy to report to you and the House that we're working closely with the colourful Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation, with our counterparts in British Columbia, and also with Parks Canada to co-ordinate our approach and make the selective use, the proper use of the different tools we have to fight pine beetles.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Jacobs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is again to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Since the public lands and provincial parks of southwest Alberta are adjacent to Banff national park, what success has his department had with getting Parks Canada to collaborate with provincial mountain pine beetle control efforts?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again the hon. member is correct. Waterton, Banff, and Jasper are three major national parks on our western boundary, saddling strategic passes which potentially

represent the inroads for the pine beetle from British Columbia. I'm happy to report that I visited with Parks Canada in both Jasper and Banff last summer and had a very good, close working relationship. Also, my department co-chairs a strategic directions council that sits with our counterparts in British Columbia. I can tell you and can assure you that when it comes to the pine beetle, Parks Canada and Alberta are on the same page.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Jacobs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental question is to the colourful Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. Can she explain what measures are being taken in provincial parks to control the mountain pine beetle?

Mrs. Ady: Well, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member said, we are working closely with Sustainable Resource Development on this issue. I mean, these are provincial parks which we all very much value. We are using controlled burns in the parks. We're also taking all infected trees out in a tree selection. We've seen what's happened in British Columbia, and we don't want to see it in the parks in this province.

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

Continuing Care Review

Ms Pastoor: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the minister of health pointed out that there are still long-term care beds in the capital plan for this year's budget. However, by project breakdown of the three-year capital plan only five of the total 11 continuing care projects are going ahead entirely as planned. The rest are deferred or the project scope is under review. To the Minister of Health and Wellness. For the seniors who are in the communities where continuing care facilities are under review by Alberta Health Services, when will the minister release these findings to the public?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure that there's much more that I can add that I haven't already said in the last couple of days. In each particular case where there is a project that funds have been committed to, we want to sit down with the community and make sure that what is going forward best meets the needs of that community. We would be doing that over the next short period of time.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. For the facilities where the scope of the project is under review, how long will construction be delayed while at least 566 Alberta seniors wait in acute care at a huge, huge cost to the taxpayers?

Mr. Liepert: Well, I'd like to emphasize again, Mr. Speaker, that one of the things that we did do in this budget was commit an extra \$42 million to our continuing care programs so that we can get more home care out into the community so that many of those patients could actually be discharged from acute care if physicians are satisfied that care will be provided when they're discharged. This isn't just a matter of taking people from acute care and sticking them into long-term care.

Ms Pastoor: No, and I certainly agree with that, but most of these will have to go into some sort of care.

Will the minister tell Albertans who is doing this review? Is it Alberta Health Services or another privately contracted group? Have you any idea of what the price tag might be?

2:20

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, this will be done internally between Alberta Health Services and the Department of Health and Wellness. There would be no additional price tag as suggested by the member.

We also have to recognize, Mr. Speaker, that there are a number of long-term care facilities in this province that are currently under construction and will be coming on stream later this year and early next year. So it's hardly like there is nothing being constructed in this province.

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

Alberta Job Losses

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, for three months 500 people a day have lost their jobs in Alberta, and the worst is yet to come. Real projections show the pace of job loss actually skyrocketing later this year and into next spring. Your dishonest budget said you'd support 80,000 jobs. The reality is that you haven't created one. To the minister of finance: how far out of touch can you possibly be to continue insisting to Albertans that they will only lose 15,000 jobs this year when we're on track to lose at least 12 times that many?

Ms Evans: You know, Mr. Speaker, I'm really glad that the hon. member posed the question so that I can reintroduce to this House something we've been talking about. We took an average over the 12-month period last year. There were a lot of fluctuations in where we were at, and we calculated what the number was. Then we took an average of what's projected over this year, for the full 12 months of this year. We are still projecting significant job increases for the last portion of the year. We are still projecting 15,000 jobs fewer this year than last year. I could answer the rest.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, this finance minister is the only person still hanging on to that projection. Meanwhile, there's nothing new or stimulating in this budget. All of your announcements are reannouncements. If reannouncing old press releases created jobs, we'd have zero unemployment. Unfortunately, your job requires a little bit more effort than that. Now, to the minister: rather than decreasing support for infrastructure construction for municipalities, why aren't you investing to create new jobs – new jobs – and keep Albertans working?

Ms Evans: Mr. Speaker, let's go back to our figures. Infrastructure spending in Alberta is double the Canadian average: \$2,200 for every man, woman, and child. We're spending \$23.2 billion over the next three years, \$7.2 billion this year. For every billion dollars of work on public infrastructure 11,600 jobs are created. That doesn't even speak to the dollars that the health minister has talked about where projects were not able to be completed, which will ultimately add to the overall spending for public-sector infrastructure. We meet and beat anywhere else in the country by double.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, this month Alberta almost led the country in that we posted the second-highest number of job losses across the country. While every other province is adopting new stimulus spending, this government is actually cutting back and threatening

to eliminate public-sector jobs. You're making Albertans feel even more desperate, more afraid, and it's going to make things worse. To the minister: why won't you finish your budget and offer some real new spending initiatives to create new jobs?

Ms Evans: You know, Mr. Speaker, the only ones that are talking about this in negative terms are the members across the House. Everybody else is seeing some very positive things about the dollars that we've spent. They can't have it both ways. They can't tell us not to increase operating spending, which we did, but also expect that we're going to be able to both increase operating spending, which we have, and not add some extra supports for people. The Premier has spoken about our sorrow when we do lose jobs. We don't like to have fewer jobs. But on average we expect that to even out, and many of the major players in Alberta give us their assurance that they're still prepared to make those jobs happen.

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

Apprenticeship Training

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Apprentices are important to build Alberta's skilled workforce for today and for tomorrow. Even in these tough economic times there is still demand for skilled tradespeople throughout this province. In fact, earlier today the Prime Minister announced \$2,000 apprenticeship completion grants. My first question is to the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology. What are the criteria for apprentices to qualify for this grant?

The Speaker: This comes under the federal jurisdiction or provincial jurisdiction?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, if I could maybe enlighten the House a little bit. Apprenticeship programming comes under the provincial jurisdiction of my department. In fact, student finance is a shared responsibility of the provincial government and the federal government. However, it was an honour today to participate with the Prime Minister at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, where we had a number of fine apprentices who were there for the \$2,000 completion grant, which is part of the red seal program that we have nation-wide, managed in Alberta by the provincial government and our apprenticeship board. The program starts July 1 of this year. Approximately 5,200 Alberta apprentices will complete their red seal, we believe, this year. That means that all of those applicants will be eligible for the grant.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I understand that there's already a grant available for first- and second-year apprentices in red seal programs here in Alberta. How many apprentices have benefited from the program since it was introduced in 2006?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, the confidence that is being shown by the companies in Alberta is absolutely tremendous. They continue to hire apprentices in our province. The apprenticeship incentive grant became effective in January of 2007, and from that point to February of 2009 approximately 80,000 – 80,000 – grants have been issued to all of the apprentices. That represents close to 33 per cent of all of the apprenticeship grants in Canada. It tells you the number of

apprentices that we're training in this province. We are the engine of Canada's growth, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My final question to the same minister: what are we doing in Alberta to help apprentices go to school and complete their training?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, over the past few years we have been, actually, ahead of the curve, if you will, in terms of what other jurisdictions are doing now in the sense that we have added a tremendous number of spaces to our postsecondary institutions because of the tremendous demand that the economy has had. We anticipate that there'll be tremendous demand on our postsecondary institutions because of some of the slowdown. Some of these students will want to come back to postsecondary. In fact, the Prime Minister today in his comments encouraged Alberta's young people or those who are looking at a second career to look to a first-class, world-class postsecondary system and come back to it. In our budget this year close to \$200 million is actually going to be attributed to postsecondary apprenticeship training in the province of Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Special-needs Education Funding

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After conducting a year of consultations, the Minister of Education's review of special-needs programming apparently has not revealed much about the needs of the most vulnerable of these children. The minister should know by now that children at risk are not getting the educational support from this administration that they deserve. Although the first two phases of the special education review have concluded, the only result to date has been to freeze funding for severe special-needs programming. To the minister: has the minister concluded that special-needs programming is adequately funded, that there is no more need for special needs?

Mr. Hancock: No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Chase: That's reassuring.

Considering that consultations are only meaningful if the views of Albertans are actually reflected in policy, what is the point of raising the hopes of parents whose children attend Calgary schools such as Emily Follensbee or Christine Meikle when the result is to freeze funding to these vulnerable populations?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, we've been very open and transparent about the process that we're engaged in. In the fall of 2007 there was a review of special-needs student profiles across the province, and that review, as we've discussed in this House before, indicated a very high discrepancy between those files which qualified for funding and those files which were actually getting funding. There were more files being funded than qualified.

What it also, though, really set out was that there was a problem with the policy framework, and throwing more money into the formula wasn't going to fix the problem. So we engaged in the very thorough review, which I believe at the moment over 5,000 Albertans have participated in. That review is ongoing. There's a conference in June. I'll be getting advice from the steering commit-

tee shortly after that with respect to the policy framework, and we're going to get this right.

Mr. Chase: Part of getting it right is planning and budgeting. That money is desperately needed for special-needs children.

Since ESL programming will only see a 1 per cent increase yet over 91,000 individuals moved to Alberta last year, many of whom have English as a second language, is it the minister's policy to assume that these children should already be able to speak English? Is this minister taking a Jason Kenney approach?

2:30

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member would read the budget documents or, if he doesn't wish to, if he would call me, I would be able to alert him to the fact that the funding for ESL, like the funding for other students, is per capita, per student. As each of those students moves in, they get counted, and as they get counted, they get funded. The funding for the per-student grant went up 4.8 per cent, which covers the cost of teachers and the increase of the cost of teachers. As every new student is added to the student count, the funding is there.

Drinking Water Quality

Mr. Mitzel: Mr. Speaker, last week I met with a large group of community leaders from my constituency. They brought to my attention several important issues related to the provision of drinking water in their communities. My questions are to the Minister of Environment. The town of Redcliff, a community of 5,000 people, is struggling to meet constantly rising standards for drinking water with their existing plant. I agree that maintaining strict standards is absolutely critical to ensure that the health of Albertans is protected. To the minister: how can the town of Redcliff, like many other small communities around the province, meet the continually rising standards without some sort of adequate funding support?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely correct. The fact is that our drinking water standards are increasing over time, and I make no apologies for that. I don't think anyone does. Even the municipalities recognize the need to constantly be vigilant when it comes to drinking water standards. The fact does remain, though, that for small, isolated drinking water facilities, that does get more and more difficult, so we're encouraging the development of regional facilities. We're encouraging shared responsibility and partnerships among the operators of these facilities. I also want to point out that in the budget that was introduced yesterday, there is about \$100 million that is available to help and assist in the development of some of these regional partnerships.

Mr. Mitzel: Again to the same minister, Mr. Speaker. The minister indicated that regionalization of drinking water systems is a possible solution, but my understanding is that the price that would be charged to the town of Redcliff by the regional system operator is too high, higher than perhaps putting in a new plant. What is the minister doing to ensure that regional systems are affordable and cost-effective for these communities?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, I did mention that we do have funding, but I also want to be very clear that while \$100 million a year is a substantial amount of money, it pales in comparison to the demand that's out there. Let's not be under any false illusions that somehow the problems are going to go away. It takes two to develop a partnership, and I do encourage not only the small

operators, but more importantly I encourage the larger operators, that are pivotal in getting these partnerships going, to be reasonable and not take advantage of a situation.

Mr. Mitzel: Again to the same minister, Mr. Speaker. Cypress county, like many other municipalities in Alberta, is growing and as a result would like to acquire additional water licences. In the South Saskatchewan River basin no new licences are being issued by Alberta Environment. Cypress county contains many communities that are either too small or too far from a regional hub to make a regional system feasible. Could the minister tell us what he's doing to ensure that communities like Cypress county are able to acquire existing licences or portions of existing licences that are deemed not presently being used by existing leaseholders?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, therein lies the problem. If the licences are not currently being used, then transferring the licence doesn't really solve the problem of oversubscription to the water, does it? However, that being said, I should point out that there have been about 30 transfers that have taken place since the moratorium has been put in place. We're getting better at evaluating and determining whether or not these are, in fact, paper transfers or real water transfers. I'm confident that over the next months as we have the discussion on water allocation policy, these transfers will become more and more routine.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, followed by the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Royalty Revenues

Dr. Taft: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The new royalty framework is immensely important to this government and to the economy of the whole province. It needs to strike the right balance between industry's share and the share that goes to Alberta. There was a clear target for the old royalty framework: 20 to 25 per cent of oil and gas wealth was to be collected by the Alberta government. My question is to the Minister of Energy. What's the target percentage for the new royalty framework?

Mr. Knight: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would certainly agree wholeheartedly with the member opposite that the structure of royalties in the province of Alberta is extremely important for Albertans. I would say that implementing a proper royalty regime is about much more than energy revenues. The regime must ensure that the province remains an attractive place for investment. It must also create an economic spinoff opportunity and wealth generation in communities throughout the province.

Dr. Taft: Mr. Speaker, for two days now the minister has avoided committing to any performance measure on this issue. Without a performance measure Albertans are never going to know whose interests the royalty system is serving. To the same minister. Industry feels that they're getting ripped off by the new royalty framework. Has this government refused to publish the percentage take because industry is right?

Mr. Knight: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's probably time that I should let Albertans and the rest of the House know – and I can't probably quote right now from my head verbatim what is stated in the business plan, but it very clearly says that that target is under review relative to the new royalty framework. It is under review, and it will be a target set out when the review is completed, as has

been suggested to us by the Auditor General and by the Valentine report. That's the fact of the matter.

Dr. Taft: Well, good. Some progress. Thank you.

If there was one thing, even just one, that everybody seemed to agree on after the royalty review in 2007 – Peter Valentine, the Auditor General, the Hunter panel, the industry, the public – it was that there did need to be more accountability. This minister has said that he is conducting a review, and he has indicated that this performance measure will be made public. My question to him is: when? When will that review be made public?

Mr. Knight: Well, Mr. Speaker, it will be made available to all the members of this House, to the public of the province of Alberta, and to the industry globally as soon as we're done with it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Business Closure Protection

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think everyone is aware of the recent world economic turmoil over the last few months. There have been quite a few stories that I've heard around my constituency, a lot of discussion about retailers all across North America going out of business. There are stories about some businesses closing their doors here in Alberta. In some cases it seems that those stores have closed suddenly, which leaves some customers who have paid for goods empty-handed, who don't have the products or services they paid for. My question is for the Minister of Service Alberta. What protections are in place, legislative or otherwise, for consumers who paid for merchandise only to find that the store has gone out of business?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are indeed a number of protections in place for consumers in this situation. For example, if someone did pay for their purchase with a credit card and did not receive any goods or services, they should contact their credit card company. In many cases the charges will be reversed. If the business has entered into bankruptcy, the consumer can contact the federal bankruptcy trustee. As well, if the business is licensed by Service Alberta and has provided monetary security, consumers may be able to file a claim through our ministry.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, there are sometimes a lot of stories in the coffee shop. One person does lose money and doesn't receive their product or good, and by the time the story gets passed around, it's hundreds of people that have lost it. I'm wondering if the minister can explain how many people have called with actual concerns about losing money or how many actually have lost money so that we can gauge the reality of this situation.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In this past year we've had 32 calls from Albertans all about store closures. Currently we are in the middle of two investigations involving business closures. Now, this may not seem like a significant number, but this is serious,

and it's something we monitor very carefully, which is why we encourage consumers to contact us.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering if the same minister can lay out some of the exact situations where her department can and will help consumers who have found that they've paid for goods and haven't received the products or services.

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the Fair Trading Act there are protections in place. A retailer who is taking deposits for merchandise even though it knew or should have known it was closing or entering bankruptcy would be in violation of the Fair Trading Act. In this situation we do investigate. Charges may be laid against the company, and depending on the court proceedings, consumers can get their money back. In practice it can be very difficult to prove that a company deliberately misled a customer, but the protections are in place. Any consumer caught in this kind of situation, again, should contact Service Alberta so we can investigate under the Fair Trading Act.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that was 96 questions and responses today.

Might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

Mr. Snelgrove: Mr. Speaker, it's indeed my pleasure to introduce a councillor from my area. Mr. Dave Gamracy is a councillor from the county of Vermilion River. Actually, I'm very glad that they do occasionally show up and watch what goes on in here because hardly anybody would believe what we're subject to, and now I have a witness. I would ask Dave to stand and please accept the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds from now we will return to the Routine.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Mrs. Klimchuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm pleased to table five copies of the 2007 Alberta vital statistics annual review. The report is a summary of all vital events during the 2007 calendar year and contains information involving the births, stillbirths, marriages, deaths, adoptions, and changes of name that occurred in Alberta. This report is produced primarily to provide the public and health care related professionals with a resource document of provincial statistical data. Service Alberta will send the report to medical examiners, cancer boards, hospitals, health authorities, research clinics, medical associations, universities, colleges, funeral homes, and libraries.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Mason: On behalf.

The Speaker: Yes. Please proceed.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona I have two tablings. First of all, I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of the labour force survey published by Statistics Canada today. The survey shows that 15,000 jobs were lost in Alberta in March and that the unemployment rate in our province is now 5.8 per cent.

The second tabling is the appropriate number of copies of 10 reports from long-term care workers indicating specific problems on shifts that were short-staffed. These indicate some residents had long waits before bells were answered, staff sometimes missed their breaks to try to keep up, and hazards were created when there was only one staff person available to lift patients where two staff were required.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today. The first is a letter dated July 21, 2008, from our constituency office to the Chief Electoral Officer regarding the poll book for mobile polling station No. 075 in Edmonton-Gold Bar on March 3, 2008.

The second letter that I have to table today is dated July 29, 2008. It is a letter that I received at our constituency office from the Chief Electoral Officer regarding polling station No. 075 in Edmonton-Gold Bar on the March 3, 2008, election.

I also have a tabling today again from the United States Government Accountability Office, a report to congressional requesters dated September 2008. It is Oil and Gas Royalties: The Federal System for Collecting Oil and Gas Revenues Needs Comprehensive Reassessment. It's from the Government Accountability Office in the United States.

Thank you.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Minister Zwozdesky, Minister of Aboriginal Relations, First Nations development fund grant agreement, undated, unsigned, with attached blank project application, tabled during a policy field committee consideration of the estimates of the Department of Aboriginal Relations on April 8, 2009.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Liepert, Minister of Health and Wellness, responses to Written Question 1 and Written Question 3 asked for by Mr. Mason on April 6, 2009.

Projected Government Business

The Speaker: The Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much for the opportunity to ask the Government House Leader under Standing Order 7(6) to share with us the projected government business for the week commencing April 14.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Monday being Easter Monday, the 13th, our session resumes on the 14th of April. Under

Government Bills and Orders, depending on progress today and depending on progress made through the week, we anticipate dealing with bills 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, and 19 in second reading; bills 4, 6, 7, and 9 in Committee of the Whole; bills 2, 3, 8, and 18 in third reading; and as per the Order Paper.

On Wednesday, the 15th, depending on progress on Tuesday, we would anticipate dealing with bills 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, and 19 in second reading; Bill 10 in Committee of the Whole; bills 4, 6, 7, and 9 in third reading; and as per the Order Paper.

Ms Blakeman: Executive Council is in Committee of Supply next Wednesday.

Mr. Hancock: I am reminded that we are not doing that on Wednesday, the 15th. Actually, on Wednesday, the 15th, we're in Committee of Supply for Executive Council. Thank you for that.

So on Thursday we will be doing what I just read for Wednesday, the 15th.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I would like to advise as well that I will be away next week.

Orders of the Day Government Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Select Special Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee

11. Mr. Hancock moved:

Be it resolved that a Select Special Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee of the Legislative Assembly be appointed consisting of the following members, namely Mr. Mitzel, chair; Mr. Lund, deputy chair; Mr. Bhullar; Ms Blakeman; Mr. Campbell; Mr. Horne; Mr. Lukaszuk; Mr. MacDonald; Mr. Marz; Ms Notley; and Mr. Webber, for the purpose of inviting applications for the position of Chief Electoral Officer and to recommend to the Assembly the applicant it considers most suitable to this position.

- (1) The chair and members of the committee shall be paid in accordance with the schedule of category A committees provided in the most current Members' Services Committee allowances order.
- (2) Reasonable disbursements by the committee for advertising, staff assistance, equipment and supplies, rent, travel, and other expenditures necessary for the effective conduct of its responsibilities shall be paid subject to the approval of the chair.
- (3) In carrying out its responsibilities, the committee may with the concurrence of the head of the department utilize the services of members of the public service employed in that department and of the staff employed by the Assembly.
- (4) The committee may without leave of the Assembly sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned.
- (5) When its work has been completed, the committee shall report to the Assembly if it is sitting. During a period when the Assembly is adjourned, the committee may release its report by depositing a copy with the Clerk and forwarding a copy to each member of the Assembly.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This motion is brought forward after recommendation by the Standing Committee on

Legislative Offices. Having been advised that the office of the Chief Electoral Officer is vacant, it's necessary to proceed to select a new Chief Electoral Officer. The committee that's being proposed is the same membership of that standing committee. It still leaves me to wonder that we need a special select committee when we have a Legislative Offices Committee that we should actually task to do the job, but I'm told that we need a special select committee to do the job. I would ask the Assembly to approve the motion and the membership of the committee.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, whenever we are discussing Government Motion 5.

Ms Blakeman: Eleven.

Mr. MacDonald: Eleven. Pardon me. Yes, my Costco glasses need cleaning, Mr. Speaker.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, Government Motion 11 certainly is interesting. I am of the view that it is unnecessary. I would rather have the former Chief Electoral Officer. I don't think he should have been let go. I think his contract should have been renewed, and he could carry on with the tasks that he started in his first term.

2:50

I was part of the previous committee, and I will serve again if this motion passes – and I can only assume that it will – on this special select committee to find a new Chief Electoral Officer. I would like to say that the former Chief Electoral Officer did a lot of good work. When we look at the recommendations, regardless of which report we refer to, the former Chief Electoral Officer had a lot of very good ideas about how to improve the election processes in this province.

Now, if we look, Mr. Speaker, at the current budget in the offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates for 2009-10, we will certainly see where there's money set aside for the office of the Chief Electoral Officer. Corporate services is \$4.1 million, and for elections – I don't know whether we're having a by-election or not; I think this is routine – this time we have \$465,000 set aside if there is to be a by-election in this fiscal year. So there is money set aside to operate the office.

Specifically to this motion and why it is unnecessary, I think the Chief Electoral Officer was blamed. He was fingered for many of the issues that are still surrounding the conduct of the last provincial election, which, of course, was held on March 3, 2008. There's a long list of issues, and I think those issues could have been addressed and many of them resolved if we had renewed the contract, as I said earlier, of Mr. Gibson and allowed him, along with the Legislative Offices Committee and members of this House, to implement the recommendations. There were good, solid recommendations on how to improve the voter turnout rates, the training of the various election officials, the timing, and who appoints the returning officers.

Everyone knows that it shouldn't be controlled by cabinet or by one respective minister of that cabinet. They should not be controlling the appointment of returning officers, and the enumeration process that follows the appointment of the returning officers has to be done well in advance – well in advance — of the date of the election.

The idea of having fixed election dates: now, our neighbour to the west, British Columbia, of course, is going to have an election in May, and it is a fixed election date there. [interjections] No, the B.C. elections are not fixed. I'm not so sure, hon. member, about

other provinces and constituencies in other provinces. We'll probably get to that later.

The Speaker: Hon. member, please let's just stick to the motion that we have here, which has to do with appointing a Select Special Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee. That's the purpose of this. Either you're in favour of the committee or not in favour of the committee. That pretty much seems to me what the range of the debate is.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for that guidance. I must say that members across the way were provoking me.

Specifically, Mr. Speaker, to this motion and the need for striking this committee, there is really no need to strike this committee. As I said before, the gentleman, Mr. Gibson: his contract should have been renewed. I will clearly admit I was one of the ones after the election that had many questions about this Chief Electoral Officer and how things unfolded. But, again, if we had given this gentleman a chance to do what he had suggested needed to be done, this motion, Government Motion 11, would not be necessary.

Certainly, as all members of this Assembly know, the schedule of the committee work that is coming forward this spring is quite heavy. There's a lot of work to do.

Ms Blakeman: Is it inhumane?

Mr. MacDonald: I wouldn't call it inhumane, but it's a heavy workload, hon. member.

We are debating at this time striking a select special committee from Legislative Offices to hire another individual to operate this very, very important office. Who are we going to get? It is going to be interesting to see. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, when we do select an individual, their workload is going to be very heavy because, of course, we're looking next year at another boundaries commission and how the electoral map for this Assembly is going to be redrawn or if it's going to be changed at all. But that is another matter. That's one job that this individual is going to be tasked with almost immediately upon his or her selection.

If we had given Mr. Gibson another term to implement the recommendations not only for the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act but for the Election Act itself, who knows? Perhaps, hon. members, we would have a fixed election date in this province. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview is probably going to have something to say about that.

There are many things that we sometimes overlook. When we look at the outcome of the provincial election and the long list of issues that unfolded, those issues were articulated by hon. members from both sides of the House at the public meetings that were held with the Legislative Offices Committee regarding the renewing or the extension, whatever word you want to use, of the contract of Mr. Gibson. Now, it's all there in the public record, Mr. Speaker, what was said and by whom.

In conclusion, I will remind the House that if I have an opportunity, I will work hard on this committee. If this Select Special Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee is struck and I'm a member of it, I will be watching the process, and I will be thinking of how this is going to work and what that individual, he or she, will do to improve our system.

Our system needs to be improved. We only have to look at the work that the former Chief Electoral Officer put into the issue of finances and contributions and what should or should not be done in the enforcement, Mr. Speaker, of some of our rules and our regula-

tions, our laws surrounding contributions. There is a long list. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has brought that up in question period. The Chief Electoral Officer had one direction he wanted to pursue. Of course, that didn't happen. For some reason many of those matters were delayed or stopped by Alberta Justice. Now, hopefully that's not going to continue under the leadership of the successful applicant to become the Chief Electoral Officer.

3:00

There is a lot of work that needs to be done by this individual when they are selected. I would urge all hon. members of this Assembly and citizens from across the province to follow this process very, very closely. This is a very important office, and we have to show support not only to the office of Elections Alberta but to the Chief Electoral Officer, whoever is eventually selected.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Other members to participate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak against this motion. I think we, first of all, need to realize that this is a very, very unusual circumstance. I'm not sure that it's unprecedented in Canadian history, but it is very close, from my consultations on this. When I say that, what I mean is that we are in this position because we, the Leg. Offices Committee, refused to renew the contract of the Chief Electoral Officer. That is a very unusual circumstance. Typically if the Chief Electoral Officer wants to continue, the person is given a second job. In fact, there are jurisdictions in Canada where a second term is virtually guaranteed.

There was one interesting case in British Columbia a number of years ago where an extension of a term was not renewed, and it ended up in the courts, Mr. Speaker. There was a particular legal ruling made which was, I believe, a bit of a precedent. Instead of it being called constructive dismissal, it was called constructive nonrenewal.

I wouldn't have been surprised if Mr. Gibson had in fact taken this issue to court. I don't know and I will never know how this departure was managed. I want to make the point that we are in this position because of very regrettable circumstances. It's a very, very unusual situation. I think we have a choice. We have at least two choices here other than this motion.

I think it's important for us to understand how we got into this situation. Mr. Gibson was hired with considerable enthusiasm by the committee, was recommended after a proper search, and was given a mandate. He looked to all to be off to a great start. He took on a challenge and delivered on an initial challenge, which was to review the electoral system in Alberta and to make recommendations for its improvement. And he made those. He made a large number of recommendations. I forget the exact figure, but it was a significant number. It covered all kinds of things like setting fixed election dates, which I think is a good idea. It included a new procedure for appointing local returning officers and on and on and on. It was basically a whole cleaning up of what has become a pretty decayed electoral mechanism in Alberta. He put forward those recommendations in his report in ample time before the last general election, in fact well over a year in advance.

Every single one of them, Mr. Speaker, was ignored, every single one of them. I think that that speaks volumes to this government's disinterest in cleaning up the electoral process. We had an independent officer of this Legislature give us very serious written advice on cleaning up the elections system, and this government completely ignored it.

So the predictable sorts of things began to happen. That creaky, old election system began to fall apart because it wasn't repaired. Very obvious issues arose; for example – and this is one that got some attention – delays in appointing the local returning officers. The Chief Electoral Officer made repeated requests to the government to get the local returning officers appointed, to get the lists of names so that he could go ahead and approach these people who are, as we all know, those people who run the local elections, and there were delays and delays and all kinds of problems. Ultimately, in what is, in my view, frankly, a kind of Third World standard, he ended up dealing with a political party, with the Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta, to get a list of candidates to be local returning officers. That's simply wrong, Mr. Speaker. This is a matter of public record, but it's simply wrong. We should not have any political party handing over lists of candidates to fill the positions of returning officers.

At that point, of course, he was desperate because it was only months before the rumoured election. He began approaching these people, and he found that there were all kinds of problems with them, so there were further delays. In many cases, when all was said and done, Mr. Speaker, the local returning officers were not appointed until weeks and in some cases days before the writ was dropped. As a result of that and many other issues, there were serious problems with the elections process. I certainly experienced those in my constituency; I imagine we all did. Enormous lineups at polling stations; shortages of staff to work the polls; serious, serious problems with the electors list. On and on and on it went.

Then there was an immense outpouring of frustration. We received a very large number of complaints verbal and written. We compiled a large three-ring binder of those complaints, some of which were extremely serious, things like ballot boxes being opened in the middle of election day by returning officers, written complaints of witnesses saying this kind of thing – that's clearly wrong, Mr. Speaker – all kinds of other issues like that.

Whether this issue of what happened in the last election is dead or not, time will tell. But I can tell you that we're in this situation debating this motion today because rather than addressing the problems the Chief Electoral Officer raised, this government chose to shoot the messenger, Mr. Speaker, and I think that was a serious and regrettable mistake. Problems in the electoral system were exposed, solutions were proposed, the solutions were overruled, and the person who identified those problems and proposed the solutions basically had the term of their job not renewed. As I said, there is a legal term called constructive nonrenewal which may well have applied here.

To this motion, Mr. Speaker. I don't need to repeat the motion; it's a long one. I think there are two better options, myself, and that's why I'm opposing this motion. The first would be to return to Mr. Gibson and offer him the position back and give him the mandate and the leeway and the resources to actually implement the solutions that he proposed to fix up the creaky, old election machinery in Alberta. Now, that's not going to happen. I'm not sure he would take the job, and I wouldn't blame him if he didn't. But I think it would be worth a try.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, if I had thought that it would work and pass, I would have otherwise proposed an amendment to this motion, which would be to add to this motion a clause giving the new Chief Electoral Officer the mandate and the resources to enact the recommendations proposed by Mr. Gibson, the previous Chief Electoral Officer, so that we at least make a gesture at cleaning up such a failing, rotten, old system. That's not in here.

My fear, if this passes as it is, is that, first of all, the well has been poisoned. I don't know what qualified person, what top-notch

electoral officer, is going to apply for a job which has been so badly damaged. As I said, I know this is a national issue in this community because I've spoken to members of this community across the country, and they were shocked and appalled at what happened to Mr. Gibson. They were dismayed at the culture around the election in Alberta, and they don't have confidence that it's going to be fixed. So the well may well be poisoned. We'll find somebody, but will that person have the abilities we need to clean up this system? I'm not at all confident of that, Mr. Speaker.

3:10

The second concern I have is that even if we get a really good person, there's no sign of any will whatsoever on the part of this government to fix the fundamental problems that led us into needing this motion in the first place. We've had a few brief comments from the Premier about allowing the Chief Electoral Officer to appoint returning officers, but when he has been pressed on it, he has backed off immediately. We've had a couple of brief comments from the Premier on the next election date, but when he is pressed on it, he has backed off immediately.

The funding to at least bring this office up to the sort of resource standards that are normal in other provinces was held back. Every sign is that there's no interest whatsoever on the part of this government to clean up the system. So we've damaged our reputation, we've poisoned the well with the pool of potential applicants, and we've shown no inclination whatsoever to bring this voting system into the 21st century.

I think this is the wrong approach. I think we need to illustrate to the new candidate that we're serious about cleaning this up. This motion doesn't do it. I'm opposed to it. I think it's a bad way to proceed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Others to participate? This is a debatable motion. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Ms Notley: Yes. Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to this motion. As already discussed, this seems like a procedural motion, but of course it's attached to something which is the fundamental foundation of all that we do here. It is attached to a process which gives our being here every day the legitimacy and the mandate to do what we do not only in this Assembly but also in terms of what we do for the people of the province with our legislative authority.

The very, very fundamental, foundational piece of that is the electoral process through which we get here. Of course, this motion is attached to how we establish a mechanism of oversight and administration of that electoral process. It must be a process of oversight and administration which is completely objective and without undue influence in the eyes of Albertans. For it to be anything other than that is, unfortunately, to, as I say, undermine everything that comes after that, everything that we do here. That's why I am concerned about this.

I mean, we talked about and there has been a lot of discussion about why the Chief Electoral Officer's contract or term of his position as an officer of this Legislature was not renewed. Of course, we talked about the problems of the last election, which of course have been fully canvassed. We had, you know, an embarrassing – embarrassing – turnout in our last election. There are countries which are just coming out of dictatorship mode who are having their first elections who have higher electoral turnouts than what we had in that last election, and there were a lot of reasons for it.

There is no question that one of the reasons for it was the failure

of the government to fix the process through which those key players were able to be put in place to administer and oversee the election, that being the returning officers. That process was fundamentally broken. It was broken in that the names for that had historically come through the government, and it was broken in that that process was not ever properly fixed, so it was broken so that the wrong people were being appointed way, way, way too late.

Then, as a result, we had a debacle of an election process that I think all members of this House can agree created many, many problems. Of course, that problem was something that was identified by the former Chief Electoral Officer, an officer of this Legislature responsible not to the government but to each individual member of this Assembly. Unfortunately, when that problem was identified, it was identified in a very sensitive pre-election period, and it was unfortunately a requirement of the Chief Electoral Officer to identify the primary source of that problem, that being the Premier, who was at the time running for re-election. Now, that shouldn't be a problem because he was an officer of this Assembly, and regardless of the political considerations, he should have been completely free to raise those issues in a way that would fix the system upon which we all rely in a way that is objective and neutral and protected from interference and influence. So that's what he tried to do. It didn't work, unfortunately, so we had the problems we had.

In addition to that, of course, other problems were also identified by this Chief Electoral Officer. He, of course, as I mentioned, had identified the process of appointing deputy returning officers. He had also identified a number of matters that should have been prosecuted and were not followed up. I believe there were 19 of them. He also made recommendations with respect to penalty provisions within the act to more appropriately hold responsible candidates who received money from illegal sources. He made recommendations for overall financial reform. Again, the electoral financing process in the province of Alberta is very, very, you know, wild, wild-westesque, I would say, in comparison to most other jurisdictions, which have much more comprehensive rules for accountability in terms of electoral financing.

So he made those proposals, and lo and behold he did that just a few months before his contract was up for renewal. I suppose, you know, he thought he was doing the job that, in his view, was the job that all Assembly members needed to have done. But then we came to the committee, and the vote is a matter of record. All members that happen to be members of the government party voted against his reappointment, and all opposition members voted for it. The result of that has been a significant undermining of the faith that Albertans and other parliamentarians across the country have in the system that we have.

Now we are here with this motion. The motion, once again, sets up the standard search committee. The standard search committee happens to, coincidentally, consist of a majority of members who are members of the government caucus. Frankly, I would think that if I were in government, I would want to try to clean up my reputation on this, I would want to try to heal the black eye that this province has sustained through this event, and I would want, as a result, to appoint a committee that was equally represented by both opposition and government members. Say what you will, we know that in the past there has been a voting pattern. So justice must not only be done, it must be seen to be done. It must be expected to be done. If the past is any predictor, Albertans have a real need to be concerned about what the outcome will be from a committee that is, again, dominated by government members.

It's for that reason that I can't support this motion, because I don't

believe that the committee is constructed in a way to best assure the faith of Albertans in the objectivity and neutrality with which it will do its job. I believe that given what has happened in the last year with respect to the Chief Electoral Officer and the role of that officer of the Legislature, we need to assure Albertans that we are going to do better.

3:20

I'm very concerned – and I've made this statement before – that this event that occurred in the last year or, I guess, over the course of 16, 18 months with respect to the Chief Electoral Officer has had a chilling effect on the sense of independence and security experienced by other officers who are accountable to all members of this Legislature. I can't blame them for that based on what has happened on the public record.

I suspect that it's too late to undo what has happened with the previous Chief Electoral Officer. But I would like to see members of this Assembly move forward in a way that is designed to change the practices of the past and to assure Albertans that a new book is being opened, a new page is being turned, and a new commitment to assuring true objectivity is demonstrated. Unfortunately, I don't see that that is demonstrated in the motion that we have before us. For that reason, I can't vote in favour of it.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Others?

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

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, interesting. The province is without a Chief Electoral Officer at the moment. It's not in my hands to revisit the discussion that the standing committee had before they determined not to renew the Chief Electoral Officer's term. The fact of the matter is that that term was not renewed, and we don't have a Chief Electoral Officer. Therefore, I would presume that every member of the House would want to pass a motion to set up a committee to hire a new Chief Electoral Officer and to make a recommendation of same to the Legislative Assembly. I'm entirely surprised that opposition members, who purport to believe in democracy, would not want an independent Chief Electoral Officer.

However, there are just a couple of things that I'd like to comment on in this process. There have been suggestions or allegations that for some reason the committee perhaps didn't renew the Chief Electoral Officer's term because of his report. I think there's no connection between the two that I can discern. I find that that kind of statement should not go unchallenged on the public record. What is on the public record – and these are not my words, but rather the words of the former Leader of the Official Opposition in *Hansard* from the Standing Committee on Leg. Offices, July 29, 2008:

Yes. I just wanted to inform the committee formally in the minutes that I have asked the Auditor General to investigate the operations of the Chief Electoral Officer in relation to the conduct of the last election. As this committee is the committee to whom both the Auditor General and the Chief Electoral Officer report, I thought I should just put that on the record. It's been in the media and elsewhere, so people probably know about it. That's a step I've taken, and it's based on very widespread concerns about the operation of the election in this preceding March.

Those are the words of the former Leader of the Official Opposition, Edmonton-Riverview, a person who today talked about being so disappointed that this motion was going forward and that we're appointing a new Chief Electoral Officer.

In fact, what was he affirming that was in the media? Well, what

he was affirming were comments that are quoted on the editorial page of the *Calgary Herald* on Wednesday, July 9, 2008.

Yet, such was the chaos on March 3, that Liberal leader Kevin Taft has called for the provincial auditor general to look into it. He called it “the worst-run election ever.” The *Herald* having recently made it’s own assessment, has no reason to disagree.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I’m not going to get into commenting on whether the Chief Electoral Officer did his job or not. That is the role of the standing committee of the House. They did their job. They determined that the contract should not be renewed. There’s a provision in the act which calls for the term of the Chief Electoral Officer to expire one year post an election unless it’s renewed. That happened. We have a vacancy in the office. I’m not sure why it happened. I’m not a member of the committee. But I can clearly understand what the Leader of the Official Opposition was saying publicly a year ago and during the course of the last year about the last election, so far be it from me to contradict the former Leader of the Official Opposition in terms of his viewpoint.

But, really, that’s not germane to the motion at hand. The motion at hand is about: should we have a committee?

Ms Blakeman: Then why did you bring it up?

Mr. Hancock: The Member for Edmonton-Centre says, “Why did you bring it up?” I bring it up because every speaker on the opposition side to this motion today dealt with everything but the motion and put on the record of this House things which were not germane to the motion but needed to be put into a proper context, so I’m putting it into that context.

I would ask members of the House to approve this motion because we do need a Chief Electoral Officer in this province, we do need an independent process – democracy depends on it – and you should join us in voting for it.

The Speaker: I will put the question to the House, but prior to that I’ll ask the Government House Leader to slap himself on the wrist for violating the rules of the House.

[Government Motion 11 carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 18

Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement Implementation Statutes Amendment Act, 2009

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stevens: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It’s certainly my pleasure to stand and request third reading of Bill 18, the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement Implementation Statutes Amendment Act, 2009.

In this particular case, Mr. Speaker, there’s no doubt we’ve had a good, healthy debate, and I’d like to thank the hon. members for their interest and participation. I hope that as a result of the debate, there has been some further insight and answers provided to questions that have been raised.

Mr. Speaker, the matter of the trade, investment, and labour mobility agreement, TILMA, has been around for some time now, and this particular bill really is pretty much a cleanup to a process that started formally a couple of years ago. There was Bill 1 of last year, and Bill 18 is this year’s bill, which is essentially nuts and bolts

legislation that amends some 11 acts. Many of those amendments deal with jurisdictional provisions like residency requirements. Alberta and B.C. agreed under TILMA that residents of both provinces would be treated equally. Just because someone happened to reside in one province, they would not be barred from accessing opportunities in the other.

It is actually very clear today to those from outside of our province and most of those within our province that TILMA is groundbreaking because it is going to help Albertans and Alberta companies during this current global economic slowdown. Teachers, nurses, welders, accountants, to name only a few, are now going to be able to work in either province without having to comply with additional unnecessary requirements. In fact, as of April 1 of this year more than 100 regulated occupations and professions gained full labour mobility between Alberta and British Columbia. As well, Mr. Speaker, under TILMA businesses will have improved processes for registration and reporting, and regulations between the two provinces will be streamlined so that we are even more effective and productive.

TILMA has already served as a model for improving the pan-Canadian agreement on internal trade, labour mobility, and dispute resolution chapters. That occurred formally last December at a meeting of ministers in Ottawa and is currently being rolled out across the country by individual provinces. It was also a catalyst for an arrangement between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, which recently signed an agreement to remove provincial trade barriers.

I can tell you that it was also a catalyst for Quebec and Ontario to commence discussions that sounded TILMA-like. When I last chatted with the ministers responsible, I was led to believe that some time this year we would hear more about that. I indicated to them that I was looking forward to the opportunity to see what they had done because it was always possible that Alberta would like to join in their good work.

It was just last month, Mr. Speaker, at an unprecedented tripartite – Saskatchewan, B.C., Alberta – joint cabinet meeting that there was a commitment by our respective Premiers to pursuing a western economic partnership to continue to reduce barriers and improve trade among the three most western provinces.

3:30

The essence of all of this work, Mr. Speaker, is that Albertans are going to receive a dramatic benefit at exactly the right time. I would ask all members of this Assembly to support Bill 18 in third reading.

Thank you.

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

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s a privilege once again to rise on this particular bill. I listened to the minister’s remarks, and clearly we understand that no matter what we say here, this bill is going to pass. There has been a vigorous debate, as the minister said, and at times an unusually interesting debate. A point of privilege, I believe, was brought on this and other things. It’s been healthy. I believe debate is good for bringing out new angles and new concerns, and there have been concerns expressed around this piece of legislation.

I also think that it’s worth noting that in principle co-operation between the provinces is something that I support and that in principle there are some good ideas about breaking down trade barriers and improving standards across the country. This is, in fact, something that’s going on globally. I mean, the news today is filled with information that Alberta’s standards on carbon emissions are probably going to be in effect set from Washington. My point in

raising that is simply that there is a global process of integration going on.

We can look at TILMA as part of that process. Inherently it's not a bad process. The devil's always in the details, and the reason that we've debated vigorously on this is that we've been concerned with some of the details.

Frankly, we've been concerned with some of the process as well. Before this round of debate there hadn't been, in our view, adequate debates around TILMA. The initial negotiations and signing were done before there was any legislative debate in this province, which was different from what I understand occurred in British Columbia.

If we are moving in this direction and since this bill is going to pass, I'd like to reflect on some other things that we may want to address in the spirit of co-ordinating and standardizing and getting in sync with the rest of the world. I actually spent last weekend in Vancouver, and I was immediately struck by some things that I thought: gee, I wish we could line those up with Alberta. One of the first was just stepping out of the airport, hailing a taxi, and realizing that virtually every taxi in Vancouver is a hybrid. Immediately you get the impression from that that this is a society, out in B.C., that's wanting to adapt to change, not resist it. It's very different, of course, hailing a taxi in Alberta. I thought right away: gee, there's something that Alberta could learn.

I was reminded, actually – I think it's something we should all remember in these days of rapid change – of Darwin's observation in *On the Origin of Species*. I can't quote it verbatim, but it was to the effect that it is not to the strongest or the fastest or the fittest that survival occurs; it is to the species that adapts most readily. I have to say that I think that in some ways we need to incorporate an attitude of adapting to change a little more quickly in Alberta than we have. That might be something we could import from B.C.

In Vancouver, again, I was looking at building standards as I walked about. I spent a lot of time walking in Vancouver on the weekend. They're opening a massive new convention centre, and the building standards there were such that it has the largest turf roof in the country, if not on the continent. They're doing that as part of an environmental standard. There's a building being opened very shortly on the UBC campus which will probably be the most energy efficient large building on the planet, certainly in the country.

I find myself, then, wondering, well, if we are embracing interprovincial standards and if we are trying to bring ourselves into line with other jurisdictions, why don't we look at some of those things? Why don't we look at environmental standards? B.C. has vehicle emission standards. Why don't we adopt those? If B.C. has better building standards, why don't we adopt those? If they have better standards in other areas, why don't we adopt those? That, of course, brings me to the issue of farm safety, where B.C. has significantly better standards than Alberta. In fact, Alberta doesn't just trail B.C.; it trails the whole country.

If we're embracing interprovincial co-ordination and standardization, which I think is a great idea in principle, then let's not just do it in a cherry-picking fashion. Let's set ourselves some challenges. Let's try to meet some standards that make us uncomfortable, make us stretch a bit. That would include things like vehicle emissions, energy efficiency, building codes, farm safety, worker safety, in fact labour rights generally. Maybe we'll get, you know, TILMA the sequel, that will address some of those issues, Mr. Speaker. That would be something to get really excited about.

The last point I will make as we compare between Alberta and B.C. is that if you look at provincial expenditures per capita, B.C. delivers all of their services, which include wonderful highways, ferry service, great provincial parks – Vancouver General hospital, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, is outstanding – a pharmacare program,

environmental standards, for a dollar. The Alberta government spends \$1.28 to deliver in many cases standards that are barely equal to and too often weaker than B.C.'s. I think there are some lessons to be learned from B.C. in terms of just government efficiency.

I would urge this government, if it's pursuing TILMA, to genuinely look at the whole spectrum of opportunities to learn from and co-ordinate with British Columbia. Certainly, they have things they could learn from us; we have a lot we could learn from them.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat. Thank you.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think I've participated in every stage of debate on this bill, and I have, clearly, some pretty strong feelings about it. I've listened carefully to the rest of my colleagues, and I appreciate the points made by the previous speaker, the Member for Edmonton-Riverview. He's putting a positive spin on this, that we could look at this as an opportunity to try to put some things in place across both provinces that would be seen as an improvement in many ways.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think this bill is fundamentally wrong, and I think it's wrong of this Legislative Assembly to support this bill. I think it's wrong because it is inappropriate for a Legislative Assembly to knowingly, willingly abdicate its responsibility to a lesser level. In this case, what is contemplated in this act is that by the passage of Bill 18 the Legislative Assembly would abdicate its ability to be the sole area where changes could be made – so what is made by the Assembly has to be unmade or changed by the Assembly – and that's what would be passed here. That's what the effect of this bill will be, that the bill abdicates the power to cabinet, to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, to be able to change legislation.

The government is very quick to say: "Oh, come on, now. Come on, now. Just trust us. Trust us. We're not going to abuse this power, but we need it in order to make all of our laws comply with the deadlines in order to not fall afoul of the regulations and standards that are in TILMA." My understanding was that there was an April 1 deadline date when all of this was to happen.

3:40

I guess I have a couple of responses to that. One, this is arguably the most powerful governing body in the country. It has 72 members. This is a one-party state. This Assembly can do anything it wants. It always gets the vote. We even have examples of where, you know, cabinet ministers are directing all-party committees on how they're supposed to behave. We had that happen at Leg. Offices, where the Treasury Board president directed the chair of that committee that the raises that were requested by various legislative officers were to be curtailed to a certain amount as dictated by the President of the Treasury Board. That's all a matter of public record.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

We have an enormously powerful one-party state, which I think is very problematic because it takes those checks and balances off of things. I am seeing this as a slippery slope. These Henry VIII clauses, as they're called, have been used in the past, and they have been challenged in court, and they have been upheld. But they have been used in the past at times of extreme crisis, let me call it that. Civil insurrection, you know, world wars: I mean big stuff, not a business contract, which is essentially what we're looking at with TILMA.

But this is the problem. Everybody was able to come back to me

and others that protested this and say: "You know what? This has been done before. There's precedent. Don't worry about it. It's fine." Well, there is precedent. It was used previously for circumstances where because of enormous upheaval or unrest that abdication was allowed to happen. We've taken a big step down, and now we're saying: "Well, it's okay. We'll abdicate our responsibility here to scrutinize on behalf of citizens. We'll abdicate that to cabinet in the case of an agreement on trade." We've gone from world wars to an agreement on trade as an acceptable reason by the government members in this House to abdicate their responsibility. I can't support that because I think what's at the base of this for me is that it's clearing democracy out of the way for a profit motive. It's saying: we're going to abdicate our responsibility as democratic workers here for a profit motive. To me that's just not good enough.

I find fault too many times with a government that chooses to uphold and facilitate and reward and enable the business sector as though it were the only one worthy. Frankly, half of our population is employed in the public sector, but you don't see them getting the same respect or the same support as what is given to the corporate sector. I don't feel I need to speak on behalf of the corporate sector because they do pretty darn well. That's part of my point. I think that they are given . . . [interjection] Well, there's somebody muttering over there, so I'm sure they'll be glad to get in on the debate as soon as I'm finished. If you feel that strongly, get up and put it on the record; don't heckle me from behind your hand.

What I see the effect of this bill being is that a B.C. businessperson is going to have more rights and protection in certain cases than an Albertan, and this Assembly, people that represent Alberta citizens, has said: that's okay. That's not okay with me. I think that's wrong. I think we're paid – and not too badly paid; it's not too shabby – to be here to represent the best interests of our constituents, and I don't think that compromising democracy is in the best interests of our citizens. Does that mean that I'm antibusiness? No, it doesn't. I'm very grateful for the very clever businesspeople and entrepreneurs that exist in my riding and work throughout Alberta and through the rest of Canada. They bring us products that we wish to purchase. They employ people. They're an economic driver, but they're not the only economic driver, and I think we need to work harder to balance that.

This government has taken a lot of criticism, and I think appropriately so, for the choices it has made around how it facilitates the oil sands, for example, and the kinds of tax regimes that are put in place so that that sector can flourish. Yes, the oil sands do employ a number of people in this province, and the money does trickle out somewhat, not as much as they'd like me to believe, to citizens. But were they given a number of advantages? Indeed.

On the other side of that, we have the not-for-profit sector in this province, which provides a lot of programs and services that people need and want that make this a better province to live in, that help us attract professional, knowledge-based workers to come from other places and settle here. I was told the other day by somebody in the department of health that the single-biggest problem they have in convincing professional experts to come from other places is that they don't think there's any culture here in Alberta and that they've got to be encouraged to have a look at the Winspear and the Citadel and the Epcor Centre and the Calgary Philharmonic and the Edmonton Opera and understand that we offer all of those things here and that we have a lot of them and that we're very good at it. But isn't that interesting? That's a sector that doesn't get the same kind of support as we are willing to give the corporate sector, yet it's the selling point. It's the final thing that gets the signature on that contract to bring the very people to us that are going to help make us all rich and famous.

I think this is a diminishment of this House, and it's a diminishment of the equality of all of the members of this House. So often I'm told by this government: "Just trust us. You know, really, we know what we're doing. You're raising all of these objections, and really it doesn't amount to a hill of beans. Just trust us. We'll take care of all of this." But you know what? When I look around, I don't see the reason to give that trust.

I think that the members that are appointed to cabinet have extra jobs. They may and should be the best and brightest from the government caucus, but frankly that does not make them gods. That is part of the equality of the members of this House. They are not omnipotent.

Mr. MacDonald: One or two of them must fit into that category.

Ms Blakeman: No. None of them. Sorry.

There are certain times where the Greeks can give us some very good lessons, and the lesson of hubris is one that this government consistently fails to learn. But that is, again, what's being contemplated in this because that power is being given to those members. Why the backbenchers here would knowingly give that power over there, I don't know. They must be hoping they're going to move to the other side. But you know what, guys? Most of you won't. And you will have abdicated your ability as a member of this House over to the other side, where you are never going to be.

I look again for examples of how I could trust them that this is all going to work out so well. Well, I can't. You know, I talked about the not-for-profit sector, and I should complete that analogy. Here we have the Wild Rose Foundation, which was, I'll admit, not completely nonpartisan, but it had operated fairly well with an appointed board for some 25 years. It had the respect of the community, and without one bit of consultation it was wiped out and rolled inside of the department to become even more of a partisan-driven, lottery-grant handout. I was joking, but I was serious yesterday in question period when I talked about the advantageous timing for government members to have these big cartoon cheques, that are the size of a door, for their photo op, to hand them out. But that's a perversion of a process, and I'm seeing the same thing involved in what's being contemplated here.

3:50

Mr. MacDonald: Have you been at one of those cheque presentations?

Ms Blakeman: No, I have never been at one of those cheque presentations. I've never been asked. The government loves to point out that the constituency of Edmonton-Centre is home to grand institutions like the Winspear Centre or the Citadel or the Art Gallery of Alberta. True enough, but they certainly didn't invite me to the cheque presentation. They didn't let me know about that one. I wasn't in the photo op. I didn't have the big cartoon cheque. No surprise there.

What I'm seeing in this agreement is the outcome of a one-party state. I think there's too much power that this cabinet is taking upon itself. I don't see a balance in it. I don't see a way to curtail that power. I think this is a slippery slope. We have slid to this point. What's next? That's the last piece, all of this: "Trust us. That will be okay. We will manage this on your behalf. This will all be great." But I say: "What's next? Where does the slippery slope take us next?" Where members of this Assembly will be asked to abdicate their responsibility and their democratic power to the cabinet to be able to make decisions on, what next?

The very principles of this bill I spoke against in second reading.

I spoke in support of some amendments and against some others. I actually wrote one of the amendments. They were defeated while we were in Committee of the Whole. As I speak to the anticipated effect of the bill in third reading, I cannot support it, and I have not heard arguments from the government side that have made me change my mind, clearly.

Now, I think there will be some people who will be advantaged by this, no question, and I hope that we will see an advantage from some things like a green economy. We'd get some of the good things from B.C., where they are better than us on things like a greener economy, on some of their labour laws and protections, but overall I cannot support this bill.

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

Seeing none, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to revert briefly to Introduction of Guests before I recognize another member.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests (reversion)

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

Mr. Sandhu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and all the members of the Assembly for allowing me to introduce to you and through you my very special family members: my wife, Kamal Sandhu, along with my beautiful daughter Neetu – she's pursuing second-year nursing at the University of Alberta – and my younger son, Deep Sandhu, also my sister-in-law Manpreet Sandhu.

While we're debating about TILMA, Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome my nephew Rocky Sandhu – he's working at nursing in B.C. – and his wife, Gurpreet Sandhu, who are visiting from Maple Ridge, B.C. They came here to spend time with us to know about beautiful Alberta.

I'm very proud they were able to come to visit our Assembly. I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 18

Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement Implementation Statutes Amendment Act, 2009

(continued)

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

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise again and speak to this bill, which I believe I've spoken to a couple of times now. It's really unfortunate, as I've stated before, that it's not a bill that I support in any way, shape, or form. This is a bill, of course, that's designed to facilitate and act as a vehicle for the implementation of the TILMA agreement. I'm going to try and focus my remarks on two general areas: one, the TILMA agreement, and two, that part of this particular bill which, of course, has received some attention in the House already and which I believe represents a gross delegation of authority on the part of this Assembly should we choose to go ahead and pass this piece of legislation.

On the issue of TILMA itself, you know, one might say: well, this bill just enables TILMA, and you should simply limit your debate to

the mechanisms of enabling it. But, of course, the problem is that we don't get to debate the substance of TILMA because the substance of TILMA has never come before this House for debate. We've never been given the opportunity to look at the agreement to determine what parts of the agreement are in the best interests of Alberta and what parts are not. We're told: "Take it or leave it. Either you support trade or you're antibusiness. It's one or the other." Heaven forbid that you actually look at elements of the agreement and determine whether there are parts of it that go too far or don't go far enough. I mean, that's something that is clearly beyond the capacity of the silly little heads inside this Assembly.

Nonetheless, I think that is an error on the part of the government and that, in fact, for TILMA to get support, the process through which it was reached needs to be completely revisited.

Basically, what's TILMA for? We're told by the government that they had to undertake the agreement with B.C. because the agreement on internal trade, to which all provinces are parties, has proven ineffectual at removing trade barriers. As far as I was able to tell last year, the provinces were actually able to reach an agreement to an amendment to the AIT in order to improve labour mobility in Canada, yet somehow that happened without necessarily having to go to TILMA.

So what barriers actually exist between Alberta and B.C.? The website for the agreement on internal trade shows that since the AIT came into force in 1995, three complaints have been filed concerning trade or labour mobility between Alberta and B.C. One of those complaints was resolved by a simple exchange of information between the parties, another complaint was dropped, and the third became inactive. Clearly, you know, business is burning up the phone lines with the way in which they're oppressed by the outrageous, insoluble barriers between Alberta and B.C.

Now, I would suggest, of course, that it's a myth that trade between provinces is restricted by any array of trade barriers and that there's really no evidence of that. Research conducted for the 1985 Macdonald commission concluded that interprovincial barriers cost no more than .05 per cent of the gross domestic product at the time, and relative to distance and market size Canadian provinces are far more likely to trade with each other than with American states. Since 2000 interprovincial trade has actually been growing much faster than Canada's international trade.

There was a Conference Board of Canada study that was commissioned by the B.C. government to support their claim that TILMA was very, very necessary and to suggest that TILMA would add \$4.8 billion to the province's economy. Unfortunately, almost as soon as that study was released, it was very quickly challenged and shown to be very faulty. For instance, the study made no attempt to list or estimate the cost of the particular barriers between the provinces. They didn't use standard economic measurement techniques. The Conference Board, instead, relied on a very tiny survey of a couple of business organizations.

Then through a simple arithmetic error the Conference Board study doubled the estimates of the TILMA benefits. Even after correcting the error, most of the so-called projected gains in that study were from industries exempt from the final agreement or from industries that barely engage in interprovincial trade. All in all, that particular study was not very convincing, and it demonstrated, to me anyway, that TILMA is really a solution in search of a problem. What TILMA does do, however, is provide a vehicle for private corporations to assert their jurisdiction and their authority over the public interest, which is otherwise reflected through acts passed in this Assembly or the Assembly in B.C., and it does that through the dispute resolution process. Failure to comply with orders of the dispute resolution panel would result in the province paying a

monetary penalty of up to \$5 million, potentially over and over and over again. That's not even clear.

4:00

Do we really need a quasi-judicial panel which can be triggered by a whole slew of other organizations to impose penalties on us for legislation that we have passed? Isn't that a bit like using a sledgehammer to swat flies? Basically, by giving trade issues precedence over other issues of public interest and by giving complainants the power to sue ourselves, we are giving other people the power to sue us for more stuff. When did anybody think that was a good idea? You know, this government always talks about how they are such brilliant businesspeople. What business owner would voluntarily give to other people more grounds on which they could be sued? I don't get it.

Nonetheless, by doing that, what we do is create a bill of rights, essentially, for corporations, similar to chapter 11 of the North America free trade agreement. You know, I just don't obviously see the point of that. It's interesting. With respect to that dispute resolution panel a former international and intergovernmental affairs minister was quoted at a Chamber of Commerce meeting in Richmond saying to those people: yes, this agreement gives Canadian business everything it's ever asked for. That's great, but, you know, there are a few more stakeholders, I would suggest, to which this Assembly needs to be responsible.

Now, of course, there have also been some legal opinions that have been floating around with respect to TILMA, which we've outlined in the past, and I won't get into them again. Suffice it to say that the agreement itself is open to a number of different legal challenges.

The primary problem with this specific bill that I want to talk about in the remaining time that I have is, of course, that part which gives to the minister of international and intergovernmental affairs the ability to write regulations that would overrule anything that we have done or things that we might do in the future in this Assembly.

As you know, I raised a point of privilege on this matter, and the Speaker ruled against that point of privilege. However, it's worth noting that at the time he suggested: well, I can only rule on what they may do in the House, what the Assembly may do, not what they should do. I would suggest that as members of this Assembly we should not give this kind of unprecedented level of authority to the executive of this government in order to implement an agreement which was not substantially the subject of debate in this House.

An agreement negotiated in secret that was never put to this House for vote or debate will now be allowed to take precedence over legislation that we pass in this House, and it's not emergent. As I've just outlined, there are no businesses screaming for government intervention, asking to bring down those barriers so we can keep our people employed. That is not a refrain I am seeing out there. There is no public emergency. There's no public health crisis. There's no war. There are no major disasters that would warrant this kind of authority being granted to the executive of this government. The only times when you've seen this kind of legislation used in the Commonwealth, frankly, is in those kinds of cases, and here what this government wants to do is take that kind of authority in order to implement an agreement which isn't even required on the evidence but that does give business everything it ever wanted.

That's the vision of this government, to further undermine the authority of this Assembly, which still, at least theoretically, is here to represent the public interest and the best interests of all Albertans. Yet, apparently, this minister thinks, and the government in proposing this bill thinks, that the interests . . . [A timer sounded] Oh, that's mine, so I'll keep going, I guess.

The Deputy Speaker: It's your timer. You still have time.

Ms Notley: Okay, great.

. . . of specific members of the business community in B.C. ought to override the interests of Alberta citizens and that those decisions ought to be made by a dispute resolution panel which we have no control over, which has only the most limited oversight by the judiciary. I mean, we've really set up a lovely, complicated system to ensure the enhanced rights of private-sector bodies to contest and challenge the public interest at every level. The fact that the dispute resolution committee itself can only be challenged on the most limited of judicial grounds is yet another part of this notion that we need to keep it all away from the public sector, keep it all away from debate, keep it all away from accountability, keep it all underground so we don't need to see what is or isn't happening and why our legislation is or isn't being applied or no longer is in effect.

I just think that this in an incredible step backwards. Certainly, this is a much heavier hammer than even the B.C. government used in bringing in its enabling legislation. I suspect it's probably one of the heaviest hammers used on any piece of legislation across the country. Of course, in Alberta we do like to, you know, show ourselves off by doing things that nobody else does. In the same way that we were just talking about our elections process and our 40 per cent turnout at the polls, we now are going to also be proud to demonstrate to the rest of Canada that we are also able to apparently pass one of the most undemocratic pieces of legislation in the history of the country. I certainly think this Assembly should rethink whether that is an award that they want to earn, if that's something that really is in our best interests as legislators.

For that reason, the NDP caucus will not be supporting this bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other hon. members who wish to join the debate on third reading of Bill 18?

Seeing none, I'll call on the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stevens: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. There are a few comments I'd like to make in reply. The thing that I find interesting about this general debate is that, once again, people not only in Canada but internationally appreciate that this is an important move that Alberta and B.C. have taken.

Just recently Canada and the EU have commenced trade liberalization discussions. The fact is that in the EU most of the barriers, certainly as they relate to trade, investment, and mobility between the 27 member states, have been essentially eliminated. In recognizing the importance of provinces within our confederation, the EU said that as a starting point they wanted to have an agreement among the provinces and territories, and we were interested in the concept of trade liberalization with the EU, and such an agreement was entered into.

There are lots of discussions with respect to the lost productivity as a result of the barriers regarding labour mobility; they're legion. The unproductive nature of Canada in so many areas is pointed to as a systemic problem. The TILMA in a small measure addresses that, and as I've indicated in previous remarks, the TILMA was the spur to the provinces, writ large, and the territories entering into a change to the agreement on internal trade with respect to labour mobility that is TILMA-like and also to dispute resolution. These are important things.

4:10

When I listen to the criticism with respect to this bill, I don't hear anything about the people who are the most obvious beneficiaries.

I noticed that Edmonton-Centre asked the question: I hope that some people are advantaged. Well, I don't know how many times I've stood and said that there are over 100 regulated occupations and professions that are impacted by this. People can move between the two jurisdictions and gain employment in the other without the barriers that previously existed. Those people would be teachers, nurses, doctors, foresters and so on. People who are advantaged. Thousands of people who are advantaged.

So they stand; they criticize; they say that they represent the people, and they miss the most obvious fact of what the TILMA is about. I must say, it's always good to see the Member for Edmonton-Centre – it's her 13th year in the Legislature, as it is mine – still arguing vigorously, in the 13th year as she did in the first, that democracy is on the verge of collapsing in the province of Alberta as a result of the heavy-handed nature of this government. Hon. member, I've got to tell you that I'm always inspired by the enthusiasm that you can bring to that retreaded argument.

Thank you so much. I will call the question, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 18 read a third time]

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 2 Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2009

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations.

Mr. Stevens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General it's my pleasure to rise on her behalf and move for third reading the Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2009.

This amending legislation will help enhance and strengthen the Lobbyists Act, legislation that establishes a registry for lobbyists. This will allow Albertans to see that lobbying is taking place in an open and transparent way. Mr. Speaker, Bill 2 includes amendments that strengthen and clarify the application of the prohibition against a dual role, limit the concept of associated persons so that spouses are not included, add to the list of individuals who are considered to be public office holders, allow an existing body to hear appeals from administrative penalties, give the Ethics Commissioner authority to disclose information when necessary to enforce administrative penalties, give the registrar the ability to prepare reports and investigations, and address a number of housekeeping matters. Essentially, Bill 2 will help the Lobbyists Act work more effectively for lobbyists and for government. At this time I would move third reading of this legislation.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any hon. member wish to speak?
Seeing none, then the chair shall now call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a third time]

Bill 3 Credit Union Amendment Act, 2009

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Berger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to move third reading of the Credit Union Amendment Act, 2009.

The main purpose of this amendment is to give credit unions the ability to allow their members to vote for directors in advance of their annual general meeting. The Credit Union Act was amended in the spring of 2008, which, among other things, allowed for credit union member participation at meetings through electronic means. We feel that the ability to use advance polls could further credit union member participation at credit union meetings.

We are also proposing that this amendment retroactively validate those formal processes used by credit unions in the past that have counted voting done at advance polls. In doing so, we will preserve the past choices of credit union members for their board members and preserve the decisions made by boards voted for in this manner. This will also reduce the possibility that these credit unions could be exposed to legal challenges based on the premise that as their board was not appointed in accordance with the Credit Union Act, the decisions made by that board are not valid. As these challenges would have the benefit of hindsight, the uncertainty surrounding a legal challenge could paralyze a credit union. We have not received any complaints regarding any tampering or any other concerns from members of credit unions that held advance polls.

As a matter of expediency we are also proposing a minor administrative change that would give credit unions more flexibility in reporting requirements of credit union committees to their board. Credit unions have sufficient corporate governance policies in place that this can be managed by the board.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much. Certainly, I've listened to the debate so far on Bill 3 this afternoon. I think we forget just how large the credit union movement has grown here in the province. As of December 31, 2008, credit unions in Alberta held deposits, including accrued interest, totalling over \$15 billion. That's almost \$2 billion more than they held in 2007.

I know that the credit union corporation under the act does a lot of very, very good work. Their business practices are sound. But I'm a little concerned, and I would like to have this concern recorded on the record. I don't understand why it's necessary to change the rules to allow these sorts of procedures, these voting procedures, these election procedures, to occur in the electronic format. I've had constituents question recently the direction of the credit unions, certainly with the bonuses, and there was a rather large salary of over \$3 million to one individual. That salary included many other disbursements, I believe. Citizens don't realize, taxpayers don't realize that through the authority of the Credit Union Act the citizens of this province, the taxpayers are responsible for each and every dollar deposited.

4:20

Citizens lately have had a very keen interest in the policies and procedures of the credit unions. I would caution the House and hon. members, please, to be very, very careful about how we develop a policy or a procedure that, in my view, is leading to less accountability. I'm in that category. I think that if an individual wants to vote or wants to participate, then they should be certainly encouraged to do so, whether it's oral or written notice. But this whole idea of allowing major decisions to be made through the electronic format: I have some concern about that.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: We have five minutes for comments and questions.

Seeing none, then, does any other member wish to speak on the bill?

Seeing none, the chair shall now call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a third time]

Bill 8
Feeder Associations Guarantee Act

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

Mr. Groeneveld: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to move third reading of Bill 8, the Feeder Associations Guarantee Act. This is a money bill.

I'm pleased to move it, but I quickly defer to my parliamentary assistant for a couple of comments on it.

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

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise today to speak on third reading. I think that during Committee of the Whole I addressed most of the concerns and questions that were raised.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I'm sort of confused a bit here in my procedure. The minister moved the bill. We need the opposition to participate before I can call on you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Dr. Taft: If the Member for Battle River-Wainwright gives me his notes, I'll happily read them. He can close debate.

I look to the Speaker: how many minutes do I have here, realistically? Do we go right till . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Six minutes.

Dr. Taft: Okay. We'll try to get the vote through before then. I won't talk it out, although I easily could.

I want to begin by thanking the Member for Battle River-Wainwright for the briefing he gave when this bill was first introduced. It was useful, and I would encourage all ministers to brief us on legislation when they can because it makes all our lives a little bit easier.

This bill is, I think, part of an ongoing restructuring of the livestock sector, the red meat sector. [interjections] My own colleagues here are talking right over me. I'm used to heckling from the other guys.

Anyways, just on a very brief but serious point, this is part of an ongoing restructuring of the red meat sector. I think it will allow some leveraging of greater resources. But there are some questions we've raised in debate about it. There are, of course, two sides to these sorts of issues or, perhaps, a number of sides.

I'm just going to make one brief point before I sit down, and that is to register with the Assembly my growing unease with the amount of money that we're putting into the livestock sector in Alberta. You know, in the last fiscal year we poured a number of hundreds of millions of dollars into the cattle industry and the red meat industry, and that's on top of hundreds and hundreds of millions over the last number of years. I've got to say that I'm starting to get uneasy about this. I can understand that in a short-term crisis like BSE or something that needs to be done, but it's beginning to feel like a bad habit.

At some point if the industry is constantly needing to be propped up, then I think we need to look at restructuring the industry. It may well be the case that there are simply too many cattle in Alberta. If we permanently lost the American market, for example, or if we're permanently struggling to get into other markets, whatever the reason, whether it's fair or not, I'm going to begin looking a little bit tougher at some of our supports for this industry because it's a lot of money. If we don't see a winding down soon, then I think we've got to revisit the very nature of some of the red meat sectors in Alberta.

With that said, I think this bill will help the sector. I don't think it's a bill that's likely to actually cost the taxpayer very much, so with some reservations I expect that we can support this, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise again. I just wanted to make a couple of comments. I understand the member expressing concern about the amount of money put into agriculture given our global challenges on trade issues quite often of recent years. But I'd like to point out that the way the feeder associations work in Alberta is not a subsidy or a program. This really just supports the banking industry to get behind local feeder associations to enhance the industry.

I appreciate the opposition's support of this legislation. I would remind everybody that this program has been running for many, many years and has been incredibly successful. This legislation isn't essentially changing anything about the way the program runs. It's mostly administrative so that it operates better on a functional basis.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members to support this bill, and I'd like to call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a third time]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of the hour I move that we call it 4:30 and adjourn until 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 14.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:29 p.m. to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 27th Legislature - 2nd Session (2009)

Activity to April 09, 2009

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

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

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

1 Employment Standards (Reservist Leave) Amendment Act, 2009 (Stelmach)

First Reading -- 6 (Feb. 10 aft.)
Second Reading -- 90-93 (Feb. 17 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 503-4 (Mar. 19 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 583-84 (Apr. 8 aft., passed)

2 Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2009 (Redford)

First Reading -- 9 (Feb. 11 aft.)
Second Reading -- 93-94 (Feb. 17 aft.), 121-23 (Feb. 18 aft.), 212-14 (Mar. 3 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 575-79 (Apr. 8 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 609 (Apr. 9 aft., passed)

3 Credit Union Amendment Act, 2009 (Berger)

First Reading -- 17 (Feb. 11 aft.)
Second Reading -- 123-24 (Feb. 18 aft.), 202-03 (Mar. 3 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 579-80 (Apr. 8 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 609-10 (Apr. 9 aft., passed)

4 Post-secondary Learning Amendment Act, 2009 (Bhullar)

First Reading -- 17 (Feb. 11 aft.)
Second Reading -- 124 (Feb. 18 aft.), 353-56 (Mar. 11 aft.), 585-86 (Apr. 8 aft., passed)

5 Marketing of Agricultural Products Amendment Act, 2009 (Griffiths)

First Reading -- 17 (Feb. 11 aft.)
Second Reading -- 125 (Feb. 18 aft.), 214-15 (Mar. 3 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 506-07 (Mar. 19 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 585 (Apr. 8 aft., passed)

6 Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Amendment Act, 2009 (Forsyth)

First Reading -- 18 (Feb. 11 aft.)
Second Reading -- 356-60 (Mar. 11 aft.), 586 (Apr. 8 aft., passed)

7 Public Health Amendment Act, 2009 (Liepert)

First Reading -- 18 (Feb. 11 aft.)
Second Reading -- 437-38 (Mar. 17 aft.), 439-40 (Mar. 17 aft.), 586-87 (Apr. 8 aft., passed)

8 Feeder Associations Guarantee Act (\$) (Groeneveld)

First Reading -- 18 (Feb. 11 aft.)
Second Reading -- 203-08 (Mar. 3 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 580-83 (Apr. 8 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 610 (Apr. 9 aft., passed)

9 Government Organization Amendment Act, 2009 (Campbell)

First Reading -- 18 (Feb. 11 aft.)
Second Reading -- 360-61 (Mar. 11 aft.), 587-88 (Apr. 8 aft., passed)

- 10 Supportive Living Accommodation Licensing Act (Dallas)**
First Reading -- 18 (Feb. 11 aft.)
Second Reading -- 361-62 (Mar. 11 aft.), 588 (Apr. 8 aft., adjourned)
- 11 Fisheries (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2009 (VanderBurg)**
First Reading -- 19 (Feb. 11 aft.)
Second Reading -- 362-63 (Mar. 11 aft., adjourned)
- 12 Surface Rights Amendment Act, 2009 (Berger)**
First Reading -- 19 (Feb. 11 aft.)
Second Reading -- 383-85 (Mar. 12 aft., adjourned)
- 13 Justice of the Peace Amendment Act, 2009 (Redford)**
First Reading -- 19 (Feb. 11 aft.)
Second Reading -- 385 (Mar. 12 aft., adjourned)
- 14 Carbon Capture and Storage Funding Act (\$) (Knight)**
First Reading -- 138 (Feb. 19 aft.)
Second Reading -- 208-10 (Mar. 3 aft., adjourned)
- 15 Dunvegan Hydro Development Act (Oberle)**
First Reading -- 105-06 (Feb. 18 aft.)
Second Reading -- 210-11 (Mar. 3 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 504-06 (Mar. 19 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 584-85 (Apr. 8 aft., passed)
- 16 Peace Officer Amendment Act, 2009 (Lindsay)**
First Reading -- 106 (Feb. 18 aft.)
Second Reading -- 385-86 (Mar. 12 aft., adjourned)
- 17 Securities Amendment Act, 2009 (Fawcett)**
First Reading -- 106 (Feb. 18 aft.)
Second Reading -- 386-87 (Mar. 12 aft., adjourned)
- 18* Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement Implementation Statutes Amendment Act, 2009 (Stevens)**
First Reading -- 161 (Mar. 2 aft.)
Second Reading -- 211-12 (Mar. 3 aft.), 349-52 (Mar. 11 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 381-83 (Mar. 12 aft.), 446-54 (Mar. 17 aft.), 472--81 (Mar. 18 aft.), 482-83 (Mar. 18 aft.), 574-75 (Apr. 8 aft., passed with amendments)
Third Reading -- 604-09 (Apr. 9 aft., passed)
- 19 Land Assembly Project Area Act (Hayden)**
First Reading -- 161 (Mar. 2 aft.)
Second Reading -- 438-39 (Mar. 17 aft., adjourned)
- 20 Civil Enforcement Amendment Act, 2009 (Denis)**
First Reading -- 161 (Mar. 2 aft.)
- 21 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2009 (\$) (Snelgrove)**
First Reading -- 283 (Mar. 9 aft.)
Second Reading -- 377-80 (Mar. 12 aft.), 386 (Mar. 12 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 440-43, 454 (Mar. 17 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 468-71 (Mar. 18 aft.), 481 (Mar. 18 aft., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force March 23, 2009; SA 2009 c2]
- 22 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2009 (\$) (Snelgrove)**
First Reading -- 344 (Mar. 11 aft.)
Second Reading -- 380-81 (Mar. 12 aft.), 386 (Mar. 12 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 443-46, 454 (Mar. 17 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 471-72 (Mar. 18 aft.), 481-82 (Mar. 18 aft., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force March 23, 2009; SA 2009 c1]

- 23 Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2009 (Danyluk)**
First Reading -- 401 (Mar. 16 aft.)
- 24 Animal Health Amendment Act, 2009 (Griffiths)**
First Reading -- 303 (Mar. 10 aft.)
- 25 Teachers' Pension Plans Amendment Act, 2009 (\$) (Evans)**
First Reading -- 283 (Mar. 9 aft.)
- 26 Wildlife Amendment Act, 2009 (Mitzel)**
First Reading -- 303 (Mar. 10 aft.)
- 27 Alberta Research and Innovation Act (\$) (Horner)**
First Reading -- 466 (Mar. 18 aft.)
- 28 Energy Statutes Amendment Act, 2009 (McFarland)**
First Reading -- 467 (Mar. 18 aft.)
- 29 Family Law Amendment Act, 2009 (Denis)**
First Reading -- 401 (Mar. 16 aft.)
- 30 Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2009 (Drysdale)**
First Reading -- 401 (Mar. 16 aft.)
- 31 Rules of Court Statutes Amendment Act, 2009 (Denis)**
First Reading -- 402 (Mar. 16 aft.)
- 32 Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act (Horne)**
First Reading -- 467 (Mar. 18 aft.)
- 33 Fiscal Responsibility Act (Evans)**
First Reading -- 545 (Apr. 7 aft.)
- 35 Gas Utilities Amendment Act, 2009 (McFarland)**
First Reading -- (Apr. 9 aft.)
- 52 Health Information Amendment Act, 2009 (Rogers)**
First Reading -- 436 (Mar. 17 aft.)
Second Reading -- 436 (Mar. 17 aft., reinstated), 437 (Mar. 17 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Health)
- 201 Traffic Safety (Vehicles with Unlawfully Possessed Firearms) Amendment Act, 2009 (Hehr)**
First Reading -- 106 (Feb. 18 aft.)
Second Reading -- 165-76 (Mar. 2 aft.), 284-86 (Mar. 9 aft., defeated on division)
- 202 Municipal Government (Municipal Auditor General) Amendment Act, 2009 (Johnston)**
First Reading -- 138 (Feb. 19 aft.)
Second Reading -- 286-96 (Mar. 9 aft.), 406-08 (Mar. 16 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Community Services)
- 203 Local Authorities Election (Finance and Contribution Disclosure) Amendment Act, 2009 (Johnson)**
First Reading -- 251-52 (Mar. 5 aft.)
Second Reading -- 408-16 (Mar. 16 aft., adjourned)
- 204 Provincial-Municipal Tax Sharing Act (Blakeman)**
First Reading -- 498 (Mar. 19 aft.)
- Pr1 Beverly Anne Cormier Adoption Termination Act (Anderson)**
First Reading -- 376 (Mar. 12 aft.)
- Pr2 Caritas Health Group Statutes Amendment Act, 2009 (Elniski)**
First Reading -- 376 (Mar. 12 aft.)
- Pr3 Les Filles de la Sagesse Act Repeal Act (Dallas)**
First Reading -- 376 (Mar. 12 aft.)

Table of Contents

Thursday, April 9, 2009

Introduction of Guests	589, 599, 607
Members' Statements	
211 Community Information	589
Health System Restructuring	590
Energy Efficiency Incentives	590
Home-care Workers	590
Alberta Job Losses	591
Grande Prairie Storm Junior Hockey Team	591
Introduction of Bills	
Bill 35 Gas Utilities Amendment Act, 2009	591
Oral Question Period	
Provincial Deficit	591
Funding for Cancer Care	592
Employment Supports	592
Provincial Budget	593
Municipal Sustainability Initiative	593
Provincial Tax Policy	594
Travel Alberta	594
Grizzly Bear Protection	594
Mountain Pine Beetle Control	595
Continuing Care Review	595
Alberta Job Losses	596
Apprenticeship Training	596
Special-needs Education Funding	597
Drinking Water Quality	597
Royalty Revenues	598
Business Closure Protection	598
Tabling Returns and Reports	599
Tablings to the Clerk	599
Projected Government Business	599
Government Motions	
Select Special Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee	600
Government Bills and Orders	
Third Reading	
Bill 18 Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement Implementation Statutes Amendment Act, 2009	604, 607
Bill 2 Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2009	609
Bill 3 Credit Union Amendment Act, 2009	609
Bill 8 Feeder Associations Guarantee Act	610

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Select Special Chief Electoral Officer Search Committee

Chair: Mr. Mitzel
 Deputy Chair: Mr. Lund
 Bhullar
 Blakeman
 Campbell
 Horne
 Lukaszuk
 MacDonald
 Marz
 Notley
 Webber

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mrs. Forsyth
 Deputy Chair: Mr. Elniski
 Blakeman
 Campbell
 DeLong
 Denis
 Johnston
 Kang
 Vacant

Standing Committee on Community Services

Chair: Mr. Doerksen
 Deputy Chair: Mr. Hehr
 Benito
 Bhardwaj
 Chase
 Johnson
 Johnston
 Lukaszuk
 Notley
 Rodney
 Sarich

Standing Committee on the Economy

Chair: Mr. Campbell
 Deputy Chair: Mr. Taylor
 Allred
 Amery
 Bhullar
 Marz
 McFarland
 Taft
 Weadick
 Xiao
 Vacant

Standing Committee on Health

Chair: Mr. Horne
 Deputy Chair: Ms Pastoor
 Dallas
 Denis
 Fawcett
 Notley
 Olson
 Quest
 Sherman
 Taft
 Vandermeer

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Mitzel
 Deputy Chair: Mr. Lund
 Bhullar
 Blakeman
 Campbell
 Horne
 Lukaszuk
 MacDonald
 Marz
 Notley
 Webber

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Kowalski
 Deputy Chair: Mr. Oberle
 Elniski
 Fawcett
 Hehr
 Leskiw
 Mason
 Rogers
 Taylor
 VanderBurg
 Weadick

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Dr. Brown
 Deputy Chair: Ms Woo-Paw
 Allred Jacobs
 Amery MacDonald
 Anderson McQueen
 Benito Olson
 Bhardwaj Quest
 Boutilier Rodney
 Calahasen Sandhu
 Dallas Sarich
 Doerksen Taft
 Forsyth

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Mr. Prins
 Deputy Chair: Mr. Hancock
 Amery Mitzel
 Berger Notley
 Calahasen Oberle
 DeLong Pastoor
 Doerksen Rogers
 Forsyth Sherman
 Johnson Stevens
 Leskiw Taylor
 Liepert Zwozdesky
 McFarland

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. MacDonald
 Deputy Chair: Mr. Quest
 Benito Johnson
 Bhardwaj Kang
 Chase Mason
 Dallas Olson
 Denis Sandhu
 Drysdale Vandermeer
 Fawcett Woo-Paw
 Jacobs

Standing Committee on Public Safety and Services

Chair: Mr. VanderBurg
 Deputy Chair: Mr. Kang
 Anderson
 Brown
 Calahasen
 Cao
 Jacobs
 MacDonald
 Sandhu
 Woo-Paw
 Vacant

Standing Committee on Resources and Environment

Chair: Mr. Prins
 Deputy Chair: Ms Blakeman
 Berger
 Boutilier
 Drysdale
 Griffiths
 Hehr
 Mason
 McQueen
 Oberle
 Webber

If your address is incorrect, please clip on the dotted line, make any changes, and return to the address listed below. To facilitate the update, please attach the last mailing label along with your account number.

Subscriptions
Legislative Assembly Office
1001 Legislature Annex
9718 - 107 Street
EDMONTON AB T5K 1E4

Last mailing label:

Account # _____

New information:

Name _____

Address _____

Subscription information:

Annual subscriptions to the paper copy of *Alberta Hansard* (including annual index) are \$127.50 including GST if mailed once a week or \$94.92 including GST if picked up at the subscription address below or if mailed through the provincial government interdepartmental mail system. Bound volumes are \$121.70 including GST if mailed. Cheques should be made payable to the Minister of Finance.

Price per issue is \$0.75 including GST.

On-line access to *Alberta Hansard* is available through the Internet at www.assembly.ab.ca

Address subscription inquiries to Subscriptions, Legislative Assembly Office, 1001 Legislature Annex, 9718 - 107 St., EDMONTON AB T5K 1E4, telephone 780.427.1302.

Address other inquiries to Managing Editor, *Alberta Hansard*, 1001 Legislature Annex, 9718 - 107 St., EDMONTON AB T5K 1E4, telephone 780.427.1875.